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Executive coaching and personal brand: coach training, coach mastery, and client satisfaction

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EXECUTIVE COACHING AND PERSONAL BRAND:

COACH TRAINING, COACH MASTERY, AND CLIENT SATISFACTION

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by

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to Taylor. Pursue your dreams, live life passionately, love generously, forgive easily, be bold and courageous, seek wisdom and knowledge, be adventurous, and continue to bless the world with your beautiful soul.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project is based upon the collaborative efforts and generous support of many people. While my name may be the only one that appears on the front page of this document it is not a true reflection of the many people who participated directly or indirectly in the project.

I want to thank my family for supporting me through my graduate studies at Pepperdine, and in particular during the doctoral portion of the program. The demands of school did not always make it possible for me to participate in family activities. My family graciously understood and encouraged me to stay focused on my studies. I love and appreciate them beyond measure.

I am also grateful to my friends for supporting me along the way. During my doctoral studies I spent more time behind the computer than with my friends, and yet my friendships remained steadfast and strong. Thank you for allowing me to be an absentee friend and now that my doctorate studies are done I can return to being an active friend!

I am deeply grateful to Karl Speak, the coaches, and the clients. Without them I truly would not have a dissertation. The generosity of the time and energy they dedicated to this project is truly amazing. I will never forget the day that I called Karl (him not knowing at all who I was) and how that cold call turned into what eventually became this research project. Throughout the months of our working together I have come to know Karl as an intelligent, generous, humble, and remarkable man. I also want to express my sincere appreciation to the coaches who participated in this study. Each one of them enthusiastically accepted the invitation to participate in this study and along the way took on the task of coaching a client. I recognize that taking on a new client or changing the content of a current coaching engagement is no small feat. I thank them for this. I also admire all of the coaches. This group of highly skilled coaches embodies intelligence, generosity, commitment, and enthusiasm. I also wish to thank the clients who participated in this project. I appreciate their willingness to be coached on a particular matter—personal brand—over a period of time. This required a commitment on their part and I sincerely appreciate that. Like the coaches, they enthusiastically embraced the opportunity to participate in this study and to be coached along the way. They generously gave of their time and personal stories, as well, during the phone interviews I had with them.

Throughout this endeavor I was blessed to be guided and supported by the most magnificent dissertation committee I could ever imagine! I admire each of them and feel fortunate to know them academically, professionally, and personally. My sincere appreciation for the time, energy, and commitment they put into serving on my committee. Thank you!

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VITA

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ABSTRACT

This project aimed to: (a) account for a method by which executive coaches may be trained in personal brand coaching, (b) describe the executive coaches' abilities to coach in particular personal brand matters pretest, posttest and posttest, and (c) assess levels of client satisfaction based upon receipt of personal brand coaching throughout a 3 month period. Thus, this grounded theory and phenomenological study sought to deduce a training process that can be used to train coaches on how to coach employing personal brand. Furthermore, the study deduced the abilities of these coaches in specific areas of personal brand coaching per training literature on learning and behavioral changes. Finally, satisfaction levels of clients before and after the receipt of personal brand coaching was assessed. Participants were a personal brand expert, 6 executive coaches, and 5 clients.

The study concluded there is a process by which coaches can be trained in personal brand coaching. However, it varies depending upon the personal brand expert who facilitates it. That is, the content will vary depending upon the facilitator. Additionally, learning occurred for the coaches as evidenced by pretest, posttest and post-posttest data. Furthermore, limited behavioral changes occurred as demonstrated through post-posttest data. Finally, satisfaction levels in the domains of work and life improved for clients as evidenced by pretest and posttest data.

The study has limitations. One is that the training program was facilitated by a personal brand expert who had a certain approach to personal brand that may differ from others. Therefore, the training content may differ if facilitated by another personal brand expert. Additionally, the small sample size of coaches and clients was a limitation

making it difficult to generalize the findings. Furthermore, the clients received personal brand coaching therefore their experience may not be generalized to other kinds of coaching.

Future research may include the use of a control group, coaches who specialize in career transition coaching along with clients who are in-between jobs, a personal brand expert who has a different approach to the subject, and a focus upon client goal attainment rather than satisfaction.

Chapter One: Executive Coaching and Personal Brand

Relatively recently, the business world has experienced the introduction and emergence of executive coaching (Bluckert, 2004; Morgan, Harkins & Goldsmith, 2005). The growth and advance of coaching may exist for many reasons, including some of the reported outcomes such as impact upon corporate vision and strategy (Stalinski, 2004), improvement in strategic planning (Kilburg, 2000), enhanced organizational learning (Stern, 2004), improved change management (Grant & Zackon, 2004), and managing complex change with greater confidence (Reeves, 2006). It could be argued that another possible reason for the rising interest in executive coaching is that it provides a platform upon which the executive may explore issues that often go unaddressed in the hustle and bustle of everyday business life (Hall, Otazo, & Hollenbeck, 1999). The coaching relationship can place the executive's frenetic life on a momentary pause so that important issues that might otherwise go unattended get noticed.

Even more recently, a concept from the business world has transcended into the personal lives of individuals, and this is the idea of branding. In 1997, Peters introduced the idea that each individual person is as much a brand as any company such as Nike, Coke, Pepsi, or the Body Shop. Since Peters' breakthrough notion of personal brand, other authors have jumped on the bandwagon (Arruda & Dixson, 2007; McNally & Speak, 2002; Montoya & Vandehey, 2002; O'Brien, 2007). They contend that knowing and living one's personal brand leads to numerous outcomes, including increased compensation, prestige, fulfillment, enhanced credibility, greater influence, and career success. According to Fried (2005), personal branding is built upon one critical premise in that "we all need to be entrepreneurs of our own existence" (p. 78). As will be discussed and evidenced throughout this document, many benefits may be reaped from both coaching and personal branding.

Problem Statement

Research indicates there has been an expansion of growth in the field of coaching, and that coaching may result in various personal and professional benefits (Morgan et al., 2005; Natale & Diamante, 2005; Sherman & Freas, 2004). Additionally, contemporary literature suggests that the concepts around branding have extended beyond the confines of corporate business into the realm of the individual (Arruda & Dixson, 2007; McNally & Speak, 2002; Montoya & Vandehey, 2002). Thus, there has been an emergence in coaching as well as in personal brand. However, there is little, if any, empirical evidence suggesting a standardized, formal process by which coaches can be trained in personal brand coaching. There is also little, if any, research on the abilities of coaches to coach clients on specific matters of personal brand. Furthermore, there is limited, if any, empirical evidence regarding the satisfaction levels of personal brand coaching clients.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to: (a) account for a method by which executive coaches may be trained in personal brand coaching, (b) describe the executive coach's abilities to coach clients in particular personal brand matters before and after training, and (c) assess levels of client satisfaction based upon receipt of personal brand coaching over a specified period of time. Hence, the purpose of this qualitative, exploratory research project seeks to deduce a training process that can be used to train coaches on how to coach using personal brand. Additionally, this research project deduces the abilities of newly trained personal brand coaches in several categories (as stated in the next section) as a result of this training. Finally, this project assesses the satisfaction levels of personal brand coaching clients before and following personal brand coaching.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study are:

1. What is the process through which coaches may be trained to coach clients on personal brand?
2. How do executive coaches describe their abilities to coach clients in the following matters: pretest, posttest and post-posttest?
    a. Distinguishing the difference between personal brand and personal image.
    b. Living an authentic personal brand.
    c. Developing a personal brand promise.
    d. Creating personal brand distinctiveness.
3. Immediately following their coach's receipt of personal brand coach training, as well as 3 months later, how do clients report their levels of life satisfaction in regard to work, friends, relatives, and life?

Discussion on the Basis for the Research Questions

This section will discuss the basis and rationale for the research questions that have been outlined above. As will be discussed in Chapter Two, the concept of personal brand has flourished since it was first introduced by Peters in 1997. Since then, many other authors have written on the subject. In fact, a search on Amazon indicates that there are 3,887 books on the topic. Perhaps more astounding is an Internet search on Google that resulted in 54,000,000 hits. It can be inferred that there is much interest in the topic and that people are seeking means to develop their own brand, including through coaching. As a result, the first research question is designed to understand the process by which an executive coach may be trained to coach on personal brand.

The reasons for asking research question 2 (which are interview questions on specific personal brand matters) comes from a review of the literature and are depicted in Table 1.

Table 1

Research Question 2: Concept, Citation, and Interview Question

Concept	Citation	Interview Question(s)
Personal brand v. personal image	McNally & Speak (2002) Montoya (2002)	How do you coach a client on matters of personal brand rather than personal image?
Authenticity	McNally & Speak (2002) Montoya & Vandehey (2002)	How do you coach a client on living a personal brand that is authentic?
Personal brand promise	Arruda & Dixson (2007) McNally & Speak (2002) Montoya & Vandehey (2002)	How do you coach a client on matters regarding developing a personal brand promise?
Distinctiveness	Arruda & Dixson (2007) McNally & Speak (2002) Montoya & Vandehey (2002)	How do you coach a client on creating a personal brand that is distinctive?

The basis for asking research question 3, in regard to satisfaction comes from a review of the literature. This is shown in Table 2. The bases for the questions are grounded in the Quality of Life Inventory (QOLI), the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS), as well as contemporary personal brand literature.

Table 2

Research Question 3: Concept, Citation, and Interview Question(s)

Concept	Citation	Interview Question(s)
Work	QOLI (Frisch, 1994) Arruda & Dixson (2007)	How do you describe your current satisfaction level of your work?
Friends	QOLI (Frisch, 1994) McNally & Speak (2002)	How do you describe your current satisfaction level of your relationships with your friends?
Relatives	QOLI (Frisch, 1994) McNally & Speak (2002)	How do you describe your current satisfaction level of your relationships with your relatives?
Life	SWLS (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985)	How do you describe your current satisfaction level of your life?

Briefly, the QOLI (Frisch, 1994) is a theoretically framed instrument in which the particular domains it measures "are empirically associated with overall satisfaction and happiness" (p. 6). Specifically, the domains that have been selected for this study are work, friends, and relatives. The QOLI is discussed further in Chapter Three.

The foundation for inquiring about life satisfaction is taken from the SWLS (Diener et al., 1985). The SWLS is a five-question instrument using a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). For the purposes of this study, the researcher chose to inquire about life by asking an open-ended, qualitative question rather than a close-ended, quantitative question. This rationale, as well as the SWLS, is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

Nature of the Intervention

As noted in research question 1, this project attempted to understand the effect that personal brand coaching has on experienced executive coaches who do not have previous training or expertise in personal brand coaching. In other words, executive coaches who are otherwise experienced but lack specific skill, knowledge, and practice in personal brand coaching. In this regard, the researcher intended to deduce, through qualitative measures, how personal brand coach training effects, if at all, otherwise experienced coaches in terms of their abilities to coach clients on specific personal brand matters (as defined in research question 2). Of further interest in this study were the clients of these newly trained coaches and the effect personal brand coaching has upon them in terms of their satisfaction, if at all.

The first step in this research project was an intervention. Specifically, the intervention was a personal brand coach training program facilitated by Karl Speak, who is a consultant on brand management issues. He has worked with a myriad of organizations, including American Airlines, United Healthcare, Honeywell, Federal Express, IBM, Pillsbury, 3M, Sony, and Target. He founded the company, Brand Toolbox, in 1984, and is a coauthor of the book, *Be Your Own Brand: A Breakthrough Formula for Standing Out in the Crowd.* Speak has also been a guest lecturer on brand management at the University of Minnesota, College of St. Thomas, and the University of Westminster.

Speak facilitated a personal brand coach training program for executive coaches who already had experience as coaches, yet who lacked specific expertise in personal brand coaching. The training was designed to last a few sessions and employed a virtual training delivery platform. At the conclusion of the training, the coaches began working with one client, utilizing their newly acquired personal brand coaching skills. In regard to the training, the researcher collected data in several ways, including being an observer of the sessions, having access to all training materials, and interviewing Speak on his methodology.

Prior to the intervention, the researcher conducted pretest interviews with the coach-trainees in order to gather qualitative data regarding their abilities to coach clients on particular personal brand matters. Specifically, based upon a review of the literature (described further in Chapter Three), the researcher inquired about their ability to coach clients on: (a) distinguishing the difference between personal brand and personal image, (b) living an authentic personal brand, (c) developing a personal brand promise, and (d) creating personal brand distinctiveness. At the conclusion of the training the researcher conducted posttest interviews to gather more qualitative data in reference to the executive coaches' abilities in personal brand coaching using the same areas of inquiry previously stated. Then, 3 months later, the researcher conducted post-posttest interviews to collect additional qualitative data on the coaches again using the same categories of inquiry. The aim of these steps was to deduce the effect, if any, that the personal brand coach training (i.e., the intervention) had on these coaches' abilities to coach clients on personal brand.

