

娛樂場的客戶服務教練技巧

Coaching for Customer Service Coaches in Casinos in Macau

顧良智¹
L.C. KOO

As at end of August 2008, Macau has 31 casinos. Despite a double digit growth rate in the recent years, the gaming industry in Macau is extremely competitive particularly when the government has announced measures to freeze the launch of new gaming-related development projects. The quality of service being provided by the various casinos is getting more and more important to ensure and maintain their successes.

Since 10 July, 2008 SJM Holdings Limited, being one of the six concessionaires and sub-concessionaires in Macau has successfully become a listed company in the Hong Kong Stock Market. As at 31st December, 2007, SJM operated 18 of the 28 casinos in Macau with a total of 305 VIP gaming tables, 1107 mass market gaming tables, and 3702 slot machines. It is the largest casino operator in terms of gaming revenue, market share and number of casinos. In order to improve its customer service the Customer Service Coaching Scheme was launched in May 2008 for the pit-managers and assistant casino-managers. This paper first reviews relevant literature on coaching and then outlines the service coaching scheme in SJM.

What is coaching?

The word "Coach" comes from "Kocs", a village in Hungary where high quality carriages were made. In the 19th century, English students used this word as slang for tutors of such excellence that they felt as if they were carried through their academic career in a carriage driven by their tutor (Wilson, 2004). Coaching has its origin from sport. Ige and Kleiner (1998) describe the coaching philosophy of John R. Wooden (a successful basketball coach), viz., "*Get the players in the best condition. Teach them to execute the fundamentals quickly. Drill them as a team. Enabled him to reach his championship goal*". Attributes from his style of coaching can be used to develop successful work teams in business as well. Coaching focuses on the individual. It can be used to enhance morale, motivate and increase productivity and reduce staff turnover. Coaching can achieve a balance between meeting organizational goals and objectives and the personal development needs of the individual. It is a two-way relationship with significant benefits for both (Sweeney, 2007).

Coaching is a private relationship built on shared values, mutual interest, respect, and trust. It is essential for the coach and coachee develop a good rapport, early in the relationship (Cramm, et al., 1998). Coaching has become a necessary technique for performance improvement.

¹ 顧良智，澳門博彩研究學會副理事長

L.C. KOO, Professor, Assistant Director of Macau Gaming Research Association and Head of Performance Improvement Department, SJM

Coaching is not same as teaching. Teaching is usually one-way communication. Managers can teach their subordinates to do or not to do things, but subordinates may not understand or act completely as their managers expect. Coaching is more of a two-way communication process. When learners, who are expected to be coached, deliver results, coaches will give feedback and let learners adjust their future actions. This process will go on and on until they reach the expected outcomes. It is a reciprocal relationship between coaches and learners. Coaches may not perform as well as coachees but they know how to improve others (Champathes, 2006). He introduces the COACH process which comprises:

- Clarifying needs;
- Objectives setting;
- Action plan designing; and
- CHecking activities.

Salisbury (1994) introduces a different coaching model called 'POWER', an acronym for: Purpose, Objectives, What is happening now? Empowering, and Review. Training should come before coaching and coaching follows training. Coaching can release the skills that people have, that training alone cannot do. Training teaches people to reach a standard performance. Coaching enables people to exceed the standard. It is the release of latent talent and skills, previously untapped by training, through a process of self-awareness initiated by the coach. Coaching can help coachees strive for the best they can be, or to be better than what they have been before.

The purpose of coaching should be clearly identified. The learning process can occur in the office or place of work so that actual work – rather than a carefully simulated exercise – is the vehicle for the learning experience. The focus is on the learner learning, rather than the coach teaching, and the coach's style is usually non-intrusive with an emphasis on helping from a distance (Phillips, 1994). Lloyd (2005) views coaching as the art of facilitating the unleashing of people's potential to reach meaningful, important objectives. According to Lloyd (ibid.), important attributes of coaches include:

- sense of power and responsibility,
- time management approaches,
- definition of identity and purpose,
- organizational arrangements,
- notions of territory and boundaries, communication patterns, and
- modes of thinking.

The concept of coaching, in which the "expert" passes on valuable skills to the "novice", will not be strange to managers. But what many fail to understand is that a different, more "customized" approach is needed when the process is applied in a business setting (Barry, 1994).

According to Edwards (2003), coaching:

- . focuses on possibilities and potential;
- . is about facilitating learning rather than teaching;
- . enables the coachee to unlock their potential and maximize their performance; and
- . gives the coachee full responsibility and ownership of the outcomes.

