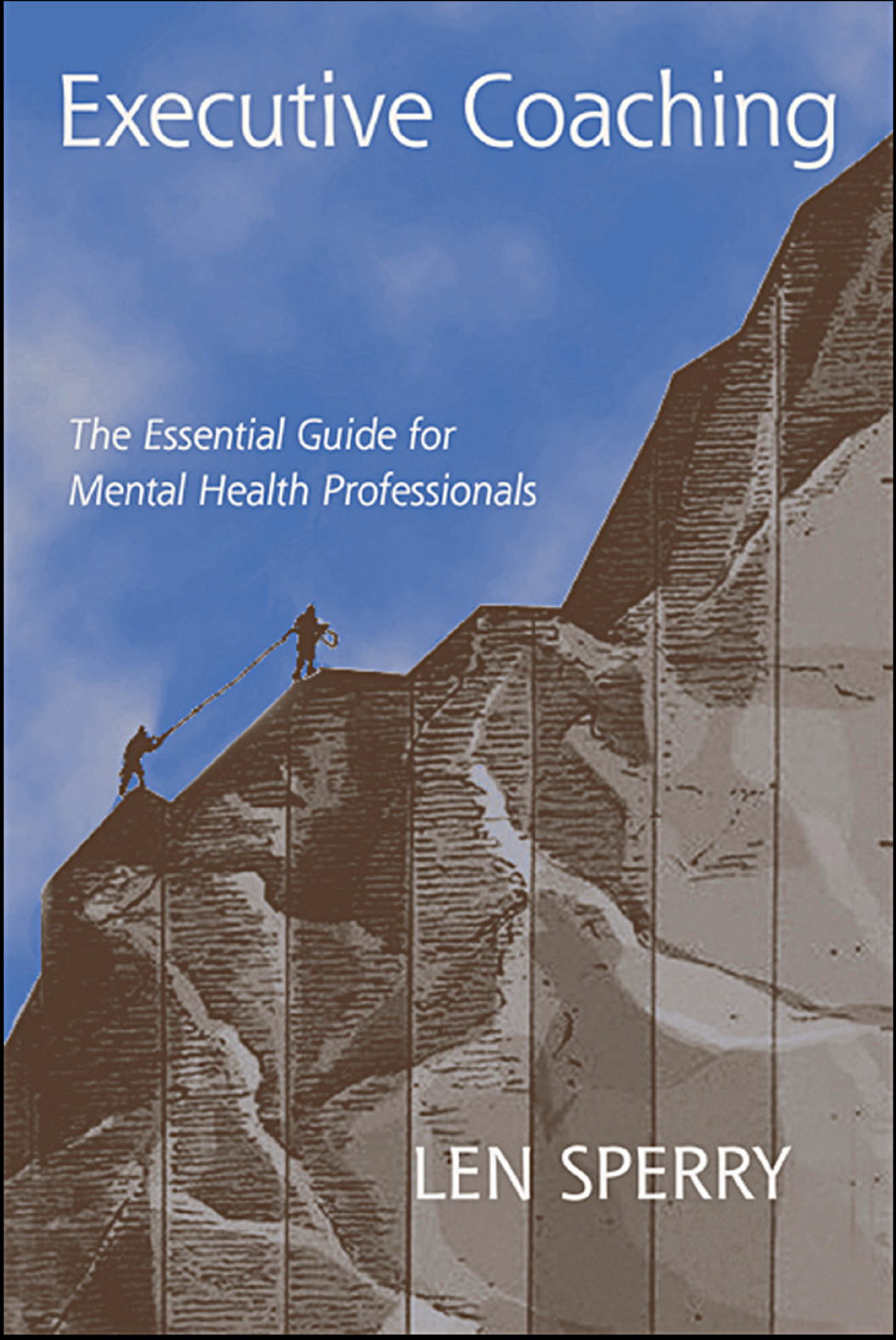
Executive Coaching

The Essential Guide for Mental Health Professionals



LEN SPERRY

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The Essential Guide for Mental Health Professionals

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Foreword

In 1953, Dr. William C. Menninger, who had been chief of U.S. Army psychiatry during World War II, and was then back in the management of the Menninger Foundation, asked me to take on a novel project. As a psychiatrist he had spent his professional life treating mentally ill people and while in the Army he managed the entire military service for treating soldiers who became mentally ill. He came away from that experience with a feeling that something ought to be done for keeping well people well. For the 3 years prior, I had been heavily involved in the reform of the Kansas State Hospital System, which required work with the public and the Kansas legislature. Presumably, therefore, I knew something about dealing with the public, which few of my clinical colleagues did, and therefore I was the logical candidate to undertake this new project. Neither he nor I knew anything about *prevention* of mental illness, nor did we know where to begin. Nevertheless, the task was in my hands.