Additionally, this research project was also interested in the satisfaction levels of the clients based upon them receiving personal brand coaching. Therefore, to determine the satisfaction levels of the clients, pretest and posttest interviews were conducted. The pretest interview occurred just as the clients were about to receive personal brand coaching. This means that the pretest client interviews occurred at the same time as the posttest interviews with the coaches. Subsequently, the posttest interviews with the clients occurred at the post-posttest interviews with the coaches. Chapter Three provides a more detailed description of this schedule.

The purpose of conducting pre- and posttest interviews with the clients was to determine their satisfaction levels in several areas of life before and after receiving personal brand coaching. In order to gather meaningful data, the researcher developed interview questions based upon the QOLI (Frisch, 1994), and the SWLS (Diener et al., 1985). As previously discussed, these instruments were selected as the basis for developing interview questions because of their sound theoretical framework and focus on life satisfaction. These instruments are described in greater detail in Chapter Three.

The rationale for assessing satisfaction with work, friends, relatives, and life was also based upon the contemporary personal brand literature. For instance, Arruda and Dixson (2007) discuss personal brand in relation to having work that stirs one's passion. In reference to friends and relatives, McNally and Speak (2002) discuss in detail how having strong relationships with others is the foundation for overall success. Finally, McNally and Speak discuss that by having a strong, clear personal brand one's life may become more fulfilling and successful.

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations of which the reader should be aware. First, the study is limited to one set of coaches who were trained by one particular individual in personal brand coaching. This individual, Speak, has a certain process or methodology that may be different from other personal brand experts. Therefore, the process that these coaches learned during the intervention phase may differ from another program taught by another personal brand expert. As such, the process described in this study may not be generalized to all personal brand coach training programs.

Additionally, this study focused upon one set of newly trained personal brand coaches and their clients. These coaches were recruited to participate in this study because they knew or had knowledge of either Speak or the researcher, or had been referred by an executive coach. Thus, a limitation of the study was that the recruitment of coaches was bound by some kind of relationship among the coaches and Speak or the researcher.

Speak and the researcher used the following as qualifying criteria when vetting coaches: One or more years' experience as an executive coach; experience coaching at an upper management or executive level (i.e., manager, department director, vice president, chief executive officer); possessing an interest in personal brand coaching, but is considered to be a novice on the subject; intellectual abilities that allow the differentiation of concepts and their applications; and experience coaching in a variety of industries. Thus, this study was limited to executive coaches who matched these criteria. In addition, the specific demographics of the coaches are described in Chapter Three.

The clients in this study received a particular kind of coaching, which was that of personal brand. Therefore, their coaching experience may be different than clients who receive another kind of coaching (i.e., performance coaching, career coaching, life coaching). Thus, their experience may not be generalized to all types of coaching.

Additionally, the clients for this study were selected by their executive coach. The basis for allowing each coach to select a particular client was based upon the unique characteristics that embody a coach-client relationship as discussed throughout Chapter Two. Additionally, further rationale for this approach is detailed in Chapter Three.

Moreover, the demographics of these clients varied, representing differences in age, industry, title, and to some degree geography. More specifics on their demographics are presented in Chapter Three.

It should also be known that the researcher is a coach. While deliberate steps were taken to reduce preconceived ideas, professional opinions, bias, and the like, that the researcher is a coach is something of which the reader should be aware. This is discussed in more detail in the Authenticity section of this paper.

This study was also limited to the following: a training intervention for executive coaches on personal brand coaching; the effect, if any, this training has on these newly trained personal brand coaches in terms of their abilities in the specific areas previously discussed; and the satisfaction levels of the coaching clients.

Finally, this study was coded in a particular manner. In qualitative research there are several means to code, each with their own purpose (Morse & Richards, 2002). However, the ultimate aim is common in that it is to transform messy, unstructured data into something that can be deciphered. Coding, in essence, is intended to "link data with information, topics, concepts, and themes" (p. 113). This allows the researcher to focus, conceptualize, and organize the data, making them malleable. Additionally, as discussed in Chapter Three, the researcher coded data following subject interviews based upon the data collected rather than coming up with predetermined codes. Creswell (2003) advocates coding after carefully reading transcripts, asking questions of the data, and clustering information topics together.

Authenticity

The concept of authenticity is integral to both coaching and personal brand. As described by Sparrow (1993), authenticity includes the courage to state one's mind, to know one's own voice, and the courage to offer an unpopular opinion. This is akin to the concept of speaking the hard truth, which is an act that a coach is called upon to do in service of his/her client (Whitworth, Kimsey-House, & Sandahl, 1998). Authenticity also includes the concept of aligning one's actions and behaviors with one's core values and beliefs (Harter, 2002; Kernis, 2003; Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Similarly, such alignment can be found in personal brand literature (Fried, 2006; McNally &Speak, 2002; Montoya & Vandehey, 2002). In the realm of personal brand, authenticity is seen as a true representation of one's self (Montoya & Vandehey).

Cashman (1998) offers that authenticity is fundamental to relationships and, as such, allows trust and synergy to blossom. Thus, without authenticity, one lacks effective, meaningful relationships. Cashman further states, "Authenticity is the life force of relationships. Authenticity is the true voice of the leader as it touches other people's lives" (p. 120). According to Cashman there are five "touchstones" (p. 120) to authentic leadership, which are: (a) knowing oneself, (b) listening, (c) self-expression, (d) appreciation, and (e) service to others. Discussion around the concept of authenticity can also be found in personal brand literature. For instance, McNally and Speak (2002) discuss the critical role authentic, meaningful relationships have, particularly as related to personal brand.

In addition to discussing literature on authenticity, it is also important that the researcher present herself in such a manner to the reader. This includes revealing information about training, expertise, and knowledge she possesses on coaching and personal brand. By doing so, the reader is made aware of the researcher's interest in these topics. Additionally, such transparency may also have the effect of reducing (or at least shedding light upon) biases that may creep in from the researcher.

Transparency on the part of the researcher is further supported by Goldman and Kernis’ (2002) description of what makes for authentic leadership. In their view, authentic leadership includes: (a) awareness of one’s motives, feelings, desires, cognitions, strengths, weaknesses, traits, and emotions; (b) objectivity in one’s self-aspects and attributes, qualities, and potential, including not distorting, exaggerating, or ignoring knowledge, experiences, and information; (c) behaving in a manner that is consistent with one’s values, preferences, and needs rather than simply to please others or avoid punishment; and (d) creating and valuing openness and truthfulness in one’s relationships, which includes self-disclosure and the creation of intimacy and trust.

Relying upon the four components of authentic leadership that Goldman and Kernis (2002) offer (awareness, objectivity, value-based behaviors, and open and truthful relationships), the researcher provides the following information about herself.

The researcher is a professional coach who received her training and coach’s certification through the Coaches Training Institute in 2004. Her coaching experience is mainly among clients who are in a supervisory or higher levels in organizations of 4,000 employees or greater. She has coached clients both within and outside the organizations for which she is employed. She is also a member of two professional associations, the International Coach Federation (ICF) and Professional Coaches and Mentors Association. The researcher was first exposed to the concept of personal brand during her doctoral studies at Pepperdine University, and since embarking upon her dissertation, has read extensively on the subject. In addition, the researcher has an interest in more clearly exploring and defining her own personal brand.

The researcher believes in the power of coaching because she has experienced the changes it made in the lives of her clients as well as in hers. Referring to Goldman and Kernis' (2002) first component of authentic leadership (awareness), the researcher is conscious of her belief in and advocacy of coaching. Furthermore, she is proud to be a member of the profession and wishes to see it continue to thrive.

Because of her experience as a coach and exposure to personal brand concepts, it was imperative that she take active steps to reduce biases or opinions that might have occurred throughout the research project. In other words, that she be as objective as possible. As such, Chapter Three discusses bracketing (Morse & Richards, 2002) and reflexivity (Pyett, 2003) as insurance against bias. As discussed in in the Data Source: Researcher as Instrument section, an assessment (via bracketing and reflexivity) of the researcher's views, experiences, preconceptions, biases, and knowledge allows the researcher to be more open with the phenomenon being studied. Such steps align with Goldman and Kernis' (2002) second component of authentic leadership, which they deem as objectivity or unbiased processing.

The third component of authentic leadership mentioned by Goldman and Kernis (2002) is behavior. This refers to acting in a manner that is consistent with one's beliefs, values, needs, preferences, and the like. This is in contrast with behaving in a way simply to please others or to avoid punishment. In regard to this study, the researcher chose the topic of her own free will and interests. Thus, she chose the topic according to her values and needs rather than that of others.

Finally, Goldman and Kernis (2002) discuss relationships as a component of authentic relationships. In particular, they highlight creating and maintaining openness and trust, which includes the act of disclosure. As such, the researcher has disclosed information about her professional background to the reader, including her interest in seeing the coaching industry develop further, and her desire to understand more clearly her personal brand.

In summary, this section provided the reader with information about the researcher. Such transparency not only demonstrates the tenets of authentic leadership, coaching, and personal brand, but it is also consistent with sound research methodologies aimed at reducing bias.

Assumptions

It is assumed that the study subjects (facilitator, coaches and clients) were truthful in their responses throughout the data collection process. It is also assumed that the researcher was able to bracket effectively any previous knowledge she may have had in regard to coaching and personal brand. It is further assumed that the coach training intervention was an honest reflection of personal brand coaching as viewed by Speak.

It was also assumed that as clients received personal brand training over time, that a change in their satisfaction levels would occur. This assumption is made on the basis that as a client receives a particular type of coaching (that is in this case, personal brand) and puts to use what he or she learns that he or she will experience a change in satisfaction. The specific areas of satisfaction that were assessed have been described earlier in this chapter, with additional details provided in Chapter Three. It was also assumed that the coaches would experience a difference in their mastery of personal brand coaching over time. That is, it was assumed that a difference in their mastery of the subject would change over the 3-month research period.

Importance of Study

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the coaching industry has experienced a boom in growth (Bluckert, 2004; Morgan et al., 2005). This may be attributed to or influenced by the apparent benefits, including handing stress more effectively, improving interpersonal relationships, increasing effectiveness, balancing work-life matters, managing workplace dysfunction, avoiding career derailment, setting priorities, and making difficult decisions (Diedrich, 1996; Ducharme, 2004; Lowman, 2005; Natale & Diamante, 2005). Moreover, as will be discussed in Chapter Two, some studies reveal there is an apparent return on investment for companies that engage in coaching services (McGovern et al., 2001; Phillips, 2007; Schlosser, Steinbrenner, Kumata, & Hunt, 2006; Stevens, 2005). All of this would suggest that coaching is here to stay. Thus, this research project adds to the existing body of work.

Personal brand, as previously mentioned, is also an area that has experienced growth and interest, particularly since 1997, when it was first introduced by Peters. Since then, the concept has continued to flourish. As such, this project adds to the body of research on this topic.

This study is important in part because it married or blended coaching and personal brand. This included introducing one training methodology for executive coaches who wish to gain knowledge and expertise in personal brand coaching. It also assessed the abilities of these newly trained coaches to coach their clients on matters of personal brand. Finally, this research gauged the satisfaction levels of personal brand coaching clients before and after experiencing the coaching. To the best of the researcher’s knowledge, examining coaching and personal brand together is a new venture. Thus, this study provides a fresh body of research to the field.

Operational Definition and Key Terms

This study uses various terms and they are defined as follows:

Ability: According to Random House Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary (2001), the term ability is defined as, “Competence in an activity or occupation because of one’s skill, training or other qualification” (p. 4). This research project adopted this definition for the term ability.

Authenticity: This research project adopted the definition of authenticity as presented by McNally and Speak (2002), who view it as the ability to make a lasting impression upon others as a result of being true to one’s beliefs, and remaining in alignment with who one is at one’s core.

Coach: In the absence of a definitive definition of a coach, this paper adopted, and adds to, verbiage from the ICF to describe a coach as a professionally trained individual who provides objective assessments and observations to enhance the client’s self-awareness in order to support the client’s desire to make personal and professional changes. The coach does this through acute listening, powerful questions, encouragement, empathy, illuminating new perspectives, fostering trust, establishing goals, holding the client accountable for his or her choices and or actions, and maintaining positive regard for the coachee, all shrouded in confidentiality.