Definitions of coaching tend to group around learning and development linked to performance improvement or coaching to facilitate personal growth and change. Executive coaching is an action-learning process to enhance effective action and learning agility. The coach works with coachees to achieve speedy, increased and sustainable effectiveness in their lives and careers through focused learning. Coaching is about change and transformation – about the human ability to grow, to alter undesirable behaviors and to generate new, adaptive and successful actions. A coach facilitates the process of change. The coach acts as a "catalyst for change", someone who "stimulates and challenges the individual to adopt new behaviors". Coaching is the facilitation of learning and development with the purpose of improving performance and enhancing effective action, goal achievement and personal satisfaction. It invariably involves growth and change, whether that is in perspective, attitude or behavior (Bluckert, 2005b).

Using a mixture of action development (built from action learning) and coaching help the coaches (Wild, 2001):

- . develop their own skills while working with the teams.
- . build themselves into an effective team;
- . understand and use the politics of the organization;
- . develop a real understanding of how to instill learning into the organization;
- . achieve qualifications.

Action development uses a series of structured tasks to help the participants develop their abilities to work in action learning sets. Wild (2001) describes the following similarity between action learning and action development

- Learning takes place in a real working situation
- Learning involves taking action
- Learning set members make contributions from their own experiences
- Managers learn best from each other
- Input of programmed knowledge should be limited
- The groups need a facilitator, not a teacher
- Individuals need higher management support
- Action learning set members must be volunteers
- Time for meetings should be flexible
- Members must be prepared to participate

- Trust and openness must be developed in the group
- Action learning/development support culture change

Solutions focused coaching discourages "problem talk" and replaces it with "solution talk". People are more naturally oriented towards "problem talk" because they are more comfortable when dealing with the past where they can analyze a problem and examine its causes and effects. "Solution talk" is more about exploring issues that are focused on the desired outcome. This does involve a change in the frame of reference and the coachee is encouraged to talk, in specific concrete terms, about the preferred "future perfect" (Nagel, 2006). Hawkins (2003) describes solutions coaching as a powerful, highly pragmatic and emotionally intelligent method of coaching individuals and teams. Its guiding principle is simple – find what works and do more of it. He (ibid.) introduces the SIMPLE solution coaching model:

- Solutions, not problems
- In-between – the action is in the interaction
- Make use of what's already there
- Possibilities – past, present, future
- Language (use simple language)
- Every case is different

Toit (2005) argues that coaching provides the challenge and the support managers need to develop the competencies they and their organizations need. The following are the key characteristics of coaching:

- a reflective practice based on a one-to-one relationship between the coach and coachee;
- tailored to the needs of the individual;
- stimulating growth in areas of organizational importance or weakness;
- present and future focused;
- action oriented;
- a non-directive intervention form of development; and
- aimed at the development of individual performance and abilities.

Coaching helps people adapt willingly to change. From the learners' perspective, being coached involves (Phillips, 1994):

- assertiveness – they need to make clear what they want to achieve;
- taking initiatives – learners may need to ask to see their coach who may be unaware that they need help;
- openness and honesty – coaches need to know if learners have specific reasons for doing or not doing particular tasks;
- asking for feedback and suggestions – coaches sometimes have to be prompted to give a review of learners' successes and mistakes;

- networking – coaching offers learners an opportunity to build valuable networks;
- clarifying objectives – the coaching project should have a clearly written statement of objectives;
- taking responsibility – learners need to take responsibility for their own learning.

The emphasis is on the learner learning rather than the coach teaching and the coach's style is usually non-intrusive with an emphasis on helping from a distance. Coaching is concerned with creating conditions so that people can perform to the best of their ability. Coachees will feel a sense of ownership and that they are managing their own development. Most of these can be delegated by coaching staff in the principles, procedures and decision rules which need to be followed. In coaching, coachees receive instant feedback about their performance – this reinforces successes and helps them quickly correct any mistakes. This accelerates the whole learning and performance improvement process. Coaching helps people who can adapt willingly to change. People who have been coached offer many insights into how the coach-learner relationship works best.

Coaching relationship requires that the coach is self-confident and motivated, which attitude is translated to the coachees and builds their confidence and the coach has confidence in the coachees, which again builds the coachees' own confidence". The mental skills include observation and analysis, and the ability to structure the coaching process for the coachees in question. Key interpersonal skills include questioning; listening; giving and receiving feedback; communicating and motivating (Phillips, 1995). The purpose of coaching is clearly identified as improving the performance of an individual person. The learning process occurs in the work place so that actual work – rather than a carefully simulated exercise – is the vehicle for the learning experience. An effective coach is an enabler rather than someone with the answer to all questions and problems. Indeed, the coach may know very little about a particular process or issue, but can still fulfill a coaching role successfully (Phillips, 1996).