If one were to develop a program for keeping well people functioning well, obviously that was a public health task. Obviously also, it could best be accomplished through already organized groups of adults in institutional forums that were central to their lives. Almost by definition, that meant working with organizations where people were employed. Work was central to the lives of most adults, and how organizations were managed had a significant effect on how people felt about themselves, their work, and their lives.

I undertook a 50,000 mile trip around the country, visiting large corporations and university departments of psychology and psychiatry. I interviewed personnel executives, industrial physicians, industrial psychologists, those few psychiatrists who worked in industrial medical departments, labor leaders, and others who I thought could shed some light on problems and practices in organizations that might have some effect on mental health.

I came away from that experience disappointed to learn that what we thought we had to know about people in order to treat them when they became mentally ill was almost totally unknown in management. Even large business organizations that were well respected for their management practices did not seem to have any significant awareness of what went on in

people's heads. Something had to be done to help managements develop such an understanding.

With Dr. Menninger's support and that of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, I created the Division of Industrial Mental Health at the Menninger Foundation. The first project I undertook was a series of seminars for executives and industrial physicians on psychoanalytic theory applied to management problems. Each of the executives who took part in these week-long sessions presented a case problem about somebody with whom he or she worked that was discussed in a small seven-person group, each group led by a psychologist or psychiatrist. In addition to the lectures and small group discussions, each participant had a personal interview with his or her group leader. That interview was devoted to whatever issues the participant wanted to raise. The issues ranged from career problems to family conflicts to managing transitions to making use of local clinical resources. In the seminars for physicians in industry, the participants interviewed patients in local mental health clinics under the guidance of psychiatrists on those staffs. For many, it was the first time they had ever talked with a psychologist or psychiatrist. Some were struggling with problems at work or in their families and they needed professional help and were referred to local sources of that help.

The seminars proved to be helpful and popular. However, in them we were bringing to the participants knowledge developed from clinical practice. We really didn't know very much about what went on within business organizations. To cope with that lack of understanding, with two colleagues, a sociologist and a psychiatrist, I undertook a study in the Kansas Power and Light Company. We interviewed 840 employees over two-thirds of Kansas. We talked with them in their offices, rode with them in their trucks, sat on piles of dirt when they were digging trenches, and once were in a boat in the middle of the Kansas River when a gas pipeline burst. We carried our lunchboxes with us and ate with them in the field. We wore our safety helmets as they did. When it was cold in the field, we shivered with them. In short, we were deeply immersed in the organization and saw firsthand the problems of people at work and the styles of management under which they did their tasks.

That experience gave us firsthand knowledge about the problems of people at work, including their exposure to the elements, to various managerial practices, to the dangers many of them confronted daily, even in the electric generating power plants where turning the wrong valve could blow the place up. We learned much that was not in the books and had firsthand knowledge which we could then transmit in seminars, lectures, and books.

In the seminar cases and in the interviews with the participants, in effect we were executive coaches. It took another 45 years before executive coaching became recognized as a professional practice.

Now executive coaching has become a fad. Almost everybody and his brother and sister have become an executive coach. Although there are many

disciplines related to management practice, and experts in those disciplines are legitimate coaches about those specialties, many who hold themselves out to be executive coaches are guided only by their good intentions. Although now there is a rapidly developing psychological literature on executive coaching, and that topic is extensively discussed in professional articles, books, symposia, and lectures, not many of the psychologists who offer themselves as executive coaches are clinically trained. Some have had long experience in organizations. Some have had training in counseling. Some have had no formal psychological training, but have developed a body of insights and experience that are particularly helpful. But those without clinical training will have a more difficult time of trying to coach those who are narcissistic, rigidly overcontrolling, manipulative, depressed, or crippled by feelings of inadequacy.