Coachee: For the purposes of this paper, the following was used as a definition of a coachee: The individual in the coaching partnership who determines the coaching agenda based upon envisioned personal and professional goals. The coachee is responsible for his or her decisions and actions during the coaching engagement and takes courageous steps during the coaching engagement to strive for goal attainment.

Coaching: A review of the literature reveals there is no one standard definition of coaching, but instead a myriad of them as described in Chapter Two. While these various definitions have their differences and similarities, for the purposes of this study, coaching is defined as an ongoing, uniquely tailored, collaborative partnership between coach and client aimed at maximizing the personal and professional potential of the client through action-based methods.

Executive: While a specific, universal definition of executive is lacking, for the purposes of this study, an executive is an individual who is the functional head of a unit(s), understands the global and long-term consequences of decision making and strategy implementation, regularly navigates through ambiguity, and has a willingness to cope with significant corporate issues while keeping in mind the interests of the shareholders and moving the business toward continued prosperity.

Executive Coaching: As with other terms used in this study, there is no exact definition for executive coaching. However, based upon a review of the literature, this study used the following as a definition: Executive coaching is a leadership-development strategy that is a triangular relationship among the coach, coachee, and organization aimed at helping the individual achieve goals through improved professional performance and personal satisfaction, while enhancing the effectiveness of the organization.

Grounded Theory: Creswell (2003) describes grounded theory as a research methodology in which the researcher aims to develop a general conceptual theory of a process, action, or interaction based upon the views of the research subjects.

Outcome: As defined by Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary (2001), the term outcome is viewed as the final product, end result, or consequence. This research paper will use this definition for outcome.

Personal Brand: A review of contemporary literature also reveals that there is no single definition of personal brand. However, themes appear and, for the purposes of this paper, the definition of personal brand is the meaningful perceptions held by others that precisely describe the distinctive values, abilities, skills, and actions associated with a person that sum up the expectations others have, which then creates that person's unique, authentic promise of value.

Personal Brand Distinctiveness: McNally and Speak (2002) define personal brand distinctiveness as the ability to meet the needs of others without sacrificing one's values. More specifically, distinctiveness is rooted in staying true to one's values while understanding and meeting the needs of others by acting on one's values in a distinct manner. The more unique one's values-based actions are the more distinct one's personal brand becomes.

Personal Brand Promise: This term is viewed by McNally and Speak (2002) as a brief, meaningful, and inspiring statement that articulates the impact that a relationship has on another person. Furthermore, it is a perceived covenant between one person and another in that it creates an expectation of what the other person will get as a result of working with or otherwise being engaged with the first person (Montoya & Vandehey, 2002).

Personal Image: Personal image is the superficial characteristics of an individual that include such things as physical appearance, attire, race, occupation, and so forth.

Personal image, unlike personal brand, is passively created by a person (Montoya, 2002; Montoya & Vandehey, 2002).

Phenomenology: Phenomenological research aims to understand the essence of human experiences with regard to a particular phenomenon via the participants' descriptions. This type of research concentrates on understanding the "lived" (Creswell, 2003, p. 15) experience of the subjects. It generally involves studying a small number of subjects through exhaustive and prolonged engagements between subject and researcher (Moustakas, 1994).

Satisfaction: Frisch (1994) defines satisfaction in the following manner in the QOLI:

> Life satisfaction is equated with quality of life and refers to a person's subjective evaluation of the degree to which his or her most important needs, goals, and wishes have been fulfilled. Thus, the perceived gap between what a person has and what he or she wants to have in valued areas of life determines his or her satisfaction or dissatisfaction. (p. 2)

Because this research project uses the QOLI as one means to collect data, the above definition of satisfaction from the instrument was used throughout this paper.

Training: Smith and Ragan (2005) define this term as, "instructional experiences that are focused upon individuals acquiring very specific skills that they normally apply almost immediately" (p. 5). This definition is the one that this research project adopted.

Summary

As discussed, the purpose of this study was to examine executive coaching and personal brand. Specifically, this entailed assessing one method to train executive coaches on personal brand, evaluating the abilities of the newly trained executive coaches, and gauging satisfaction levels of the coachees. As such, an intervention took place in order to train the executive coaches on personal brand coaching. In that regard, the researcher interviewed Speak in order to understand such matters as the training curriculum, program objectives, participant materials, and overall methodology. Additionally, the researcher was an observer of the training. The researcher also conducted pretest, posttest, and post-posttest interviews with the executive coach trainees in order to assess their abilities to coach on specific personal brand matters. Finally, the researcher also conducted pretest and posttest interviews with the clients in order to gauge their levels of satisfaction.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

This Chapter provides an overview of coaching and personal brand. In addition, it includes a discussion on training specifically in regard to evaluation measures.

Coaching Overview and Definition

Coaching is a phenomenon that has grown significantly during the past several years. Williams (2007) reports, “Coaching is the second-fastest growing profession, rivaled only by information technology” (para. 1). Morgan et al. (2005) echo this view stating, “Coaching is an exploding industry” (p. 1). They go on to point out, “More and more coaches, from an ever-widening circle of backgrounds and schools of thought, offer their services to organizations and individuals” (p. 1). Indeed, the profession has seen coaches who identify themselves as simply coaches, as well as those who differentiate themselves as coaches who specialize in various areas, including executive coaching, behavioral coaching, career coaching, leadership development coaching, organizational change coaching, strategy coaching, diversity coaching, emotional competence coaching, change and transition coaching, alignment coaching, spiritual coaching, philosophical coaching, and ethics coaching, (Lazar & Bergquist, 2004; Morgan et al.; Ting & Scisco, 2006).

Despite the growth in the coaching industry, the field has yet to find a definitive definition of coaching. Similarities and differences, as well as simplicities and complexities, abound in the various definitions that have been published. Some definitions are more suited toward one-on-one coach-client partnerships, while others also insert the organization for which the coachee works into the relationship. Several definitions contend that coaching is a process that occurs throughout a period of time rather than as a fixed event. A common element among the vast myriad of definitions seems to include some reference to personal growth, development, improvement, or change within the context of the partnered coach-client relationship. In the end, it seems that coaching is intended to benefit the individual by helping him or her grow in his or her own humanity.

Peterson and Hicks (1996) describe coaching as, “the process of equipping people with tools, knowledge, and opportunities they need to develop themselves and become more effective” (p. 14). King and Eaton (1999) see coaching as, “a structured two-way process which develops and harnesses a person’s talents in the pursuit of specific goals” (p. 145). Tobias (1996) offers, “The term coaching has the advantage of implying an ongoing process,” which, as he points out, distinguishes it from other one-time activities such as workshops and seminars. He goes on to say, “Coaching is individually tailored to the person and the current issue or problem, as opposed to the…‘one-size-fits-all’ menu” (p. 87). This sentiment is echoed by Witherspoon and White (1996b) who also contend that coaching is a customized, individualized, one-on-one partnership in which there is “a recognition that no two people are alike. Each person has a unique knowledge base, learning pace, and learning style” (p. 127).

Many view coaching as a collaboration or partnership. Whitworth et al., (1998), who are associated with the Coaches Training Institute, have specifically characterized their approach to coaching as “co-active because it involves the active and collaborative participation of both the coach and the client” (p. xi). In their view, both parties are actively and equally engaged in the coaching partnership, so they have thusly deemed this as coactive.

The ICF (2008c) defines coaching as,

> …partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential. Professional coaches provide an ongoing partnership designed to help clients produce fulfilling results in their personal and professional lives. Coaches help people improve their performance and enhance the quality of their lives. (para. 3)

As mentioned previously, some definitions are more suited for a work or business construct because included is the individual coachee and coach, along with the employer. Linkage (as cited in Goldsmith, Lyons, & Freas, 2000) contends that, “The best coaching occurs within context, working with individual leaders to drive personal behavioral change against the backdrop of the business strategy and the larger team” (p. xvii). Furthermore, Linkage argues, “Coaching must be grounded in the practical and geared toward action” (p. xvii). In other words, the coaching must generate results not just for the client but for the client’s company, as well.

The concept that coaching is a long-term process that benefits both the person as well as the organization in which he or she works is a definition held by Goldsmith et al. (2000). Specifically, they see coaching as,

> …a behavioral approach of mutual benefit to individuals and the organizations in which they work or network. It is not merely a technique or one-time event; it is a strategic process that adds value both to the people being coached and also to the bottom line of the organization. (p. xviii)

Differentiating Coaching From Other Means of Personal Development

Because there is no single definition for the term coaching, and because its interpretations can be broad, it is important to demonstrate its distinguishing differences with other seemingly similar terminology. This section provides a brief description of consulting, mentoring, therapy, and tutoring.

Consulting

According to the ICF (2008b) consulting occurs when an organization retains another party for the purpose of accessing specialized expertise to diagnose and, at times, implement solutions. The difference with coaching is that the client is viewed as being capable of generating his or her own solutions, with the coach acting in a role that prompts self-discovery. As previously mentioned, the coach views the client with a positive regard, capable of uncovering answers to his or her problems rather than as needing to be fixed (Passmore, 2007; Whitworth et al., 1998)

Mentoring

Another important distinction to make is between coaching and mentoring. Hudson (1999) describes a mentor as someone who has a certain set of knowledge and skills that are passed on to others. The ICF (2008b) views mentoring as guiding another person based upon one's own experience.

Therapy

There are several differences between coaching and therapy. For example, Grant (2007) reports that the key foci in coaching is striving for and attaining goals, along with enhancing one's well being, whereas in therapy the key foci is on the treatment of psychopathology. Grant goes on to point out that there is limited empirical research that explores the boundaries between coaching and therapy.

When specifically considering executives, one difference between coaching and therapy is that executive coaching tends to be focused upon an issue such as job performance and interpersonal skills (Ducharme, 2004; Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001). It also occurs in the workplace and is intended to improve the executive's performance (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson). The settings in which executive coaching may take place are many, including in-person, meetings with the coachee's colleagues, observation sessions, via the telephone, through e-mail, and a variety of nonwork locations. On the other hand, therapy mostly occurs in the counselor's office (Richard, 1999; Rotenberg, 2000; Sperry, 1993). The length of a coaching session can be as short as a few minutes or up to many hours in a single setting, which contrasts with the typical therapy session that generally lasts 45–50 minutes (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson; Rotenberg; Sperry). Another distinction between coaching and therapy is that in coaching, data are usually collected from several parties, often through the use of a 360˚ instrument or other similar means (Brotman, Liberi, & Wasylyshyn, 1998, Diedrich, 1996; Harris, 1999; Kiel, Rimmer, Williams, & Doyle, 1996; Kilburg, 1996; Peterson, 1996; Richard, 1999). In the context of therapy, the propensity is to rely upon self-reports of the client to measure results whereas in executive coaching, the measurement is often captured in objective organizational terms (Richard). Finally, the relationship between the executive and coach tends to have some unique characteristics that are unlike those between therapist and patient. For instance, Levinson (1996) and Richard contend that a coach can be more directive in his or her approach with the executive client, and that the two share a more collegial relationship.

Rotenberg (2000) makes a distinction between confidentiality in a therapeutic versus coaching setting. In therapy, confidentiality is strictly maintained unless the client expresses harm to self or others, or if the therapy includes outpatient, disability, or other such published reports. In coaching, confidentiality is also maintained; however, the caveat is that the client's progress may be reported to the client's employer (i.e., human resources).

Tutoring

Typically, in tutoring the aim is to help a person acquire specific new knowledge or skills (Kinlaw, 2000). This may include improving technical competence and understanding, becoming an expert in a particular discipline, or increasing the pace at which one learns.

Executive Coaching

This section will discuss four particular concepts. The first is the history and definition of executive coaching. This is followed by an examination of the relationships among the coach, client, and organization in which the client works. Then, there is a discussion that explores factors that influence the use of executive coaching. Finally, the section concludes with a discussion on the position and characteristics of an executive.