According to Rezania (2008), team coaching is a fairly short-term activity, a relationship between the coach and the team, focusing on developmental discussions around the current and future performance. It is an act of leadership, based on self-directed learning process in which individuals:

- take the initiative in analyzing their learning needs;
- determine learning goals;
- identify human and material resources for learning;
- choose and implement appropriate learning strategies; and
- control and monitor learning outcomes.

To help a team develop towards high performance requires an integrative perspective of the team as a whole. Team coaching is a response to the difficulties teams encounter to foster team

building. It is intended to trigger self-reflection on team performance and promote the necessary changes in the team in achieving its desired objectives (Rezania, *ibid.*).

Coaching helps an individual or group make sense of their environment through active, experiential learning. Coaching enables the coachee address deeply held beliefs and behaviors that inhibits their performance. Coaches aim to release the full potential of their coachee by helping them develop intrapersonal competences such as self-awareness, self-regulation and self-motivation. Sensemaking is about dealing with new situations and integrating the new information with the old paradigms. In order to do this one must question and analyze existing beliefs and behaviors. Sensemaking is retrospective and can provide the coachee with the clarity to look at past events and assign a new meaning to them. Two other elements in the sensemaking process are schema and frames of reference. Schema are knowledge structures that help interpret our surroundings and reduce the need for high levels of information-processing. Schema tend to be developed through personal experience so are created subconsciously. Part of the coach's role is to bring such frameworks to the surface in order to explore and question them. Similar to schema, frames of reference provide us with cues on which to act. When coaches ask individuals to reflect and give meaning to past events, they are asking them to reframe the past. Another major element in sensemaking is overcoming ambiguity (too many interpretations) and uncertainty (not enough interpretations). Coaching can help understand what is meant by ambiguity and also to evaluate beliefs about the choices or possibilities that exist. Similarly, they can explore a lack of interpretations to help discover any hidden possibilities (Toit, 2007).

In structuring effective coaching, Barlow (2005) suggests that the following five questions can be useful:

- Where have I been?
- Where am I now?
- Where do I want to go to?
- How will I get there?
- How will I know if I have arrived?

Coaching vs. therapy

Bluckert (2005c) claims that therapy tends to focus on personal issues within an individual, while coaching focuses more on people management, strategic planning, organizational change, business performance and personal development. Other differences are listed as below:

- Coaching is more results and action-oriented than therapy. Coaching exists with a three-party contract involving the manager (the coachee), the organization and the coach.
- Coaching involves processes rarely used in therapy such as feedback from managers, peers and subordinates. Therapy, by contrast, is more veiled behind a confidentiality agreement.

- The length of sessions. Whereas therapy sessions can be undertaken regularly within the hour or 50-minute frame, coaching sessions tend to last longer and to be spaced at longer intervals. Therapy sessions take place in the therapist's consulting rooms, whereas coaching takes place in a typical business environment.
- Coaches are often required to interact, to some extent, in the business culture of their clients, and partake in the complexities of organizational life. For this reason, coaches generally dress similarly to their clients and wear suits.
- Coaching focuses on the present and future whilst therapy deals with the past
- Coaching is geared to highly functioning people whilst therapy exists for people with trouble
- The intentions of coaching and therapy are different
- The training, skill-sets and experience of coaches and therapists are quite different

Types of coaching

Transitional coaching prepares managers to meet the challenges posed by new work settings. Coaches take on the roles of ethnographers and organizational translators. As ethnographers, coaches attempt to understand those features of their coachees' new organizational work settings and cultures. As organizational translators coaches take on the task of helping coachees "make sense" of their new organizational settings. Coaching challenges: short time-framed for completing coaching goals.

Developmental coaching helps coachees think through the comparative tradeoffs associated with competing career options. This involves preparing professionals to assume broader leadership roles in the organization. Developmental coaches take on the roles of leadership developers and career planners. The related coaching challenges are: identifying critical role transitions and distinguishing between leadership style issues and skill deficiencies.

While transitional and developmental coaching are used to help managers prepare for future work challenges, remedial coaching takes a corrective stance in helping coachees get their performance back on track. Remedial coaches take on the roles of devil's advocate and trusted advisors. The coaching challenges are: building trust with the client; client resistance; and gaining organizational alignment on coaching goals (Barner, 2006).

