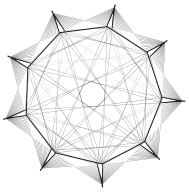
Bonds & Bridges

Facing the Challenges of the Globalizing World with the Use of Simulation and Gaming



ISAGA 2011
Bonds & Bridges

wydawnictwo poltext

Editors
Witold T. Bielecki
Jagoda Gandziarowska-Ziołecka
Anna M. Pikos
Marcin Wardaszko

Reviewers
L.J. (Rens) Kortmann, Ph.D.
Mikołaj Lewicki, Ph.D.
dr. ir. Sebastiaan Meijer (Ph.D.)
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Professor Witold T. Bielecki
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Proofreading
Justyna Marut
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Cover design
Rafał Kucharczuk

Computer typesetting
Marek Bąk

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Warsaw 2012

Publication of this book is financially supported by Kozminski University

Poltext Ltd
32 Oksywska Street, 01-694 Warsaw
tel.: 22 832-07-07, 22 632-64-20
e-mail: wydawnictwo@poltext.pl
internet: www.poltext.pl

ISBN 978-83-7561-212-7

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BRIDGE OVER COACHING AND GAMES

Joanna Chmura
Joanna Chmura – The Art of Possibilities
joanna@joannachmura.pl

ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to provide a brief description of a new idea - introducing games into the coaching world. The background for this concept is a conference session that took place during ISAGA 2011 in Warsaw, Poland. The session was divided into 2 parts: introduction and a workshop session. Participants had a chance to find out how one can implement games into personal and/or professional coaching processes. The first part gave a little insight into the world of coaching and highlighted some of the challenges a coach might face during everyday work with clients. During the workshop part The Coaching Game by Points Of You was in use. It is a game designed by Yaron Golan and Efrat Shani. This game provided workshop participants with a unique chance to search and find answers to the following questions: "Why do I procrastinate things?" and "How to take a step forward in life by letting go your spare baggage?". After the game participants declared that the game enabled them to understand the complexity of a challenge they were facing and at the same time made them see wider range of solutions to it. The main question placed was – Is it worth it to marry the two – coaching and games? And the answer is – yes. For several reasons, yes.

1. WHY GAMES?

Games are interactive. They make you think in an abstract way and make you search for solutions among several, sometimes very distant, sources. When using games we provide a safe environment to test oneself, actions, habits and opinions. It means that one can easily try out various behaviors and in a blink of an eye see the results they bring. Unlike in real life when you have to wait quite a while to see the results. After all the experiences gained during the game, coming back to reality has never been easier. Skills have been tested, results are known and knowledge broadened. Applying tested earlier solutions to real life is as easy as riding a bike.

2 WHY COACHING?

To answer the above we have to know what coaching is?

- It is helping others reach their goals without doing it for them.
- It is identifying and trying out several different solutions to a challenge/problem/issue client is facing.
- It is facilitating the exploration of clients:
  - Needs
  - Motivations
  - Desires
  - Skills

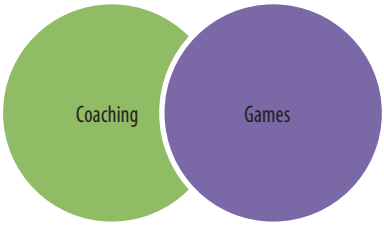
International Coach Federation defines coaching as follows - *Coaching is partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential.*

Coach invites client to see that the range of possibilities is so much wider than he once thought. Simply said in most cases it's a **talk with numerous questions** that client needs to find answers to. Once answered they accelerate the development process and equip the client with all the resources one needs to reach their goals.

3. WHY GAMES AND COACHING?

The first thing that came to my mind when I asked myself the above question was: "Why not?". Games and simulations have been successfully implemented in the social skills trainings area. Games accelerate development processes and provide excellent results on educational levels for wide range of recipients varying from private individuals, corporate world to government institutions. Since coaching is also a training/personal development oriented tool then why not use games in the this area as well.

But do they have anything in common?



Quite a few things:

- Provide space for testing various opportunities
- Prepare clients for different probable scenarios
- Both enable the shift of perspective
- Guarantee safe environment

- Promote attitude that change is a natural step in the growth process
- Move client so reach out of their comfort zone
- Test and challenge inner beliefs "in the field"

Therefore it was tempting to check whether mixing the two will be beneficial for coach, client and the coaching process itself.

Being a coach and working with different clients might be a challenge for quite a few reasons:

On the client side:

- Dichotomous thinking,
- Being driven by "need for closure",
- Looking for solutions in the same areas where the problems were created,
- Limited creativity,
- Schema thinking,
- Limited out of the box thinking skills,
- Limited skills in naming the emotions,
- Seeing the inner side or things,
- Limited creative problem solving skills,
- Strict following one's inner beliefs,
- Hemisphere dominance (Sperry, 1981)
- Metaphoric thinking,
- Language fluency limitations,
- Social styles based way of thinking (Meryill and Reid, 1984)

On the coach side:

- Routine coaching sessions – lack of new ideas, concepts, exercises to use with clients.