History and Definition

Beyond simply identifying and defining the broad term, coaching, there are those who have attempted to describe it in more specific terms, including that of executive coaching. First, though, it is interesting to note when the term executive coaching seemed to become a part of our lexicon. Tobias (1996) claims that the term entered the business world during the 1980s. He suggests that the expression coaching is less threatening and more easily digestible than the terms consulting or counseling; thus, its path was easily paved into the business setting. According to Judge and Cowell (1997), executive coaching became more common place by the 1990s. Axmith (2004) indicates that executive coaching is a "relatively new area of management consulting that has emerged primarily because of the increased pressure on senior executives" (p. 1). Furthermore, it appears this relatively new area of management has grown rapidly. As Hall et al. (1999) report, the number of executive coaches in the United States has been estimated in the tens of thousands.

The history of executive coaching may have some framework and yet at the same time not be crystal clear. Through the work of Harris (1999), three phases seem to have been identified. The first occurred between 1950 and 1979 when a small number of professionals employed a blend of psychological and organizational development approaches when working with executives. Then, according to Harris, from 1980–1994, an increase in the profession was experienced and some standardizations started to fall into place. Finally, the third phase, from 1995 to present, has seen a rise in the number of publications on the subject of coaching, along with the establishment of the ICF, which is the governing body of the profession (originally called the Professional and Personal Coaches Association).

Just as there is no definitive definition for coaching, neither is there one for the executive coaching. However, attempts have been made. Kilburg (1996) conducted a literature review on coaching and offers this definition of executive coaching:

> A helping relationship formed between a client who has managerial authority and responsibility in an organization and a consultant [coach] who uses a wide variety of behavioral techniques and methods to help the client achieve a mutually identified set of goals to improve his or her professional performance and personal satisfaction and, consequently, to improve the effectiveness of the client's organization within a formally defined coaching agreement. (p. 142)

McDermott, Levenson, and Newton (2007) see executive coaching as "one-on-one interventions with an individual who is not the executive's supervisor, where the focus is on job-related issues such as demonstrating leadership behaviors, new job transitions, and job performance/avoiding derailment" (p. 31). They contend that the focus is upon helping the executive navigate through such issues by making his or her own decisions rather than the coach directing the specific actions to take.

A Triangulated Relationship: Coach, Client, and Organization

Having an eye toward not only personal goals, but also the strategic interests of the organization is a common underpinning of executive coaching. Indeed, Williams (2007) argues, "Two factors distinguish executive coaching from other kinds [of coaching]: it always involves a partnership between the executive, the coach, and the organization; and the individual goals must link back and be integrated into strategic organizational objectives" (p. 1). Stern (2004) reverberates that what drives the coaching are "the needs and preferences of the executive and the organization" (p. 155). He goes on to point out that executive coaching is "individualized leadership development, behavior modification, business planning, and organizational re-engineering" (p. 157). Stern advocates that what differentiates executive coaching from other kinds of coaching "is its dual focus on working one-on-one to develop the executive as a leader while also helping that leader to achieve business results" (p. 157). Thus, executive coaching is not simply for the benefit of the individual, but also for that of the organization.

Regardless of the exact wording of the definition, in the end it seems that executive coaching is intended to "improve an individual's performance in the workplace" (Johnson, 2007, p. 4).

Factors Influencing the Use of Executive Coaching

According to several authors, coaching is on the rise (Judge & Cowell, 1997; Kilburg, 2004; Williams, 2007). Hall et al. (1999) offer one reason for the increased popularity in executive coaching is that it affords executives an opportunity to address issues that would normally get lost in the hectic, pressure-filled, hustle and bustle of everyday work life. Rotenberg (2000) points out the complex roles executives are expected to play in the midst of ever-increasing pressures to enhance personal as well as company performance. Similarly, Ducharme (2004) and Lowman (2005) discuss the high intensity stress faced by executives, including competing demands among work-life balance, workplace dysfunction, and continual organizational changes. Coaching puts a spotlight on such issues, allowing the executive to be attentive to them throughout the course of his or her work. Schlosser et al. (2006) concur, indicating that executives must be both strategic decision makers as well as experts in employing soft skills as they manage people. Furthermore, this is all done in the context of increased ambiguity, unsettling changes, and pressures to perform successfully in an ever-dynamic global market. While amidst all of this turbulence, the relationships that can buoy the executive's personal development and learning are often lacking. Given all of this, according to Schlosser et al., the realm of executive coaching has expanded.

The Executive

It is valuable to explore the term executive, as well as to gain an understanding of the organizational terrain an executive must navigate, common characteristics of an executive, and the circumstances that may cause an executive to enter into a coaching relationship. Beginning with the term executive Sperry (1993) offers this definition:

> [The head] of [a] functional [unit] of an organization, including general managers and upper policymakers through the level of vice presidents, presidents, chief operating officer (COO), and chief executive officer (CEO). The key quality that sets these senior managers apart from other employees and managers in the corporation is perspective. The executive must be able to view the world in much larger terms than others, envisioning global and long-term consequences of any

> prospect or alternative. This requires an openness to thinking about the world in new ways, the capacity to deal with the ambiguous and undefined, and a willingness to cope with big issues. Finally, executives must possess a strong desire to live and work passionately, to rely on their own judgment, and to exploit their own potential. (p. 258)

The role and responsibilities of the executive are great as he or she must navigate the interests of shareholders while growing the business toward prosperity and profitability (Saporito, 1996). Such a position requires not only building the business, but also getting employees to work in a consistent manner and even sometimes altering the corporate culture. An executive must also be comfortable being in an authoritative role, handling subordinate ambivalence, and traversing peer and superior rivalry (Kernberg, 1978, 1979).

Saporito (1996) points out a number of characteristics associated with executives that should be kept in mind within the context of the coaching relationship. One is the issue of control. Perhaps a somewhat unique characteristic of executives is that they have made a career out of controlling personal and organizational vulnerabilities. Additionally, Saporito contends that the further one moves up the hierarchy of an organization the less feedback he or she tends to receive. As such, Saporito states that a certain isolation develops in which the executive neither receives nor benefits from real-time, honest feedback about the impact of his or her leadership upon the organization and its individual members. Kampa and White (2002) echo this opinion by indicating that securing honest feedback from colleagues or subordinates on one's strengths and weaknesses is not easily obtained by executives. Thus, it is imperative that the coach be sensitive to an executive's need for control and to serve in the role of a confidante.

In addition to issues of control and being a confidante, while working with executives the coach must be attentive to understanding the organization as a whole system and the unique position the executive holds within it (Saporito, 1996). Thus, the coach must become familiar with the organizational culture, industry, key imperatives, business challenges, and gain an understanding the leadership needs of the organization. As previously mentioned, this relationship is a triad: coach, coachee, and organization (or sponsor). Thus, for effectiveness the coach must not only understand the coachee, but he or she must also have organizational savvy.

Judge and Cowell (1997) contend that executives who receive coaching fall into one of three broad categories. The first is the executive who has experienced derailment. This is the executive who has adequate skills and possesses promise, but falls short in an area or two that is holding him or her back from advancement. Judge and Crowell state that such executives were promoted into managerial roles based upon technical expertise, but once there they suffer from an inability to navigate through the new demands of the job, including effectively interacting with others. The second category is the executive who wishes to enhance his or her leadership capacity. While there may not be a specific leadership deficiency, this is the person who may need assistance planning and implementing strategic goals and objectives. Such an executive may need coaching on creating a vision, using personal influence with others, and building trust with subordinates. The third category, according to Judge and Crowell, are what they deem professionals/entrepreneurs. These are individuals in professional practices (i.e., medicine, architecture) who are starting or growing a business. These individuals find themselves in the dilemma of needing to take care of the daily managerial aspects of their business while remaining attentive to long-range growth strategies. Here, the coach provides coaching on the future of the business and how the professional or entrepreneur's goals may be attained.

Distinguishing Executive Coaching From Other Types of Coaching

As referenced in Chapter One, there are a plethora of coaches who practice the art of coaching. Coaching may come in many forms and specialties, and here we will explore just a few as a means to distinguish them against executive coaching. Specifically, this section will review appreciative inquiry coaching, alignment coaching, and co-active coaching.

Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative inquiry came to life in the 1980s, and has been evolving ever since as a positive philosophical and practical approach to organizational change (Gordon, 2008). Appreciative inquiry is based upon five core and five emerging principles (Watkins & Mohr, 2001). The five core principles are: (a) constructionist, (b) poetic, (c) simultaneity, (d) anticipatory, and (e) positive. The emerging principles are: (a) wholeness, (b) enactment, (c) free choice, (d) awareness, and (e) narrative. The aim, according to Gordon is to leverage the strengths of an organization rather than trying to mitigate its weaknesses. Likewise, appreciative inquiry coaching (AIC) focuses clients on the positive present and future possibilities versus the problems of the present and past. In short, Sloan and Canine (2007) contend that AIC means simply applying the core appreciative inquiry principles with a client in a practical manner. At the heart of both appreciative inquiry and AIC is that human systems are heliotropic in that they gravitate to what resides in their inner most being, which are their values, vision, accomplishments, and best self (Sloan & Canine; Watkins & Mohr).

Orem, Binkert, and Clancy (2007) developed an AIC model that includes the following elements: (a) something works in every society, organization, group or person; (b) reality is determined by what one focuses upon; (c) there are multiple realities and they are created in the moment; (d) asking a question of another (an organization, team or individual) influences the other in some manner; (e) if individuals bring portions of their past to the present, these should be the best from the past; and (f) reality is created by the language one uses. The foundation of AIC is built upon the assumption that within every person something works and what a person focuses upon becomes their reality. To facilitate this foundational concept, appreciative rather than problem-solving questions are asked in AIC (Gordon, 2008). Examples of these differences, according to Gordon (2008) include the following questions: “Tell me what the problem is?...What gives you energy?”…“What worries you?”…“What do you want more of?”…“What’s bothering you?”…“What’s working well now?”…“What do you think is the cause?”…“How do you wish to continue moving forward?” (p. 25).

Alignment Coaching

Alignment coaching is intended to help a client understand his or her values, beliefs, and expectations (Lazar & Bergquist, 2004). This type of coaching is focused upon helping the client clarify values and how they affect or contribute to his or her perspective on the world in order to understand what is important. As such, alignment coaching can bring to life for the client how his or her values match or mismatch that of the organization in which he or she works and the corresponding impact. According to

Lazar and Bergquist, alignment coaching is composed of four subcategories of coaching: (a) spiritual, (b) philosophical, (c) ethics, and (d) life and career. Spiritual coaching is a reflective inquiry and appreciation of major, transcendent forces. These forces compel one to improve one's life and the lives of others. These forces also help construct meaning for people's complex lives, and they provide a composition of ceremonial activities that allow the expression of deep longings and joys. The aim of philosophical coaching is quite similar; however, its focus is on the secular. In philosophical coaching, the goal is to illuminate the client's assumptions and beliefs, and how they influence his or her perceptions and behaviors in life. In ethics coaching, the coach helps the client uncover and clarify his or her values and ethical stances in order to understand how he or she aligns or betrays his or her own values and ethics. This in turn assists the client with understanding the implications of his or her actions within the midst of an ever-changing, complex, and chaotic world. This is done in order to instill new ethical and value-based principles that can navigate such turbulent conditions. The ethics coach also supports the client as he or she seeks alignment among his or her personal and professional life, family and community, personal interests, and collective societal responsibilities. In life and career coaching, it is the whole life experience of the client that is embraced and coached. A career and life coach may explore such areas as financial issues, friendships, leisure time, career aspirations, and much more. Often inventories, specific interview questions, and planning exercises are used in life and career coaching.

Coactive Coaching

Whitworth et al. (1998) describe coactive coaching as a dynamic and collaborative partnership between the coach and client in which both fully participate. In short, a coactive coach listens deeply (even to what is not said), holds the client accountable, expresses curiosity, is fully committed to what the client wants, tells the hard truth, embraces the client's emotions, and helps the client manage his or her internal saboteur. Coactive coaching is founded on four cornerstones: (a) the client is naturally creative, resourceful, and whole; (b) the client's whole life is addressed; (c) the client determines the agenda; and (d) the coach-client relationship is a designed alliance.