Clinicians who have the professional skills and competence to deal with character problems usually have had little experience with managements, managerial practices, career trajectories, mergers and acquisitions, downsizing, financial crises, or organizational politics. Although many clinicians should be and could be good executive coaches, to do so they should become knowledgeable about organizational cultures and practices, and the wide range of coaching problems they will encounter. There aren't many guides for that transition.

The need for such guidance is the task that Len Sperry addresses in this book. He brings long clinical experience with the problems of people in organizations to the process of teaching clinicians how to understand and work with the immediate practical problems of managers and executives. In doing so, he focuses on the task I started out with nearly a half century ago, namely, how to keep well people functioning well. Clinicians who assume the executive coaching role will find Sperry's understanding and guidance helpful. They may even find the results of his extensive professional experience invaluable.

In addition to coaching others, clinicians inevitably encounter issues that touch on their own problems and their own career issues. These are rarely dealt with in the coaching literature. Sperry makes the unique contribution of helping the coach consider the intra-personal problems he or she experiences in the coaching process. That contribution is an important step beyond what is in the contemporary coaching literature. Taken together, these insights, experiences, and guides, make *Executive Coaching: The Essential Guide for Mental Health Professionals* an important and indispensable resource for mental health professionals involved in executive coaching.

Harry Levinson, Ph.D.

Acknowledgments

This book is grounded in over 30 years of working with executives. I feel honored and profoundly grateful to have known, worked with, and learned from these leaders and their organizations. Over the years, I have had the good fortune to know Harry Levinson, Ph.D. and Harry Prosen, M.D. as mentors, and I must express my heartfelt admiration and gratitude for their role in my personal and professional development. Lee R. Hess, Ph.D., Peter Brill, M.D., and Jon Carlson, Ed.D., Psy.D. have meant the world to me and words fail to convey my deep appreciation for their friendship. Finally, I would like to recognize my esteemed colleagues, Carl Chan, M.D. and Jon Gudeman, M.D. at the Medical College of Wisconsin, Maureen Duffy, Ph.D. and Scott Gillig, Ph.D. at Barry University, and Bill Nicoll, Ph.D. and Alex Miranda, Ph.D. at Florida Atlantic University.

Publishing a book is a major team endeavor, and I've been blest to work with some of the best and brightest in the publishing world. My heartfelt gratitude to the editorial staff at Brunner-Routledge: George Zimmar, Shannon Vargo, Dana Bliss, Marsha Hecht and Alice Mulhern.

Introduction

Executive coaching has clearly captured the attention of top management, executives who want and need to increase performance, as well as individuals in the mental health profession. The major appeal of coaching among top management and executives rests on the perception that coaching is a powerful and highly effective approach to productivity and leadership excellence, and that it is a relatively brief and cost-effective alternative to psychotherapy and traditional training and development approaches. The main appeal to mental health professionals is that coaching offers a viable as well as lucrative alternative to psychotherapy practice in a managed care environment.

There are probably more than 10,000 coaches in America offering executive coaching. Only about 20% are trained and licensed mental health professionals. The rest are M.B.A.-trained consultants, have athletic coaching or training experience, or are simply entrepreneurs attracted by the $250 to $500 hourly fees that coaches working with corporate clients can command.

It appears that executive coaching can and does achieve its promise of increased performance and/or well-being with certain clients. The fact that executive coaching is not effective with all clients, often because of co-morbid psychological problems, suggests that formal psychological training and experience can be significant assets. Because of their unique training and experience in assessment and diagnosis, mental health professionals have much to offer the emerging field of executive coaching, since these professionals can both select and work with the most appropriate candidates for coaching, as well as competently refer those who are better candidates for psychotherapy. In addition to an alternative to managed care practice, executive coaching appeals to many mental health professionals because it is an alternative to the pathology-oriented, medical model. Instead, executive coaching is based on the developmental model. This means that mental health professionals can focus their efforts beyond merely reducing symptoms and resolving major problems. Instead, they can assist already healthy and productive individuals to increase their personal, relational and spiritual well-being.