Barner and Higgins (2007) introduce four implicit models which guide the coaching process:

1. The clinical model

The goal of the clinical model is to help the coachee gain insight into herself as a leader and individual, and to affect constructive changes in performance based on this learning. The coach must discover much about the client's personal history and investigate factors

such as interpersonal relationships, the management of daily stress, and the influence of significant personality characteristics

2. The behavioral model

The behavioral model suggests that coaches can best support personal change by encouraging coachees to understand the impact of their behavior on themselves and others, and by looking for ways to constructively adapt their behavior to the expectations of their organizations. Coaches assume the roles of guides and trainers in assisting clients to change problematic behaviors or develop new work competencies.

3. The systems model

This system approach requires that coaches must first understand the organizational context in which the behavior is embedded. Based on the belief that it is difficult to affect changes to leadership behavior without concurrently making changes to the surrounding system, systems-directed coaches emphasize that the coaching change process requires the support and alignment of the client's manager and other key organizational stakeholders.

4. The social constructionist model

From the social constructionist viewpoint, it is through our social interactions and the symbolic frameworks within which we interact that our social identities are constructed. What constitutes a "great leader", an "effective team", or a "high potential performer" varies widely depending on how these concepts have been constructed within different organizational cultures.

Effective coaching

Barry (1994) outlines the following critical principles of coaching:

- Choose the right time.
- Communicate clearly. Avoid vagueness, ambiguity and confusion.
- Listen to ensure full understanding.
- Learn to deal with your coachee's emotions.
- Delegate projects to help increase satisfaction and broaden skills.
- Encourage continuous improvement.
- Give criticism in a way that clearly communicates your intention to help.
- Discuss and understand the coachee's career goals, interests and concerns.

Bluckert (2005a) describes the characteristics of a successful coaching relationship:

- Predictability and reliability.
- Factors of time, place, confidentiality, fees and cancellation are set out from the beginning as well as the coach's expectations.

- Respect, consideration and understanding for the complexities of the coachee' s experience.
- Empathy for the coachee.
- The coach interacts in an authentic and genuine fashion.
- Consideration and understanding for the complexities of the coachee' s life;
- Courtesy;
- Accurate and tact.

A great coach will facilitate and accelerate individual learning and dramatically increase the personal effectiveness of the coachee. Coaching delivers results when a relationship is based on mutual respect, the intent of the coach and the effectiveness of the communication used. Essentially, coaching is a highly personalized one-to-one personal development programme. People learn best when they take ownership of a given situation and take personal responsibility for the outcome. The key principles of a great coach (Edwards, 2003):

- Focuses their attention on achieving the outcomes.
- Negotiates how the coachee wants feedback.
- Uses high impact questions.
- Gets themselves out of the way and releases any value judgments.
- Has excellent personal mental/emotional state control and great behavioral flexibility.
- Is fully present and listens with full attention.
- Believes that everyone has the inherent abilities and resources they need to succeed.

The key factors in successful goal-focused workplace coaching are (Grant, 2007):

- coaching sessions that deliver an outcome of tangible value;
- the development of a strong collaborative working alliance between coach and coachee;
- an emphasis on constructing solutions, rather than just analyzing the problem;
- efficient goal setting; and
- managing the coaching process and holding the coachee accountable for agreed actions.

Grant (ibid.) points out that emotional intelligence have four key branches:

1. the ability to accurately perceive emotions in oneself and others;
2. the ability to use emotions to facilitate thought;
3. understanding how different emotions arise and change over time; and
4. the ability to manage emotions and translate them into constructive action

Salisbury (1994) opines that the following attributes and skills are necessary for a coach:

- Caring skills
- Observation skills
- Questioning skills
- Supportive skills

- Listening skills
- Verbal skills
- Non-verbal skills
- Counseling ability
- Patience
- Awareness

It is essential to establish a coaching relationship built on trust and mutual respect. The coach has to have a good understanding of high achievement and what is needed for a high achiever, in order to demonstrate empathy for the total commitment required. The coach needs to ensure that the core content of the coaching satisfies the high achiever's personal performance and development needs. Coaches of high achievers should maintain a professional relationship at all times (Graham, 2006). Trust has several dimensions but two are especially important to coaches. The first is to do with integrity and the second, competence (Buckert, 2005a).

Toit (2005) proposes the following selection guideline to appointing a coach:

- Assess the need of the individual to be coached.
- Should the services of an internal or external coach be employed?
- Match the profile of the coach with that of the need of the individual, and the organization.
- What is the relevant experience of the coach and how much experience have they had?
- Review testimonials from previous clients.
- How will quality be monitored during the coaching assignment?
- Agree measurable outcomes for the coaching assignment.
- Determine qualifications and any membership of professional bodies.
- Match personal qualities and characteristics with the individuals they will coach.