The first cornerstone (the client is naturally creative, resourceful, and whole) means that the client has the answer and the ability to find it. In this sense, the coach does not have the answer; rather it is the client who does. The coach simply asks the questions to help spark the answer. From this viewpoint, the coach is not there to fix the client because the client is not broken. It is simply a matter of helping the client uncover or go find the answers he or she is seeking. The next cornerstone (the client's whole life is addressed) stems from the belief that all of the client's choices and behaviors contribute to a life that is more fulfilling. The third cornerstone (the client determines the agenda) means that the relationship is focused on the results the client wishes to experience. Additionally, during the coach-client relationship, the client makes changes in his or her life, and the coach continues to maintain focus on the client's overall agenda so that it does not get lost or overlooked. Thus, the coach ensures the client continues to navigate his or her way toward fulfillment and shifting perspectives. The final cornerstone (the coach-client relationship is a designed alliance) means that power is by virtue of the relationship, and not sequestered to one party or the other. This designed alliance is a customized, powerful relationship that fits the communication and learning style of the particular client. Finally, a designed alliance allows the client to have control in the relationship and the changes he or she makes in his or her life (Whitworth et al., 1998).

Reasons for Executive Coaching

The reasons for executive coaching can be as varied as the definition of the term. The ever-increasing demands upon executives as the world continues to proliferate into a more and more global community may be just one factor that has influenced the growth of executive coaching. The myriad of other challenges and pressures facing any executive may include increased competition, constant changes within the terrain of their industry and corresponding workforce, and meeting shareholders' needs. Add to this equation a position of relative isolation and loneliness that can cause an executive to ache for someone whom he or she can trust to provide objectivity, support, and counsel (Sperry, 1993).

While the history of executive coaching may not be clear cut, the inclusion of it as a tool among consulting firms began around 1990 (Judge & Cowell, 1997). Since then, coaching seems to have exploded as a widespread leadership development tool. For example, by one estimate, annual spending in the United States on coaching is thought to be approximately $1 billion (Sherman & Freas, 2004). Additionally, research conducted by the Corporate Leadership Council indicates, "Senior executives highly value professional coaching, ranking [it] among the top five leadership development interventions" (Corporate Leadership Council, Summary of Research: Executive Coaching, n.d., p.1). Looking at the growth of coaching from another perspective, the membership numbers of the ICF have risen from 6,791 in 2003 to more than 16,000 in 2008 (Wesley Bullock, personal communication, June 25, 2008).

However, regardless of the reasons, it appears that coaching is on the rise. As Williams (2007) declares, “Coaching is the second-fastest growing profession in the world, rivaled only by information technology” (para. 1). As a supporting example, McDermott et al. (2007) surveyed 55 companies of which 80% were multinational with mean annual sales in 2003 of $18.5 billion, and 34,000 employees. Of these companies, 57% indicate they have plans to increase coaching “moderately” (p. 32) or “a lot” (p. 32) and 41% (p. 32) plan to maintain the amount of coaching, while 2% plan to decrease it.

Many companies have integrated executive coaching into their leadership development programs (McDermott et al., 2007; Reeves, 2006). In fact, research on the development of effective leaders points toward individuals such as coaches who have helped the leader along the way (Boyatzis, Smith, & Blaize, 2006). In one study of 55 companies, 24% indicate they provide coaching to their CEO and top management team, and 16% report coaching is given to their senior vice presidents and general managers (McDermott et al.).

More specifically, executive coaching may be described a precision tool aimed at optimizing the capability of leaders, particularly in a team environment, in order to drive organizational change (Morgan et al., 2005). Unlike other forms of leadership development such as group workshops, it offers a tailored approach that acknowledges and honors the individuality of the client (Stratford & Freas, 2004; Tobias, 1996). Executive coaching can be thought of as a collaborative alliance between coach and client aimed at change and transformation (Natale & Diamante, 2005). Within the context of a collaborative and trusted relationship with the client, the coach uses his or her expertise and insight to push the executive beyond his or her comfort zone, within an accelerated period of time, to reach new heights of performance that could not be achieved independently (Morgan et al., 2005).

The services of an executive coach may be employed to help the executive manage stress, meet job requirements, improve interpersonal relations, increase organizational effectiveness, avoid career derailment, manage change more effectively, set priorities, and make difficult decisions (Diedrich, 1996; Hall et al., 1999; Natale & Diamante, 2005). Regardless of the specific motive(s), the ultimate goal is to benefit both the individual executive and the organization overall. “The focus nearly always remains on how to help people [executives] who have already demonstrated a great deal of competence and success get even better at what they do” (Kilburg, 2004, p. 204). In simple terms, the reason for coaching is to “allow for ongoing, continuous learning, while offering support, encouragement, and feedback as new approaches are tried and new behaviors practiced” (Tobias, 1996, p. 87). In this manner, the coach helps the executive by challenging him or her toward his or her potential while addressing resistance. In the end, this sets the stage for continuous learning and ultimately for change.

Executive coaching may also be used to assist a newly appointed leader to make the transition into a new role, help a valued executive with a specific performance concern, support a high-potential leader to expedite readiness for a promotion, or provide a confidante to a senior executive who is faced with difficult strategic and organizational decisions and is looking for a sounding board (Axmith, 2004).

In both a strategic business, as well as personal sense, having a confidante can serve an executive well. Lukaszewski (1988) points out that in their day-to-day role, executives often do not have colleagues they may turn to in order to ask questions, gain advice, or receive counsel on a difficult situation. Sperry (1993) agrees with this sentiment stating, “Many senior executives, particularly CEO’s, find it necessary to bounce their ideas and concerns off someone in order to clarify their impressions and validate the reasonableness of their conclusion” (p. 262). Thus, the coach serving as a confidante and sounding board is a useful strategic business and personal tool for the executive.

Other reasons executives may engage the services of a coach include to improve their communication style, enhance their interpersonal skills, become more sensitive to and aware of others’ feelings, increase confidence, manage work-life balance, and enhance emotional intelligence (Reeves, 2006). Sometimes, there is no specific problem to be addressed, but instead the executive wishes to “enhance his or her style, future options, and organizational impact” (Tobias, 1996, p. 88) thus he or she engages the services of a coach.

Ultimately, though, coaching is driven by the business needs and preferences of both the executive and the organization (Stern, 2004). On a more individual and personal results level, executive coaching is a window into enhanced self-awareness for the executive that in turn creates the context for him or her to live more consciously and contribute more richly (Sherman & Freas, 2004). The outcomes of executive coaching are supported by a unique aspect of the relationship in that it provides the executive with a safe haven nestled in confidentiality where he or she can delve into self-exploration, self-awareness, and self-improvement with the coach (Reeves, 2006). This can be extremely powerful as, according to Saporito (1996), the higher one moves up in an organization the less feedback one generally receives. Thus, the coach fills a valuable and indispensable void by acting as a confidante and sounding board.

Despite all of the reasons and apparent outcomes for engaging with a coach, it must be acknowledged that coaching cannot transform an executive entirely. As such, Saporito (1996) cautiously points out that rarely does an executive change his or her behavior completely, and this would be an unfair expected outcome of the coaching engagement. However, what is hoped for is “getting the individual to modify enough of his or her behavior to fit the specific behavioral requirements and success factors to a great enough degree that he or she can help the company achieve its organizational imperatives” (p. 103).

Benefits and Outcomes of Executive Coaching

Despite the prominence coaching has been gaining in organizations, it is interesting to note the lack of empirical research on the general subject (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001). There is limited empirical research on executive coaching outcomes (Fillery-Travis & Lane, 2006; Kilburg, 1996, 2004; McGovern et al., 2001; Turner, 2006). Lowman (2005) goes so far as to say that there is no basis substantiating coaching as a validated treatment, and that if there are results, they are general rather than specific. This paper is intended to add to the, albeit somewhat limited, research on coaching.

Some executive coaches have published works on the subject, but theirs tends to be of a descriptive rather than scholarly nature (Turner, 2006). McDermott et al. (2007) cite, “Companies report that coaching has the biggest positive impact on micro-level outcomes such as developing future leaders and improving leadership behaviors and individual employees’ performance” (p. 32).

Research by Witherspoon and White (1996b) contend that coaching leads to several positive outcomes, including better decisions, increased options, and enhanced self-awareness. Natale and Diamante (2005) point out a number of other potential benefits, including the achievement of personal and professional goals, increased sales, enhanced employee satisfaction, better organizational communication, greater self-knowledge, ability to lead more effectively change, and capacity to make quicker and better decisions.

However, in general, companies "lack a disciplined approach to managing the coaching process and measuring outcomes" (McDermott et al., 2007, p. 35). In addition to these obstacles, there is the issue of the complexity and variety of reasons why a person engages the services of a coach. The broad range of reasons makes it difficult to categorize, quantify, and report results on the coaching. As Greif (2007) points out:

> A fundamental difficulty of coaching outcome research is the extreme heterogeneity of issues, problems and goals, which can be picked out as themes in different coaching interventions. Therefore, it is difficult to identify outcome measures which are applicable to the whole range of coaching interventions. (p. 224)

Despite the dearth of empirical research, there are some data and studies that strive to substantiate the outcomes of coaching. CLC (2003) research information reveals, "Coaching can provide a high return-on-investment (ROI) and satisfaction rate" (Fact Brief: Executive Coaching Programs, p.1). For example, the CLC cites a study conducted by MetrixGlobal, LLC on a *Fortune* 500 telecommunications firm that reported an ROI of 529%. Other research conducted by Wasylyshyn (2003) indicate the following outcomes of successful coaching: (a) 63% sustained behavior change, (b) 48% increased self-awareness and understanding, and (c) 45% more effective leadership.

McGovern et al. (2001) conducted one of the few research studies on the impact of executive coaching. This study revealed both tangible and intangible business outcomes attributed to executive coaching. McGovern et al. studied 100 executives from 56 different organizations ranging from small to large in size. The results revealed that 43 of the 100 participants were able to estimate a return on investment in terms of dollars. “The majority of the 43 participants…reported between $100,000 and $1 million as the return on investment in executive coaching” (p. 7). Additionally, 75% of the sample rated the value of the coaching as, “considerably greater” (p. 7) or “far greater” (p. 7) than the money and time spent. Furthermore, 73% of the study participants indicated they had reached their goals, “very effectively” (p. 8) or “extremely effectively” (p. 8). The rate of results was shown to be higher for intangible impacts (i.e., improved relationships with direct reports at 77%, improved teamwork at 67%, improved job satisfaction at 63%) than for tangible ones (i.e., productivity at 53%, quality at 48%, customer service at 39%). As impressive as these numbers may sound, this study cannot go without questions, as it surveyed the clients of the consulting firm of which the authors belong, and the outcomes are based upon estimates by the coachee (Fillery-Travis & Lane, 2006). However, it should be noted that certain factors were put into place to enhance reliability such as the data were collected by trained independent contractors and limits were put on outlier ROI estimates of $1million (McGovern et al., 2001).

In another study aimed at identifying ROI, Phillips (2007) reports that Nations Hotel Corporation (NHC) instituted a formal, structured executive coaching program, and then evaluated it among 25 randomly selected participants. NHC used Kirkpatrick’s (1959) levels of evaluation to assess the program. Based upon level-1 evaluation (reaction), the average rating was 4.1 on a 5-point scale (1 = unacceptable, 5 = exceptional). Learning (level-2 evaluation) was assessed by means of a questionnaire given to the coach and coachee in which enhancement of skills and knowledge was gauged. To assess application of the behavior (level-3 evaluation), the executive had to create three action plans and implement items from them. The action plans contained details on what the executive would do in order to drive a particular item. Among the executive coaches, 83% reported completion of all three action plans, while another 11% completed one or two of them (Phillips, 2007). In addition, the coachees and coaches completed a questionnaire about changes in the executive coachees' behavior as a result of using these skills. To measure results (level-4 evaluation), at the beginning of the engagement the coachees were required to align their performance goals with at least five measures (productivity-efficiency, sales, direct cost savings, employee retention, and customer satisfaction). The study concluded that the total performance value among the executives was estimated at $1,861,158. The cost of coaching all 25 executives was $579,800. Based upon the total monetary benefits and the cost of the coaching program, NHC developed two ROI calculations. The first is the benefit-cost ratio (BCR), which is the ratio of monetary benefits divided by costs:

$$\text{BCR} = \frac{\$1{,}861{,}158}{\$579{,}800} = 3.21 \quad \text{(p. 18)}$$

The above indicates that for every dollar invested, $3.21 was returned.

The ROI for this coaching program was calculated using earnings divided by investments (Phillips, 2007):

$$\text{ROI (\%)} = \frac{\$1{,}861{,}158-579{,}800}{\$\ 579{,}800} \times 100 = 221\% \quad \text{(p. 18)}$$

This figure suggests that for each dollar invested in coaching, the dollar was returned plus another $1.21 was produced.