Besides the obvious financial benefits, coaching also offers practice flexibility that clinical practice does not: executive coaching sessions can even be conducted by phone or Internet. The "clinical world" differs considerably from the "corporate world" and coaching is not watered-down psychotherapy. Effective coaching requires a realistic understanding of organizational dynamics as well as some measure of training in the methods and professional issues unique to

coaching. This book can provide the reader a map of the territory of the "corporate world" and the practice of executive and personal coaching.

Why the need for this particular book when there are already several coaching books in print? First of all, most books on executive coaching are not written expressly for mental health professionals. Second, the few that target mental health professionals either merely restate the content of general coaching books or are primarily collections of "how I became a coach and practice coaching" stories. These books have little or no coverage of topics that concern those with psychotherapeutic training. Simply comparing coaching and psychotherapy in a few pages and offering a summary table or chart of their differences is not useful or sufficient for most mental health professionals.

Based on my experience giving seminars on executive coaching, mental health professionals who are seriously considering executive coaching as a practice option or career change really want and need to understand the ins and outs of executive coaching before they make major decisions to secure additional training and then expand their practices or shift careers. They should consider several issues. What are the practice differences between executive coaching and personal or life coaching? What additional training and experience are required to practice executive coaching ethically and legally compared to the requirements for providing personal or life coaching? Which executives are the best and least suitable candidates for executive coaching? What are the indications and contraindications for executive coaching compared to the indications and contraindications for psychotherapy? What is the relationship between executive coaching and executive consultation, and can mental health professionals trained as executive coaches ethically perform executive consultation? What additional training and experience are needed to function as an executive consultant? How does the process of executive coaching differ from psychotherapy? What are the specific indications for skill-focused executive coaching compared to performance-focused and development-focused executive coaching? What are the strategies and methods of practicing these three different approaches? Can coaching be practiced with a team or is it only a one-to-one intervention?

Executive Coaching: The Essential Guide for Mental Health Professionals is unique in that it addresses the concerns noted above and others. It provides extensive background information that is essential for the practice of executive coaching. It offers the reader a clearly articulated "map" and illustrations of the actual process of executive coaching in its various forms: skill-focused, performance-focused and development-focused executive coaching. Numerous case examples, some of which include transcriptions of coaching sessions, provide the reader with an insider's view of the executive coaching process in several contexts. Included are indications and strategies for utilizing executive coaching with an executive, with an executive and a problematic employee, and with an executive in a team context.

This book will be of primary interest to mental health clinicians who seek alternatives to managed care practices, who have interest in working with higher functioning clients on self-fulfillment and other personal development issues, or who would like to have more flexible practices provided by coaching. This book may also be of interest to non-clinically trained coaches who seek ways to identify clients who are poor candidates for coaching or work with those who are "stuck" in their coaching efforts. Executives who are looking for the insider's view of what effective executive coaching is like may also find the book of interest.

Executive Coaching consists of ten chapters. An overview of the field of executive coaching from the perspective of the mental health professional is provided in chapter 1. This chapter explores executive coaching and distinguishes it from executive consulting, training and development, and counseling and psychotherapy and suggests a number of reasons mental health professionals, i.e., those with psychological training, are well disposed to practice executive coaching. Chapter 2 discusses the client by presenting a portrait of the executive in terms of personality and character, leadership style, skills, and competencies. Chapter 3 portrays the corporate world in which executives live and function as well as their job demands. Following these three rather global and descriptive chapters, chapter 4 begins to focus more directly on executive coaching by addressing the matter of suitability: who is an appropriate candidate for executive coaching and who is not as well as the suitability of those who provide executive coaching. Chapter 5 focuses on the actual process. It describes the models, modes, stages, and types or functions of executive coaching. The three chapters that follow describe and illustrate the actual practice of executive coaching. The three basic types of coaching are described and extensively illustrated with case material. Skill-focused coaching is covered in chapter 6, performance-focused coaching in chapter 7, and development-focused coaching in chapter 8. Other strategies that can be combined with coaching to increase executive productivity and well-being are described in chapter 9, while chapter 10 addresses several professional issues in developing a practice in executive coaching.