Benefits of coaching

The main benefits of coaching to the recipient were found to be:

- . Improvements in individuals' performance
- . Increased openness to personal learning and development
- . Solutions to specific work-related issues

The main benefits to the organization were found to be:

- . Allows fuller use of individuals' talents/potential
- . Higher organizational performance/productivity

Many companies bring in coaching as a solution to a chronic problem. The most common of these are that people:

- . Do not know what is expected of them;

- . Do not get the quality of feedback they need;
- . Do not feel appreciated;
- . Do not trust management;
- . Are not getting the career development they want.

Process of launching coaching:

Giglio et al., (1998) suggest that coaching is a critical part of the organizational development process. They suggest a nine step approach as follows:

Phase I: building commitment and personal transformation

- Step 1. Establish a learning relationship not a telling relationship
- Step 2. Act as an objective information provider
- Step 3. Engage in joint problem identification

Phase II: moving the executive forward

- Step 4. Build a credible data bank
- Step 5. Let the clients come to their own conclusions
- Step 6. Acceptance of the situation and realization of the need to change

Phase III: facilitating the personal transformation

- Step 7. Set action plans that are realistic, achievable and within the executive's control
- Step 8. Weave a safety net
- Step 9. Self-generated motivation and continuous improvement

Nagel (2006) outlines the features of a typical solutions focused coaching session:

Co-operative relationship

An important starting point in an coaching intervention is to establish trust and understanding between the coach and coachee.

Recognizing solvable and unsolvable problems

With solutions focused coaching, it is essential to keep the intervention "on track" by focusing on solvable issues only.

Encouraging solution talk

Solutions focused coaching discourages "problem talk" and replaces it with "solution talk". "Solution talk" is more about exploring issues that are focused on the desired outcome. This does involve a change in the frame of reference and the coachee is encouraged to talk, in specific concrete terms, about the preferred "future perfect".

Resources

There are a wide range of resources which coachees have at their disposal to help them achieve the solution. There are both concrete and intangible resources, e.g.:

- Concrete - communication skills, conflict or crisis management skills, business insights, time and finances; and
- Intangible - effort, the will to succeed, company loyalty and camaraderie.

Agreeing the next steps

Towards the end of an coaching session, it is important to summarize and agree next steps.

Evaluating

The feedback loop to evaluate the effectiveness of the coaching intervention.

The three main principles of solutions focused coaching are (Nagel, 2006):

1. People need to be willing to change or do something differently. If they do not wish to do so, there is no point in forcing them to participate in a coaching program.
2. It is important to do more of what is working – this behavior needs to be strengthened.
3. It is important to stop doing what is not working and, instead, trying something different.

The Customer Service Coaching Scheme in SJM

In response to the key findings of a training need analysis conducted by end of 2007, the Performance Improvement Department of SJM tailor-developed this action learning approach using the coach-the-coach concept since May 2008. Up to end of August, six classes were conducted and 157 managers attended the training on customer service coach. Before the trainees came to the one-day training they were required to complete two questionnaires. One is a modified form of the SERVQUAL questionnaire and the second questionnaire is related to their view on coaching. These findings are discussed at the beginning of the training in order to set the scene that customer service is an important success element in gaming industry and then also review their perception towards coaching. The one-day training on service coaching is designed to be interactive, interesting, pragmatic, and action-oriented. Live-examples on customer service related issues are used as learning opportunities. Gaming and group discussions are used to strengthen the learning outcomes. The one-day course serves in fact as the start up for a three month long action learning project initiated and owned by the individual potential customer service coach. After the training on theory and practice on coaching they are asked to prepare a coaching action-plan with SMART objectives (SMART is the acronym for: Specific; Measurable; Achievable; Result-oriented, and Time-bound). On top of these individual three month action-learning assignments the coaches are also asked to form Service Improvement Teams (SITs) which is modified from Quality Control Circles (QCCs). The SITs are in fact solution focused coaching approach mentioned above. With the SITs, these newly appointed Customer Service Coaches are expected to apply their knowledge gained from the class-room into solving real life service issues occurring in the workplace.