Collecting data beyond dollars and cents is another method of viewing the results of coaching. Starting in December 2004, Cambria Consulting began an ongoing study of the effects of executive coaching in large organizations from the perspective of multiple stakeholders (coach, coachee, managers-sponsors, and others). They used two methods to assess stakeholders' perceptions. The first was a set of 10 questions regarding the perceived overall benefit of the coaching. The second was that stakeholders were asked to estimate the dollar value using specified ranges for various coaching outcomes. The study assessed these perceptions at the onset and conclusion of the coaching engagement. Of the 132 coaching triads (coachee, coach, and manager) who were invited to participate, 95 in fact did. To assess the outcomes, respondents selected from a set of results or metrics that were believed to have manifested from the coaching engagement. Across the triads, two items were noted in the top five metric responses from each of the stakeholders (coachee, coach, and manager), which were, "employee engagement" (Schlosser et al., 2006, p. 11) and "promotion/promotability" (p. 11). To assess the perception of value, the triad members (coach, coachee, and manager) responded to a questionnaire with a rating scale from 1 (very little) to 10 (very much). Across the 10 questions, responses from the manager were all lower than the coach and coachee, with the exception of one question which was: To what extent (was the manager) personally committed to the coaching process with regard to the coachee? Here, the managers rated this an 8.2, coachees rated it an 8.3, and coaches a 7.8. In response to the summary question—At present, how satisfied are you with the value of coaching initiatives across company?—the average rating for coaches was 8.8 (SD = 1.1; *n* = 62) and 7.8 for coachees (SD = 1.7; *n* = 44). However, the average rating from managers was 5.3 (SD = 2.5; *n* = 12). These numbers indicate that coaches and coachees perceive the coaching engagement to have higher value estimations than the managers. In fact, over 85% of the 56 responding coaches and 91% of the 51 responding coachees estimated an overall value of $50,000 during the 18-month coaching process. In contrast, 30% of the 12 responding managers did not observe value from the coaching, 42% estimated less than $50,000 in value, and 25% estimated more than $1 million in value.

A study on a smaller scale was conducted by Stevens (2005), who interviewed 7 top management executives representing a range of industries (industrial manufacturing, financial services, health care, and academia). The executive also had received coaching. Of the 7 participants, 3 had previously been engaged in a coaching relationship with Stevens. Of those 3 executives, 2 had experiences with other executive coaches, and the balance of the 7 had had a coach at one time. All of the executives had a coach during their time as a CEO or president of their respective companies. Stevens' study found that the executives view coaching as a "helping process wherein something is done with them in a way that also enables them to better meet their role obligations and responsibilities" (p. 283).

Beyond tangible measuring sticks such as cost savings, reduced turnover, and increased productivity, the results of coaching are often based on the intangible. In fact, Fillery-Travis and Lane (2006) pointedly ask, "Is it sufficient that the coachee perceives coaching to have enabled him/her to achieve an identified goal? Or does the output have to percolate down to the bottom-line in terms of a quantifiable performance measure for the organization?" (p. 29). As previously discussed, Phillips' (2007) report of NHC's coaching program revealed several intangible benefits that were identified through a questionnaire and the aforementioned action plans. Measures that were identified by at least 4 of the 25 executives as intangible outputs included increased commitment, improved teamwork, increased job satisfaction, improved customer service, and improved communication.

Schlosser et al. (2006) seem to concur that the value generated from coaching is not always a tangible measurement, as they offer, "Value is in the eyes of the beholder" (p. 3). Schlosser et al. indicate that the decision makers within the organization look for value creation when determining how to proceed with executive coaching. The authors point out that this value creation is both implicit and explicit, suggesting that costs are not the only factor when evaluating whether executive coaching is the appropriate intervention. Schlosser et al. state that ROI is an organization-specific metric, at least in part. Thus, they contend any metrics should relate to what is important or valued within a given organization. "This perspective…is aligned with the trend toward viewing executive coaching as serving a strategic rather than remedial role" (p. 10).

Schlosser et al. (2006) argue that organizations that look beyond the financial impact and returns of coaching into value creation will generally take into account the following company issues and needs: (a) competencies (i.e., behaviors and abilities) necessary of leaders and coachees for the execution of business strategy, especially the competencies needed for considerable impact on short- and long-term results; (b) individual leaders who largely need these competencies; and (c) how expert coaching can facilitate building these important competencies with these leaders and coachees, as they are likely to have noteworthy impact on business results.

The Coaching Process

Just as there is no cookie-cutter definition of coaching or its tangible outcomes, there is also no absolute recipe for the coaching process. However, a number of common themes do arise that result in some sense of a general framework.

Perhaps at the heart of this process is the readiness of the client. Johnson (2007) makes the point that effective coaching is contingent upon the coachee identifying his or her goals, following a meticulous coach selection process, and having a mindset that is willing and ready to learn and change. Client motivation is a related facet to the, "learning mindset" (p. 3) pointed out by Johnson. Peterson (1996) states, "People are motivated to work on their development when they perceive discrepancies between where they are and where they wish to go" (p. 79). Thus, as a condition that supports successful coaching, Axmith (2004) offers that the executive "must be receptive to new ways of looking at problems and solutions" (p. 4).

Kilburg (1996) adopted principles from Weinberger (1995) that provide specifics outlining the components of the executive coaching process: (a) establishing an intervention agreement, (b) building a coaching relationship, (c) creating and maintaining expectations of success, (d) providing experiences of mastery and cognitive control, and (e) evaluating and attributing coaching successes and failures. To flesh out these components further, Kilburg (1996) sees the first component (establishing an intervention agreement) as including the foci and goals of the coaching partnership, securing confidentiality, estimating a time commitment, and establishing fees. In the second component (building the relationship), Kilburg suggests this includes creating an alliance, along with starting and preserving containment. He does not specifically expand on the third component, "creating and managing expectations of coaching success" (p. 139) although this may be somewhat self-explanatory. The fourth component of the executive coaching process, according to Kilburg, is mastery and cognitive control. This may be stimulated by the coach through problem solving, identifying and understanding emotions, using coaching techniques and methods with flexibility, willingness to face real problems, employing feedback and disclosure with maximum effort, and being prepared to confront acting out and moral concerns of ethical misjudgments in a diplomatic manner. Finally, the fourth component, according to Kilburg, is assessing each coaching session for effectiveness or failure, as well as occasionally looking back over the coaching relationship for the same.

Natale and Diamante (2005) offer the following stages of executive coaching: (a) alliance check, (b) credibility assessment, (c) likeability link, (d) dialogue and skill acquisition, and (e) cue-based action plans. Natale and Diamante point out that the first stage, the alliance check, may begin with the executive's uncertainty about the coaching engagement. The executive may feel some resistance because he or she is unsure about the circumstances that may have led to the coaching and, thus, may be suspicious that his or her superiors have ulterior motives. Natale and Diamante suggest that the remedy for this is being factual and disclosing what agreements have been made between the coach and the organization and why the executive is being provided a coach. For instance, if the executive did not volunteer for the engagement, then the agreements between the coach and organization should be discussed openly with the executive, including confidentiality, methodology, control over the process, and the main objectives of the coaching. In the end, the authors contend, “The alliance activates the conversations that will lead to the writing of a roadmap and removal of resistance” (p. 363). However, they caution that alliance building never ends. It is a constant yet fluid underpinning of the coach-client relationship. They offer that coaches enhance the alliance by being truthful, insightful, and helpful. The next step, the credibility assessment, revolves around the coach’s background, credentials, and experience. This stage is also “centered on the executive’s desire to gain control and determine whether the coach has anything to offer” (p. 36). They argue that at this point, the executive is concerned about the impact the coach will have upon him or her. In other words, the executive must view having a coach as beneficial. The next stage is the likeability link, which occurs as the executive compares his or her style and preferences with that of the coach. Natale and Diamante do not suggest that the executive is looking for a carbon copy of himself or herself, but may indeed be seeking a coach who has a different style, preference, and approach. To uncover styles, preferences, and approaches Natale and Diamante contend that an open conversation of discovery in which each party comes to understand the other is a good starting point. They also recommend that as part of this dialogue, the coach points out that information, observations, or insights that arise from the coaching engagement will not always be pleasant, but are necessary in order to achieve business results. The next stage, dialogue and skill acquisition, prepares the executive for change. Dialogue and practice lets the executive become more self-aware of automatic reactions and provides the platform for the executive to choose different reactions. The last stage (cue-based action plans) delineates what the executive is to do. The model suggested by Natale and

Diamante expresses the role and intersection of cognition, affect, physiology, and behavior. Their model is based upon the premise that the executive is personally accountable for change in that, “Through self-control (physically, intellectually, emotionally, and behaviorally) the executive contributes to the nature, meaning, importance, and consequences of the event to which he is ‘responding’” (p. 368).

The CLC (n.d.) streamlines the coaching engagement into three steps: (a) assessment, (b) feedback on the assessment, and (c) performance monitoring and follow-up sessions. According to the CLC, the assessment phase may include administrating a variety of tools, including the Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator, Thomas Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, Lifestyles Inventory, and a 360° instrument. This is followed by a feedback session to agree upon goals and action plans. Then, regular follow-up occurs on a weekly, biweekly, or monthly basis, which may happen in person or over the telephone.

Beginning a coaching engagement with a contract is cited as an important first step in the coaching process (Diedrich, 1996; Natale & Diamante, 2005; Stern, 2004). Natale and Diamante contend that a contract among the executive, coach, and organization is essential for defining the terms and avoiding misunderstandings. According to Natale and Diamante, included in the contact should be a confidentiality provision, length of service, minimum amount of coaching, means of communication among the coach and coachee, fees, expenses, and method of billing.

Diedrich (1996) argues that a contract should be for an extended time frame, with at least 12-months being the recommended minimum. He also contends that all parties should agree that data collection, feedback, and coaching processes are evolving activities that are expected to continue throughout the engagement. In terms of confidentiality, Diedrich recommends that the coach, executive, and organization agree upon what information is privileged and what is not. He also advocates for periodic three-way review sessions with the executive (coachee), sponsor (organization), and coach to assess how the engagement is progressing. Finally, he recommends that the contract stipulate that the coach will have several opportunities to observe the executive in the work environment, particularly while engaging with subordinates.

Two characteristics of a coaching engagement that bear exploration are trust and confidentiality. Natale and Diamante (2005) contend that confidentiality is an ethical issue that a coach must honor, even in the absence of a written contract. In their words, "The coach has the duty to respect the confidentiality of the executive's information, and must refrain from disclosing it even to the party compensating him, except as otherwise waived or agreed by the executive, or as required by law" (p. 362). Morgan et al. (2005) view confidentiality as sacred, "no matter who is paying the bill" (p. 43). This is because to engender an effective coaching relationship, the client must feel comfortable openly discussing feelings, concerns, situations, and attitudes that may include his or her colleagues such as superiors, peers, and direct reports. In the absence of this, the coach cannot fully understand the challenges and opportunities facing the client.

Whitworth et al. (1998) point out that the coach cannot guarantee an a priori agreement in terms of confidentiality. They contend that there are circumstances that may cause the coach to reveal confidentiality to a higher authority, including those in the legal profession. They advise coaches to inform clients that their confidence is not privileged under the law and that a coach may be subpoenaed for information.

Trust is an integral characteristic of a coaching partnership that must be earned so that the coach may provide the right balance of challenges and support to the client throughout the engagement (Peterson, 1996). Trust also provides the platform upon which the executive feels comfortable being open and influenced by the coaching (Kiel et al., 1996). However, building trust is not a one-size-fits-all process, as "trust looks differently behaviorally to [different people]" (Ting & Scisco, 2006, p. 37). Thus, the coach must be ever aware of deepening trust, including "constant awareness and monitoring of [his or her] behaviors and motivations that may bear on how his or her trustworthiness is perceived by others, and an understanding and respect for what trust means to the person being coached" (p. 37). Trust is such a crucial component to the coaching relationship that in its absence little can be achieved. One way to build trust is to honor confidentiality (Morgan et al., 2005). Self-disclosure of the coach in regard to challenges in his or her life in which he or she relied on outside resources is another means to build trust (Axmith, 2004). Furthermore, such candid and vulnerable disclosures "serve as a powerful relationship-builder and as a model of the kind of frank discussions that forms the foundation of any worthwhile coaching relationship" (p. 5).