1
Executive Coaching as a Practice Option

Coaching has taken center stage in the world of personal change and development. In glowing media reports, high profile CEOs and celebrities in the sports and entertainment world attribute much of their success to their coaches. Recently, a weekly news magazine called coaching the second hottest consulting field behind management consulting. Many see coaching as a panacea for all manner of personal, professional, and corporate problems, while some top executives view coaching as a quick and inexpensive alternative to psychotherapy. Interestingly, a recent study examining media perceptions of executive coaches and their effectiveness as compared to psychologists found that the public had much more favorable views of coaches than psychologists with regard to competence and helpfulness (Garman, Whiston, & Zlatoper, 2000).

In the past few years, presentations on coaching at national conferences and continuing education workshops for therapists have drawn large crowds. Institutes and online programs to train and "certify" coaches have sprung up and, at least according to their entrepreneurial founders, are flourishing. Coaching is pitched to mental health professionals as a viable and profitable alternative to practicing therapy in a managed care environment. By training to become coaches, mental health professionals are promised that they can leave managed care behind and easily earn six-figure incomes (Campbell, 2001). But is executive coaching really a viable practice option for mental health professionals?

This chapter begins by describing and defining coaching. It then distinguishes coaching from a number of related strategies for improving executive performance, such as consulting, training and development, and psychotherapy. Next, it discusses the various similarities and differences between coaching and therapy. This leads to a consideration of the main types of coaching: life coaching, personal coaching, managerial coaching, and, the subject of this book, executive coaching. The effectiveness of executive coaching is then addressed. Finally, the chapter ends with a discussion of the viability of executive coaching as a practice option for mental health professionals.

Descriptions and Definitions of Coaching

What is coaching? At the current time, no consensus on the scope, format, methods, duration, and frequency of sessions exists among the various descriptions and

definitions of coaching. The lack of consensus is understandable since this area of professional endeavor is more recent than executive consultation and counseling. Some representative definitions and descriptions of executive coaching are provided in this section.

Witherspoon (2000) insists that coaching is basically a growth-oriented, personal relationship. Accordingly, he describes executive coaching as "an action-learning process to enhance effective action and learning agility. It involves a professional relationship and a deliberate, personalized process to provide an executive with valid information, free and informed choices based on that information, and internal commitment to those choices" (p. 167). Two expected outcomes of coaching should be more effective action and increased ability to learn, i.e., asking for feedback and reflecting before and after making a decision or initiating an action. Similarly, Goldsmith, Lyons, and Freas (2000) describe coaching as a strategic process that adds values to those who are coached as well as to the organization. "Coaching establishes and develops healthy working relationships by surfacing issues (raw data gathering), addressing issues (through feedback), solving problems (action planning), and following through (results)—and so offers a process in which people develop and through which obstacles to obtaining business results are removed" (p. xviii).

Others describe coaching from a more performance-based perspective. For instance, O'Neil (2000) defines coaching as the process of increasing an individual's skill and effectiveness in three areas: (1) communicating the organization's purpose, vision, and goals to key constituencies; (2) building relationships and facilitating interactions that result in outstanding team performance; and (3) producing results and outcomes (pp. 5–6).

Kilburg (1996) defines coaching as "a helping relationship formed between a client with managerial authority and responsibility in an organization and a consultant who uses a wide variety of behavioral techniques and methods to help the client achieve a mutually identified set of goals to improve personal performance and personal satisfaction, and consequently, to improve the effectiveness of the client's organization within a formally defined coaching agreement" (p. 142).

Some believe that coaching is probably a necessary, and perhaps even a sufficient, condition for achieving organizational transformation. Coaching can be transformational which is to say that "through a behavioral change brought about in individuals, a leader may transform the organization and gain commitment.... In coaching, people are offered the chance to align their own behavior with the values and vision of the organization ... and then putting these individuals back in alignment, one person at a time—coaching can make real impact and build healthy organizations—top-down, and from the grass roots up" (Goldsmith, Lyons, & Freas, 2000, p. xviii).

Performance or Personal Development?

While there are differences in these various definitions, they nevertheless seem to reflect only two basic viewpoints. In one, the primary purpose of coaching is performance enhancement and the secondary purpose is personal development; in the other, the primary purpose of coaching is personal development and performance enhancement is secondary. Those who advocate for the personal development view point out that the original meaning of the word *coaching*—derived from the word *carriage* in the English language—was "to convey a valued person from where he or she is to where he or she wants to be."