The contents of the coach the coach session include:

- What is coaching
- Why coaching becomes important
- The Customer Service Coaching Model
- The Coaching skills

Table 1 depicts the questionnaire survey findings from the participants attending the coaching training course (Likert scale: 5 = Definitely agreed, 4 = Agreed, 3 = Neutral; 2 = Disagreed' 1 = Definitely disagreed)

Table 1: Listing of extent of agreement in descending order

| | N | Mean |
|--|-----|------|
| sc1 Good Service Quality is very important to casinos | 137 | 4.85 |
| sc4 Teamwork among colleagues is needed in providing good customer service | 137 | 4.64 |
| sc7 People need to be given opportunities to prove their abilities | 137 | 4.22 |
| sc6 With support people will work hard to enhance their capabilities | 137 | 3.96 |
| sc12 After having made a mistake, SJM employees are given opportunity to improve | 136 | 3.89 |
| sc13 Every interaction between superior and subordinates can be an improvement opportunity | 137 | 3.85 |
| sc9 SJM employees are competent to do what they should do | 137 | 3.76 |
| sc3 SJM service still needs improvement | 137 | 3.76 |
| sc5 On the whole, cooperation among SJM colleagues are good | 137 | 3.44 |
| sc8 SJM employees know what they do and the importance of their tasks | 137 | 3.42 |
| sc2 On the whole SJM service is highly praised by our customer | 137 | 3.33 |
| sc10 SJM employees enjoy their jobs | 137 | 3.26 |
| sc14 Traditional training can help enhance service quality of SJM | 137 | 3.26 |
| sc11 SJM employees find their jobs challenging | 137 | 3.14 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 136 | |

Cluster analysis

Cluster analysis is a statistical technique that can be applied to data that exhibit “natural” groupings. Cluster analysis sorts through the raw data and groups them into clusters. A cluster is a group of relatively homogeneous cases or observations. Objects in a cluster are similar to each other. They are also dissimilar to objects outside the cluster, particularly objects in other clusters. Cluster analysis, like factor analysis and multi dimensional scaling (MDS), is an

interdependence technique, i.e. it makes no distinction between dependent and independent variables. The entire set of interdependent relationships is examined. It is similar to MDS in that both examine inter-object similarity by examining the complete set of interdependent relationships. The difference is that MDS identifies underlying dimensions, while cluster analysis identifies clusters. Cluster analysis is the obverse of factor analysis. Whereas factor analysis reduces the number of variables by grouping them into a smaller set of factors, cluster analysis reduces the number of observations or cases by grouping them into a smaller set of clusters. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cluster_analysis_\(in_marketing\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cluster_analysis_(in_marketing)))

Clustering helps classify objects into different groups, i.e. the partitioning of a data set into clusters, so that the data in each cluster share some common trait - often proximity according to some defined distance measure. Data clustering algorithms can be hierarchical. Hierarchical algorithms identify successive clusters using previously established clusters. Hierarchical algorithms can be agglomerative ("bottom-up") or divisive ("top-down"). Agglomerative algorithms begin with each element as a separate cluster and merge them into successively larger clusters. Divisive algorithms begin with the whole set and proceed to divide it into successively smaller clusters. Hierarchical clustering builds (agglomerative), or breaks up (divisive), a hierarchy of clusters. The traditional representation of this hierarchy is a dendrogram (from Greek *dendron* "tree" , *-gramma* "drawing") used to illustrate the arrangement of the clusters produced by a clustering algorithm.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Data_clustering).

The following dendrogram, generated by SPSS, presents a picture of cluster agglomeration with distance rescaled to numbers between 0 and 25. The closer the variables are joined towards the number "0" the more similar it is among themselves. From the dendrogram, SC6 and SC7 are most similar to each other (joining very close to number "0" . SC1 and SC4 are similar to each other and yet are most different from the rest of all other variables (Joining at the number of "25" . Visually there are three clusters which are:

If a vertical line is drawn on the dendrogram below at a distance between 10 and 12, three clusters are formed. They are labeled as: Coaching philosophy (SC6, SC7, SC12, SC13, SC9 and SC3); SJM Staff Status (SC10, SC11, SC5, SC8, SC14 and SC2); and Success Criteria (SC1 and SC4).

Table 2: Cluster analysis of Service Coach Survey

| <i>Coaching Philosophy:</i> | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| sc6 | With support people will work hard to enhance their capabilities |
| sc7 | People need to be given opportunities to prove their abilities |
| sc12 | After having made a mistake, SJM employees are given opportunity to improve |

- sc13 Every interaction between superior and subordinates can be an improvement opportunity
- sc9 SJM employees are competent to do what they should do
- sc3 SJM service still needs improvement