The Role, Skills, and Characteristics of a Coach

The role of the coach is to help the client achieve objectives through facilitated deep learning and sustained change while providing continuous feedback and support (King & Eaton, 1999; Zweibel, 2005). A coach facilitates this by helping "the [client] maintain a consistent, confident focus on tuning up strengths and managing shortcomings" (Tobias, 1996, p. 87). This continuous learning, support, encouragement, and feedback offered by the coach helps "the executive to challenge his or her own potential and to confront resistance” (p. 87). Through the coaching process, and as new insights arise for the executive, the coach helps the executive prioritize his or her goals along with an action plan for development and behavior change (Peterson, 1996). In essence, the coach’s role is to be a catalyst for change by helping the client acquire new skills and knowledge, thus sparking learning and growth (Peterson, 1996; Witherspoon & White, 1996a).

Along the way, the various skills and approaches employed by the coach are individually tailored in service of the client’s growth and development (Evered & Selman, 1989). As Peterson (1996) asserts, “The role of the coach is to find the best way for an individual to learn a specific skill” (p. 80). Overall, Hudson (1999) states, “Good coaches know how to listen, find core values, empathize, reflect, probe, ask questions, relate issues, challenge, foster alternative scenarios, find network resources, foster alliances, sustain ongoing evaluation, and conduct strategic reviews” (p. 17). The specific types of skills a coach employs include listening effectively, asking powerful questions, building and sustaining rapport, reframing, reading nonverbal behavior, setting goals, and eliciting commitment (King & Eaton, 1999; Whitworth et al., 1998).

As advocated by some authors, skillful, penetrating questioning by the coach is at the heart of the coaching relationship, as it propels forward movement in the client and is, therefore, essential to effective coaching (Turner, 2006; Whitworth et al., 1998). The art of questioning provokes new insights within a client and the discovery of answers by the client (Richard 2003; Zweibel, 2005). Getting to the truth of the matter by asking provocative questions is necessary in order to get at the real issues (Sherman & Freas, 2004). Whitworth et al. distinguish what they deem powerful questions from regular questions. They advocate that asking open-ended, powerful questions sends a client on an inner journey, inviting introspection and generating meaningful insights. In summary, an effective coach must have the skill, stamina, and wherewithal to ask continually stimulating questions that challenge the executive's thinking and judgment in order to spark new perspectives on problem solving and solutions (Axmith, 2004).

Additional skills that a coach employs during a coaching session include interpersonal effectiveness, good listening, empathy, patience, flexibility, analytical problem solving, creativity, and humor (Wasylyshyn, 2003). Moreover, the CLC (2005) reports that other skills an executive coach uses are assessing an executive's strengths and weaknesses, clarifying issues, mediating between the executive and his or her colleagues, reviewing progress, and educating the executive on management and interpersonal skills.

Another skill of an effective coach is providing feedback (Diedrich, 1996; O'Neil 2000; Witherspoon & White, 1996b). Diedrich contends that an effective coach employs specificity, empathy, and inquiry when providing feedback to a client. According to him, feedback should be detailed in that it refers to actual behavior, comes from an empathetic place of listening and sharing perspectives, and is open-ended. As such, it can solicit more information, understanding, and agreement regarding the feedback. Furthermore, Kilburg (1996) contends that feedback stimulates self-awareness, self-esteem, and enhanced communication with others.

Hudson (1999) contends that a characteristic of coaching is that coaches are guided by the values they possess, along with the values of their client, although this is not a skill. By accessing these values, as well as the emotional and mental vitality of their clients, coaches spark transformative directions and goals of the client. Coaches, according to Hudson, probe deep within the client to unearth his or her purpose, as well as the values from which his or her passions are derived. Whitworth et al. (1998) advocate that when a client is aware of his or her values, then he or she understands what is truly essential in his or her life, and this helps the client make choices that are consistent with those values. Whitworth et al. goes on to point out that living one's values is not necessarily easy, but instead may come with discomfort. However, once the discomfort passes, the client experiences a sense of integrity residing in the wake. Furthermore, as Whitworth et al. discuss, as long as the client lives beyond the bounds of his or her values, the client will experience a high personal cost, resulting in an ungratifying life of toleration rather than fulfillment.

The coach's view of the client is also paramount to the effectiveness of the relationship and the coaching. "A good coach must believe unequivocally in the potential of the [client] and operate on the assumption that the [client] is the real expert about themselves and their work" (King & Eaton, 1999, p. 146). Therefore, coaching is focused on uncovering and developing a client's potential and future possibilities. As such, coaches view clients as "well and whole… rather than as needing to be fixed (Wright, 2005, p. 326). Wright asserts that when a person (and in this case a client) is empowered and becomes aware of his or her capabilities, his or her overall mental health and quality of life improves both professionally and personally.

Levinson (1996) points out that the word coach must be taken seriously, as this is a shared relationship between peers. The concept of a shared, peer relationship is also advocated by Whitworth et al. (1998), wherein the coach and client are viewed as equal collaborators mutually committed to successful outcomes. Accordingly, this shared commitment refers to the objectives, as well as to the successes and losses, of the coaching.

Credentials of the Coach

The background and credentials of coaches is like mosaic tile in that each coach's breadth, depth, and type of experience is unique. However, there are some common characteristics of executive coaches that include having an understanding of psychological dynamics, adult development, business management, leadership, and political issues (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001; Kiel et al., 1996; O'Neil, 2000; Saporito, 1996; Sperry, 1993; Tobias, 1996). The CLC (n.d.) reports that organizations highly value a coach's prior experience in coaching executives, along with training in psychology. More specifically, the CLC reports (n.d.) the competencies most sought when selecting an executive coach, as depicted on Table 3.

Table 3

Competencies Sought When Selecting an Executive Coach

Coach Competencies Sought	Percent of Response
Experience coaching senior executives	90%
Degree in psychology	55%
Coaching qualifications or certifications	32%
Experience working as part of an executive team	27%
Experience working in a line-management position	19%
Experience running a business	16%
Experience working in the industry similar to the client's organization	6%

In another report, findings of 87 executives who have had a coach report the following sought-after credentials and experience criteria when selecting a coach: (a)

82% graduate studies in psychology, (b) 78% experience in or understanding of business, and (c) 25% an established reputation as a coach (Wasylyshyn, 2003).

Personal Brand

As referenced in Chapter One, personal brand came onto the scene in 1997, when Peters wrote an article in *Fast Company* magazine. Since then, the concept of personal brand has taken hold and subsequent contemporary literature has been written on the subject.

This section reviews five different areas in regard to brand. First, it begins with an overview of corporate and personal brands. This then leads into an examination of the definition of personal brand. The next topic that is discussed is the distinction between personal image and personal brand. This is followed by an examination of the topic of authenticity. Finally, the section concludes with an assessment of perception and personal brand.

Overview of Corporate and Personal Brand

Like coaching, the idea of personal brand is a concept that has taken hold, but even more recently than coaching. McNally and Speak (2002) argue that like a business, each individual has his or her own personal brand, which is built upon relationships. Furthermore, they contend that for businesses, “The principles and techniques of brand management allow organizations to focus on strategies and tactics that build strong relationships” (p. 5). According to McNally and Speak these business relationships support the overall achievement of organization objectives. However, they are careful to emphasize that these relationships must meet the needs of the people with whom the organization does business (i.e., customers, stakeholders) in order to be successful. Thus, from McNally and Speak’s perspective, relationships are the foundation of a business’s success or failure. Likewise, a strong personal brand can create success for an individual. McNally and Speak contend that individuals may use the same proven, fruitful, and loyalty-producing strategies as companies do in brand management to achieve outstanding personal results. “By developing a strong personal brand that is clear, complete, and valuable to others, you will create a life that is much more successful and fulfilling” (p. 5).

As referenced previously, personal brand is a concept that was first established in a magazine article by Peters (1997) in which he argued, “We are CEOs of our own companies: Me Inc.” (p. 84). Peters introduced the idea that each person is a brand in and of themselves by declaring, “You’re every bit as much a brand as Nike, Coke, Pepsi, or the Body Shop” (p. 86). Similar to a corporate brand, Peters challenged us to think of those qualities and characteristics that make each one of us distinctive from other people by creating “measurable, distinguished, distinctive value” (p. 86). In essence, understanding and building one’s personal brand is a method for reaching success.

Since the inaugural conception of personal brand by Peters (1997), other articles and books in contemporary literature have followed. Borrowing ideas and principles from the business world, the concept of personal brand is built upon the foundation of corporate branding. For instance, those who have written about personal brand discuss such elements as differentiation (Arruda, 2003; Montoya 2002), promise of value (Arruda & Dixson, 2007; Montoya), strategy (Montoya), and authenticity (Arruda; Lam 2003; McNally & Speak, 2002).

A corporate brand is based on many of the same or similar factors, including differentiation, (Aaker, 2004; Roper & Davies, 2007), credibility (Aaker; Hankinson, 2007; Uehling, 2000), values (Hankinson; Roper & Davies), and strategy (Schultz & Schultz, 1998). Schultz and Schultz state, “The primary purpose of [corporate] branding is to establish a meaningful, differentiated presence that will increase [the] ability to attract and retain loyal customers and improve [the company’s] marketplace maneuverability” (p. 26). Adamson (2002) sees the corporate brand as the “essence of the company” (p. 18). In a marketplace in which competition is ever increasing, corporations relentlessly seek ways to distinguish their brand identity to achieve an advantage over other companies (Donavan, Janda, & Suh, 2006).

Likewise, Arruda (2003) also speaks of the importance of differentiation and establishing a competitive advantage when it comes to personal brands:

> Like a corporation, you need to differentiate yourself and build demand for your services in your target markets. You do that with a personal brand, which distinguishes you from your colleagues and competitors and promises value just as a corporate brand does. (p. 58)

Perception is also an influencing factor in both corporate and personal brands. As identified by Gregory and Sellers (2002), who state the following in regard to brand:

> A brand is a collective perception of a company based on consumer experience.…The aggregate of those experiences, accumulated over time, creates an overall perception in the minds of everyone who encounters the brand. That perception generates a set of expectations, which the brand must live up to. But a brand, like any business asset, must be managed for continued positive results. (p. 44)

Managing these corporate results is a never-ending pursuit that encompasses a number of strategies and elements. According to Adamson (2002), one powerful strategy that maintains positive public perception of a company is keeping promises. Adamson points out, “A brand is a promised benefit delivered” (p. 18). Therefore, when a company keeps its promise, it consequently protects its image in the minds of the consumer.

It must be noted that neither a corporate brand nor a personal brand is simply a collection of logos, jingles, taglines, attire, physical characteristics, or likes and dislikes. Both are more strategic with specific outcomes in mind (Montoya, 2002; Schultz & Schultz, 1998). Personal brand outcomes may include career advancement, increased compensation, enhanced career satisfaction, additional clients, consistent flow of business, more prestige and recognition, and greater creditability (Arruda & Dixson, 2007; Montoya).

Definition of Personal Brand

Just as there are countless definitions for coaching, there are a number of varying ways to define a personal brand. What makes the concept and definition of personal brand all the more complicated is that empirical research could not be found on this topic. Therefore, reliance upon contemporary literature is necessary.

Looking first at the concept of brand, Kawasaki (2004) states, “The art of branding requires creating something contagious that infects people with enthusiasm, making it easy for them to try it, asking them for help in spreading the word, and building a community around it” (p. 167). For a brand to build an audience, Kawasaki contends that one must create contagion by aligning with a product or service that is cool, effective, distinctive, disruptive, emotive, deep, indulgent, and supported. Kawasaki advocates the use of what he calls “evangelists” (p. 173) to achieve critical mass through proselytizing by finding people who enthusiastically believe in a product or service as much as the producer does. Kawasaki refers to such individuals as evangelists and contends they are a vehicle for communicating a brand. Proselytizing is also a means, according to Kawasaki, to build a community around a product or service. These communities are customers who come together on the basis of their belief and commitment in a product or service. In regard to corporate examples, Kawasaki references Apple and Harley-Davidson as companies who have such communities.

Turning our attention to personal brand, McNally and Speak (2002) define it as "a perception or emotion, maintained by somebody other than you that describes the total experience of having a relationship with you" (p. 4). Gad and Rosencreutz (2002) see personal brand as "your values, your qualities and everything you have to offer as an employer, a friend, a life partner and to your family" (p. 35). Manallack (2006) simply states that personal brands are "those things that make you different and attractive to the prospect" (p. 9). An article ("Best and Worst," 2003, p. 1) defines personal brand as "the process of taking one's skills, personality, and unique characteristics and packaging them into a powerful identity. Used properly, it creates a clear, positive image that comes to mind when other people think of someone" (p. 1). Montoya (2002), and Montoya and Vandehey (2002) describes it as a powerful, focused, positive idea that is evoked in others that clearly communicates the values, abilities, and actions associated with an individual.