Not surprisingly, these advocates insist that the basic purpose of coaching is to bring out the best in individuals, and that focusing primarily on an individual's overall development usually leads to increased professional effectiveness and job performance. As will be noted in a subsequent section of this chapter, advocates of this view of coaching tend to practice personal coaching or life coaching. On the other hand, those who view the purpose of coaching primarily as performance enhancement and secondarily as personal development are more likely to practice executive coaching.

Executive Coaching, Consulting, Training, and Psychotherapy

In the business world, several strategies and methods have been found to be effective in increasing an individual's job performance. In the executive suite, four different strategies are commonly utilized: executive coaching, executive consulting, executive training and development, and executive counseling or psychotherapy. This section describes and differentiates each of these in terms of professions and then as functions. We begin by discussing these four strategies in terms of professions.

Strategies as Professions

The four strategies are described as they are embodied within four separate professions. The case can be made, organizationally and legally, that the four professions are autonomous.

Executive Consultation—This is an organizational consultation strategy in which a consultant forms a collaborative relationship with an individual executive to address a broad range of professional and personal issues of concern to the executive. Because these discussions can range from complex financial and personnel decisions to delicate personal health issues, this type of consultation is not for a beginner. Rather it requires a seasoned consultant with an encyclopedic knowledge and broad experience base. The signature characteristic of this form of consultation is that the consultant serves as a sounding board and expert adviser who can quickly and effective assess the personal and organizational dynamics influencing the executive's concerns. Chapter 9 describes and illustrates this strategy in more detail.

Executive Psychotherapy—This form of psychotherapy is a strategy and process in which a therapist and executive establish a close, collaborative relationship and utilize psychotherapeutic methods to achieve greater self-understanding and resolution of the executive's work-related problems and/or symptoms. Usually briefer, less intense, and more focused on work-related issues than traditional counseling or psychotherapy. work-focused psychotherapy is a form of executive counseling that focuses on work-related issues. It is described and illustrated in chapter 9.

Executive Training and Development—With this approach, training and development specialists endeavor to assist executives, as well as other employees, to learn and master knowledge, skills, and competencies. From a training and development perspective, learning results from instructional input, practice and reinforcement. Learning is believed to be optimized when it is individualized to a learner's unique needs and learning style. Accordingly, learning modes that are interactive, individualized, and easily accessed are preferred over traditional classroom didactic instructions and seminars. Most training and development today takes place via interactive electronic and other computer-based modalities. While training and development methods are useful in achieving various learning outcomes, they seem to excel at learning that involves technical and analytic skills.

There are probably two main differences between coaching and training and development. First, as noted, is that while training is very effective for teaching technical and analytic skills, coaching can achieve learning outcomes in relational and strategic skills as well as technical ones. Second, while both coaching and training consider individualization unlike important, coaching emphasizes learning within a respectful, trusting, and collaborative relationship unlike training and development.

Executive Coaching—This is a specialized type of executive consultation. A coach works collaboratively with an executive to improve the executive's overall professional productivity and personal well-being. The focus of such coaching can be on increasing skills, performance, or development. It is usually directed at communicating vision and acting strategically, understanding individual and organizational dynamics, building relationships and mobilizing commitment, facilitating team performance, or improving specific corporate results. Unless it is part of an ongoing leadership development program, executive coaching tends to be fairly focused and of short duration.

Table 1.1 summarizes this discussion.