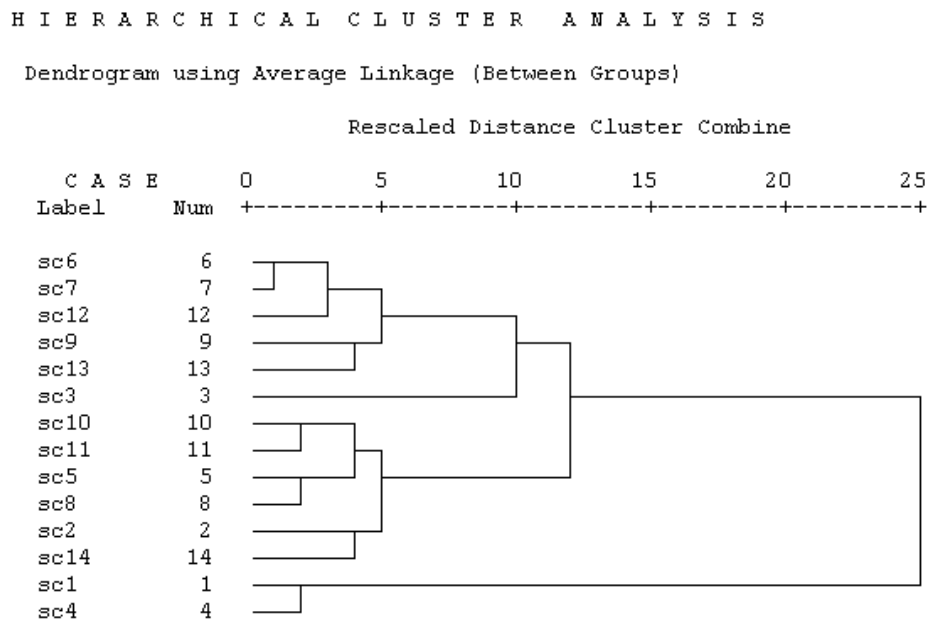
SJM Staff Status:

- sc10 SJM employees enjoy their jobs
- sc11 SJM employees find their jobs challenging
- sc5 On the whole, cooperation among SJM colleagues are good
- sc8 SJM employees know what they do and the importance of their tasks
- sc14 Traditional training can help enhance service quality of SJM
- sc2 On the whole SJM service is highly praised by our customer

Success Criteria:

- sc1 Good Service Quality is very important to casinos
- sc4 Teamwork among colleagues is needed in providing good customer service

Figure 1: Hierarchical Cluster Analysis - Dendrogram



The Service Coach Model in SJM

During the training for the Service Coaches, the findings from the surveys were shared with them. It is seen from table 1 that the most agreed items are customer service and teamwork are important criteria for success. The coachees also agreed with the philosophy adopted in coaching. Generally speaking they agreed that employees needed to be given the opportunity to

prove their ability and with support they would work hard to enhance their capability. They agreed that employees should be given opportunity to improve and every interaction between the superiors and the subordinates is a coaching opportunity. These points were then reinforced in the training. The training then continued with elaboration on the definition of coaching, the benefits of coaching and the approach of coaching.

The coaching model for continuous performance improvement in service is as below:

Step 1: Core values of coaching:

- When given opportunity, people would work hard to improve their capability
- People should be given opportunity to prove their ability
- Every interaction between coach and coachee is a coaching opportunity
- In developing and sustaining excellent performance, individual and team should strive hard
- People should know what they are doing and the contribution they are making
- People have the ability to do what they should do
- People like their jobs and find them challenging
- When people commit mistakes, they should be given a chance to improve

Step 2: Basic characteristics of a coach

- Balanced (two-way communication)
- Specific achievement objectives
- Shared responsibilities between the coach and coachee
- Approach (Diverse and Focused)
- Respect the coachee

Step 3: Key coaching skills:

- Participate (listening skills)
- Explore (probing skills)
- Express (ensuring coachee can understand the message)
- Assure (getting commitment from coachee to improve. Coach helps coachee in problem solving, achieving and sustaining results, and revising for higher achievement goals)
- Normalize (being responsible for the coaching results)

Step 4: Core coaching interviews:

- deploying coaching skills outlined in step 3 above, to explore areas for improvement with the coachee
- Problem solving (problem identification, problem diagnosing, problem solving)
- Guiding coachee (what to improve and how to improve)
- Sustaining achievement made
- Revising for further improvement target (i.e. the Plan-Do-Check-Act improvement cycle)

Conclusion:

It is obvious that coaching is a more effective tool to enhance and sustain service quality than the traditional chalk and talk approach in classroom training. Service provision is more an attitudinal issue and in service management we can argue that the weakest link in a service delivery chain (a series of moment of truth) is its weakest. In other words, we have a service formula $100 - 1 = 0$. If one service personnel out of 100 is delivering bad customer service, the customer will rate the entire service of that organization as poor. It is of paramount importance for the service provider to provide consistent high service standard at all times and in all encounters with its customers.