4. WHY WAS THE GAME DEVELOPED BY GOLAN AND SHANI CHOSEN?

Some of the following description of "Points of You" coaching game is property of the game authors: Yaron Golan and Efrat Shani.

As Einstein once said: *"The significant problems we have cannot be solved at the same level of thinking with which we created them."*

The Coaching Game enables overcoming that. The client is invited to explore several different options, ask questions, provide answers and test their inner beliefs. The tool activates a special link between topics and words, pictures, and questions. This link enables delving into issues and processes that are significant in our lives, leading to awareness and action by generating new points of view via which we can shift automatic patterns that we've been following in our daily lives.

How does The Coaching Game work?

The Coaching Game brings 65 Life Topics that somehow touch us all. Each topic is presented via various media, both textual and visual, including pictures, a story, quotes, and thought-stimulating queries. It all makes it easier for the client to overcome any potential difficulties he or she might have in metaphoric thinking. It becomes possible to strengthen metaphoric thinking skill within 3 channels: vision, hearing and touch. Looking at a picture might be a breakthrough process, verifying, challenging, inspiring, and opening the client. The questions are intended to help illuminate and arouse those places that the patient, trainee, client or participant is dealing with. This game has no winners or losers, but rather stimulates thinking, discussion, and cooperation. It can be used in several ways and adapted to various groups.

The Coaching Game places several questions in front of the player (client) and it's the player's job to provide the answers. Apart from that it easily brings new light to his/her old way of thinking. It also makes one search for solutions in the areas wouldn't be your first choice. It provokes various emotions and thanks to that you can look at the same issue from different angles. The Coaching Game is a powerful tool used to generate clear, quality communication between people.

Because each card bears both a word and a picture, client might have a tendency to read the word, and thereby assign a meaning to the picture; or alternatively, to focus on the picture and ignore the word. Both ways of depicting the topic — visual and textual — reflect the perceptions of the two respective parts of the brain: the right brain, stimulated by the intuition and emotion depicted in the picture; and the left brain, responsible for analytical thinking, represented by the word. Simultaneous stimulation by the picture and the word together creates a unique situation where a struggle takes place between emotion and logic, setting off a sort of "short circuit" in the vigilant defense mechanism of our consciousness. With appropriate work, this "scrambling" actually liberates us from our "controlling parent lists" of "how we should look at life", and enables other points of view to seep through to our consciousness and once we see that the whole field of new solutions enter our world.

Summing up – The Coaching Game invites the client to:

- Get out of their comfort zone and think different
- Challenge him/her with different points of view
- Look further for solutions by looking deeper into chosen photos from different perspective - informative, plot, stylistic, personal and emotional, comparative.
- Enrich their range of vision (wider than regular 180°) and therefore enabling them to see "undiscovered" options
- Face and fight their inner beliefs

5. ISAGA 2011 WORKSHOP GOALS – BRIDGE OVER COACHING AND GAMES

The participants were introduced to The Coaching Game designed by Yaron Golan and Efrat Shani. The conference session was divided into 2 sections:

- 40 minute introduction
- 2 hour workshop.

The main goal for the workshop part was to make the participants reflect on their professional and/or personal development. They were invited to give answers to the following questions:

- Why do I procrastinate things?
- Why do I postpone?
- Why is it hard for me to do some things straight away?
- How to take a step forward in life by letting go your spare baggage?

The participants were divided into pairs and played The Coaching Game for about 40–60 minutes.

What were the insights and discoveries made by participants?

According to the answers and insights participants shared after the workshop I dare to state that the goal of the session was reached. Here are examples of the discoveries made by the participants during the workshop:

- I had to answer questions I would not normally even ask myself.
- It made me think of other possible options.
- I've learned a new thing about myself today.
- I had to connect very distant dots but thanks to that I could see the whole picture.
- I had to ask myself strange but very interesting questions.
- I was constantly challenged to answer difficult questions.

Using The Coaching Game made the participants face some of their procrastination inner beliefs. They left their coaching sessions with precise action steps that will enable them to change the habit or at least think about costs and benefits of keeping/changing the habit.

6. WAS IT WORTH TO MARRY THE TWO?

According to participants discoveries one might say it was. In my personal coaching practice I see how efficiently games support "regular" coaching process. Games equip and strengthen clients with wider range of qualities, reflections and insights crucial for their growth.

Using games equips coach with tools that extend their range of questions, ideas and concepts one can apply to their client's development process when facing the above.

Mixing the two provides a new quality to the coaching processes. Was it worth it? It's like asking whether it is worth to develop online games since the good old chess was fair enough. It simply brings something new, fresh, different to the table of coaching – and since it's all about the change… why not change the way we coach by using games?

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