Strategies as Functions

The various strategies for improving executive performance and development such as coaching, therapy, consultation, and training and development can be thought of either as professions (coach, therapist, consultant, trainer) or as functions. When we consider discrete professions, we like to think that trainers

TABLE 1.1 Comparison of Four Strategies of Executive Development

Strategy	Distinctive Features
Executive Coaching	A *coach* works collaboratively with an executive to accomplish specific goals and objectives involving the executive's productivity and well-being; typically focuses on increasing skills and performance or on personal and professional development; usually of short duration
Executive Consultation	A *consultant,* functioning as a sounding board, expert adviser and/or evaluator, forms a collaborative relationship with an individual executive to address a *broad range* of professional and personal issues of concern to the executive; often an ongoing process of longer duration
Executive Psychotherapy	A *therapist* and an executive establish a close, collaborative relationship and utilize psychotherapeutic methods to achieve greater *self-understanding and resolution* of work-related problems and/or symptoms; usually briefer, less intense, and more focused on work-related issues than traditional counseling or psychotherapy; often weekly meetings of short to medium duration, depending on need
Executive Training and Development	A *training and development specialist* focuses on developing the requisite leadership skills and competencies of individuals targeted for advancement to executive positions or on enhancing the skills and competencies of those already in executive positions; usually of short duration; longer in the context of a formal leadership development program

only train, consultants only consult, therapists only provide therapy, and coaches only provide coaching. The reality is that the various strategies for improving executive performance and development are discrete but overlapping functions that can conceivably be provided by one professional. Figure 1.1 portrays these four functions as separate and autonomous strategies of the same value and importance—as noted by their similar size.

Figure 1.2 portrays these four functions wherein coaching is largely informed by a training and development perspective. Coaches who come from training and development backgrounds often are quite comfortable viewing coaching as a variant of training and development. Thus, it should not be too surprising that they typically define coaching in terms of skill deficits and specific targets and tend to "specialize" in skill-focused executive coaching.

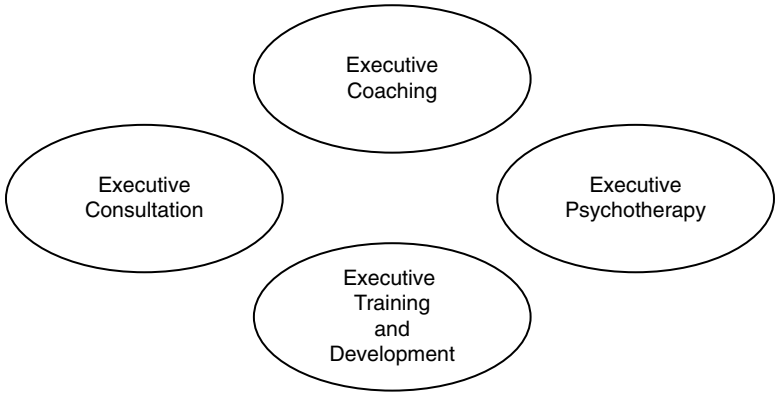

Fig. 1.1 Coaching, consulting, training, and therapy as separate functions.

The increased sizes of the circles representing the coaching and training and development functions reflect their perceived superior value and importance in comparison to the consultation and psychotherapy functions.

Figure 1.3 portrays these four functions wherein coaching is largely informed by a consultation perspective. Coaches who come from business or management consulting backgrounds often are quite comfortable viewing coaching as a variant of consultation. Thus, it should not be too surprising that they typically define coaching in terms of team, organizational, and professional development outcomes or are likely to "specialize" in performance-focused executive coaching.

Figure 1.4 portrays these four functions wherein coaching is largely informed by a counseling or therapy perspective. Coaches who come from mental health backgrounds often are quite comfortable viewing coaching as a variant of counseling therapy. Thus, it should not be too surprising that they typically define coaching in terms of relational and personal and professional

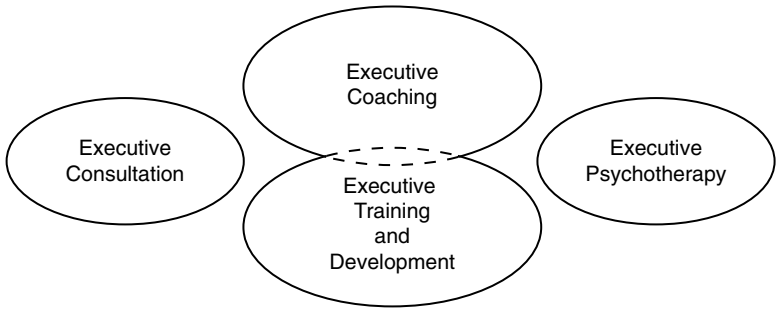

Fig. 1.2 Coaching viewed from a training and development perspective.