Service coaching approach is far more effective than the one-off service training conducted in a class-room setting. Coaching is an on-going process and successful coach would use every occasion to reinforce good service behavior and to rectify undesirable service issues through problem solving techniques. This service coach scheme in SJM is supplemented by Service Improvement Teams (SITs) whereby team synergy is deployed to help improve the quality service.

References

- Barlow, L. (2005). Effective structuring of coaching: using five questions. *Development and Learning in Organizations*, Vol. 19 (No. 6), pp. 11-12.
- Barner, R. (2006). The targeted assessment coaching interview Adapting the assessment process to different coaching requirements. *Career Development International*, Vol. 11 (No. 2), pp. 96-107.
- Barner, R., & Higgins, J. (2007). Understanding implicit models that guide the coaching process. *Journal of Management Development*, Vol. 26 (No. 2), pp. 148-158.
- Barry, T. (1994). How to Be a Good Coach. *Management Development Review*, Vol. 7 (No. 4), pp. 24-26.
- Bluckert, P. (2005a). Critical factors in executive coaching – the coaching relationship. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, Vol. 37 (No. 7), pp. 336-340.
- Bluckert, P. (2005b). The foundations of a psychological approach to executive coaching. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, Vol. 37 (No. 4), pp. 171-178.
- Bluckert, P. (2005c). The similarities and differences between coaching and therapy. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, Vol. 37 (No. 2), pp. 91-96.
- Burdett, J. O. (1998). Forty things every manager should know about coaching. *Journal of Management Development*, Vol. 17 (No. 2), pp. 142-152.

- Champathes, M. R. (2006). Coaching for performance improvement: the "COACH" model. *Development and Learning in Organizations, Vol. 20* (No. 2), pp. 17-18.
- Cramm, S., & May, T. (1998). Accelerating executive development: hey coach... *Information Management & Computer Security* (6/5), pp.196-198.
- Edwards, L. (2003). Coaching – the latest buzzword or a truly effective management tool? *Industrial and Commercial Training, Vol. 35* (No. 7), pp.298-300.
- Giglio, L., Diamante, T., & Urban, J. M. (1998). Coaching a leader: leveraging change at the top. *Journal of Management Development and Learning in Organizations, Vol. 17* (No. 2), pp. 93-105.
- Grant, A. M. (2007). Enhancing coaching skills and emotional intelligence through training. *Industrial and Commercial Training, Vol. 39*(No. 5), pp. 257-266.
- Hawkins, L. (2003). Solutions coaching? No problem! – part 1_. *Industrial and Commercial Training, Vol. 35* (No. 7), pp. 285-289.
- Ige, C. M., & Kleiner, B. H. (1998). How to Coach Teams in Business: The John WoodenWay. *Management Research News, Vo. 21* (No. 1), pp. 9-12.
- Jones, G. (2006). Coaching high achievers. *Human Resource Management International Digest, Vo. 14*(No. 7), pp.4.
- Lloyd, B. (2005). Interview Coaching, culture and leadership. *Team Performance Management, Vol. 11* (3/4), pp. 133-138.
- Nagel, R. (2006). Coaching with a solutions focus – focusing on the solution not the problem. *Development and Learning in Organizations, Vol. 22* (No. 4), pp. 11-14.
- Phillips, R. (1994). Coaching for Higher Performance. *Management Development Review, Vol. 7*(No. 5), pp. 19-22.
- Phillips, R. (1995). Coaching for higher performance. *Executive Development, Vol. 8* (No. 7), pp. 5-7.
- Phillips, R. (1996). Coaching for higher performance. *Employee Counselling Today, Vol. 8* (No. 4), pp. 29-32.
- Rezania, D. (2008). A framework for team coaching: using self-discrepancy theory. *Development and Learning in Organizations, Vol. 22* (No. 5), pp. 12-13.
- Salisbury, F. S. (1994) *Developing Managers as Coaches: A Trainer's Guide* McGraw-Hill International (UK) Limited. ISBN 0-07-707892-6
- Sweeney, T. (2007). Coaching your way to the top. *Industrial and Commercial Training, Vol. 39* (No. 3), pp. 170-173.

Toit, A. D. (2005). A guide to executive coaching. *Development and Learning in Organizations*, Vol. 19 (No. 2), pp. 11-12.

Toit, A. I. D. (2007). Making sense through coaching. *Journal of Management Development*, Vol. 26 (No. 3), pp. 282-291.

Wild, A. (2001). Coaching the coaches, to develop the teams, to accelerate the pace of change. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, Vol. 33 (No. 5), pp. 161-166.

Wilson, C. (2004). Coaching and coach training in the workplace. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, Vol. 36 (No. 3), pp. 96-98.