Montoya and Vandehey (2002) go on to speak about the influence a personal brand has upon other people and that in order to be stimulating, the brand must demonstrate differentiation, superior quality, and authenticity. Montoya (2002) also contends:

> Any brand is the sum of the expectations and associations it creates in the minds of its audience. It is an implied covenant between product and consumer, a

> promise that creates a lasting belief in the buyer: "When I buy this, I will be getting this." (p. 14)

More specifically, Montoya defines personal brand as, "A personal identity that stimulates precise, meaningful perceptions in its audience about the values and qualities that a person stands for" (p. 15).

Personal Brand and Personal Image

Montoya and Vandehey (2002) and Arruda (2003) are careful to point out the difference between personal brand and personal image in that branding strategically takes hold of the process that affects others' perceptions of a person and then manages those processes in a manner to achieve the person's goals. Without strategy, according to Montoya and Vandehey (2002), all one simply has is a personal image. Montoya and Vandehey contend that personal image is the exterior packaging of a person (what one wears, the car one drives, etc.) and is a collection of qualities others identify with a person, including humor, hairstyle, physical characteristics, and hobbies. Personal brand is different as, according to Montoya and Vandehey, it entails understanding others' perceptions of a person, how those perceptions influence the person's behaviors, and how those perceptions can be managed strategically. He argues that a personal brand is, "A personal identity that stimulates precise, meaningful, perceptions in its audience about the values and qualities that a person stands for, personally and professionally" (p. 279). Similarly, Arruda argues that personal brand, rather than image, entails "understanding your unique combination of attributes—strengths, skills, values, and passions—and using them to differentiate yourself and guide your career decisions" (p. 58). In other words, personal image is passive while personal branding is active or strategic (Montoya, 2002).

Authenticity

Perhaps an opposite of personal image is authenticity. In fact, the concept of authenticity arises in many of the definitions of personal brand as a mainstay (Fried, 2006; Lam, 2003; McNally & Speak, 2002; Montoya & Vandehey, 2002). McNally and Speak share Montoya and Vandehey's contention that branding is much more than simply creating a public-relations campaign of contrived images and catchy slogans. It is a representation of who an individual is rather than a packaged image. A personal brand communicates the strengths, skills, values, uniqueness, qualities, and passions of the individual in a manner that differentiates him or her from others and that creates value for others (Arruda, 2003; Gad & Rosencreutz, 2002). Fried captures personal brand as "offering a concise calling card as to who you are, what makes you unique, and adds value to others" (p. 34). Authenticity is so potent and fundamental to a personal brand that Montoya and Vandehey contend it is the only kind of brand that sustains over time.

Perceptions

Like Montoya (2002) and Montoya and Vandehey (2002), McNally and Speak (2002) also hold the premise that a personal brand encompasses perceptions because it is an opinion that is stimulated in others based upon their experiences with the individual in question. Specifically, McNally and Speak define personal brand as, "a perception or emotion, maintained by someone other than you, that describes the total experience of having a relationship with you" (p. 4). They also carefully point out that a brand is a relationship. Furthermore, that relationship is built over time upon trust that develops as the parties begin to learn and experience a connection between their value systems. They go on to explain that one's brand is a mirror image of who a person is, including his or her beliefs, values, and associated actions.

Outcomes of Corporate Brand and Personal Brand

As a result of a strong corporate or personal brand, it appears that a myriad of benefits may be reaped. As an example, for corporations, such benefits may include strong balance sheets (Uehling, 2000). This is evidence by at least one study (Fournier, 2007), which revealed that corporations with strong brands "deliver greater stockholder return at less risk than other brands" (p. 17).

Contemporary literature contends there are numerous benefits that may result from uncovering, understanding, and living one's personal brand. Commonly held benefits include increased number of clients, higher earning potential, consistent flow of business, attracting like-minded people, increased credibility, enhanced leadership roles, more prestige, and greater recognition (Montoya & Vandehey, 2002). Similarly, Arruda (2003) contends that a strong personal brand may result in increased compensation, spark business expansion, and support the ability to thrive in economic downturns.

Underneath the surface of all of these extrinsic outcomes are those intrinsic differences a personal brand can make. Having a personal brand that is clear, complete, and adds value added to oneself and others creates a more successful and fulfilling life (McNally & Speak, 2002). In that regard, Ulrich and Smallwood (2007) state:

> When you know with utmost clarity what you want to be known for, it is easier to let go of the tasks and projects that do not let you deliver on the brand and to concentrate on activities that do. (p. 3)

Arruda (2003) indicates that a strong personal brand may allow one to know oneself better and enhance confidence. McNally and Speak state that having a solid personal brand can result in overall greater life fulfillment, gratification, and satisfaction. Gad and Rosencreutz (2002) purport that personal branding "leads to improved financial, social, and mental standing" (p. 35).Thus, a number of different extrinsic and intrinsic rewards may result from knowing and living one's brand.

Personal branding allows an individual to enjoy such benefits as a result of setting apart what differentiates him or her from others who have similar skills and abilities (Arruda & Dixson, 2007). Put more simply, Arruda and Dixson state, "Your personal brand is your unique promise of value" (p. 34). It is that promise of value that sets one apart and is the foundation for one's brand (Arruda & Dixson; Montoya & Vandehey, 2002).

Building a Personal Brand

Building a personal brand takes time, consideration, and care. It is not something that can magically be accomplished overnight, but instead is achieved through both self-reflection and actionable steps (Arruda & Dixson, 2007). This section of the paper will discuss several authors' approaches to building one's brand. Specifically, an examination will be made of Arruda and Dixson, McNally and Speak (2002), and Montoya and Vandehey (2002)

Contemporary literature outlines a number of themes that appear as components of creating a personal brand. These include authenticity, specialization, consistency, differentiation, emotional appeal, clarity, and relevancy (Fried, 2006; Hodgkinson, 2006; Johnson, 2002; Lam, 2003; McNally & Speak, 2002; Montoya, 2002). Looking specifically at the work of Arruda and Dixson (2007), McNally and Speak (2002), and Montoya and Vendehey a number of commonalities can be found. Among these include assessing how one is currently perceived (McNally & Speak; Montoya, & Vandehey), establishing goals (Arruda & Dixson; Montoya & Vandehey), creating a personal brand statement (Arruda & Dixson; McNally & Speak; Montoya & Vandehey), being distinctive (Arruda & Dixson; McNally & Speak; Montoya & Vandehey), building a brand based upon one's values (Arruda & Dixson; McNally & Speak), determining one's unique value of promise (Arruda & Dixson; Montoya & Vandehey), measuring progress and success (McNally & Speak; Montoya & Vandehey), and continuous brand building (McNally & Speak; Montoya & Vandehey).

This next section of the paper will describe the specific processes of uncovering and establishing one's brand among three different authors: Arruda and Dixson (2007), McNally and Speak (2002), and Montoya and Vandehey (2002).

Arruda and Dixson

We begin with a discussion on Arruda and Dixson's (2007) perspective on personal brand. They contend that, "Personal branding enables you to profit from what distinguishes you from others with similar skills and abilities" (p. 24). Furthermore, they offer that creating a personal brand can help distinguish a person within his/her career thus leading to success and fulfillment. According to them, "[Personal branding] is the most effective and innovative strategy you can use to achieve professional success and fulfillment" (Arruda & Dixson, p. 25). This is because it allows a person to clearly communicate what makes him/her special, different, and valuable to employers and customers.

Arruda and Dixson (2007) contend that to build a solid personal brand that propels one toward one's goals, a person must be able to know and articulate what makes him or her unique and compelling. This entails discovering one’s unique promise of value, which is accomplished through defining one’s vision, purpose, goals, values, and passions.

Arruda and Dixson (2007) define vision as being external in that it is what one sees as possible for the world. While on the other hand, one’s purpose is internal because it is the role one plays to achieve that vision. Arruda and Dixson point out that to fulfill one’s purpose, one must have clear goals that provide direction, focus, and encouragement toward one’s intended destination. Related to vision and purpose are one’s passions and values. Passions are those activities and events that energize a person. Professionally, the resulting effect of a job that stimulates one’s passions may be increased job performance, which can then cause the individual to be memorable in the eyes of others. Values, according to Arruda and Dixson, are one’s operating principles and part of one’s belief system. Being aware of one’s values is imperative for making savvy career decisions because one is able to recognize if the organization’s and one’s values are a match.

Arruda and Dixson (2007) discuss the importance of establishing one’s brand community. This may include one’s supervisor, colleagues, friends, family, peers, and competitors. Creating a brand community is important because it aids one with successful career planning. This is because members of one’s community can help convey to others the strength and power of one’s brand. As such, Arruda and Dixson contend that those individuals who plan their careers with the most success are those people whom interact with their brand community regularly.

Arruda and Dixson (2007) also speak of the importance of brand attributes, which are the adjectives others use to describe a person. Furthermore, they make a distinction between rational and emotional attributes. Rational attributes are one’s competencies, while emotional attributes are what create strong connections between a person and his or her brand. Emotional attributes stimulate brand success because other people (meaning one’s customers or constituents) are influenced by emotion. This emotion that is generated between the person and the customer can result in enhanced loyalty and respect. However, Arruda and Dixson caution that a brand cannot stand on its emotional attributes alone. It must include strong rational attributes that demonstrate competence, credibility, and results.

Arruda and Dixson (2007) discuss a model they call the, “communications wheel” (p. 100). The wheel is intended to help one formulate a plan to convey or communicate one’s brand. The idea is to develop a wheel of various communications vehicles that will most effectively express one’s brand to one’s target audience. The vehicles may include printed articles, speaking engagements, a newsletter, interviews, web-based platforms, and the like.

Associated with the communications wheel is a concept that Arruda and Dixson (2007) call the, “three C’s” (p. 63). These are clarity, consistency, constancy. Their purpose is to create and sustain a successful brand. Clarity refers to one’s unique promise of value. This means understanding who one is and who one is not, which then translates into attracting the people one wishes. Consistency refers to the content and style of one’s communication. That is, no matter what communications vehicle is used one’s brand is conveyed in the same manner. Constancy is about the frequency of one's messaging. The more regular, steadfast, and constant one is with one's brand the stronger it can become.

Arruda and Dixson (2007) also advocate developing a personal brand statement (PBS), which describes the value one offers, who one's audience is, and what differentiates one from all the rest. It is based upon one's unique promise of value and is "a concise summary of how you intend to solve a problem, meet a need, or make a difference" (p. 75). It is also a constant compass for oneself to keep on purpose, guide important decisions, and set priorities. Additionally, a PBS is a clear, concise communication tool that can be a magnet for attracting other individuals who value what one has to offer.

It is argued that a strong personal brand permeates everything about a person. For instance, Arruda and Dixson (2007) speak about one's brand environment, meaning one's appearance (including clothing, voice, and body language), office and business tools (which may include a personal digital assistant or briefcase), one's brand identity system (the colors, fonts, and images that one employs), and one's professional network. Arruda and Dixson argue that all of this communicates a certain message about a person, as well as the person's brand. The key, according to Arruda and Dixson, is to align all of these elements together so that they are consistent with one's brand message or unique promise of value. Effectiveness is gained when one's brand environment is comfortable for the person and appeals to the audience one wishes to attract.

McNally and Speak

Turning to another perspective, McNally and Speak (2002) describe a personal brand framework they call a personal brand manifesto. This manifesto is composed of three elements: (a) personal brand dimensions model, (b) personal brand platform, and (c) personal brand promise. Combined together these three elements create the manifesto and are described in the following paragraphs.

Personal brand dimensions model. The first element of the manifesto, the personal brand dimensions model, entails: (a) roles and relationships with others, (b) standards of behavior or performance, and (c) style. Combined into one, these three elements create a distinctive, relevant, and consistent image in the mind of others (McNally & Speak, 2002).

Beginning first with roles, this element identifies the key relationships one plays with others (i.e., spouse, employee, little league coach). In particular, McNally and Speak (2002) emphasize the importance of relationships in that one must demonstrate that one has the competence to meet the other's need. Furthermore, McNally and Speak contend that a branded relationship is "one that involves the kind of trust that only happens when two people believe there is a direct connection between their value systems" (p. 3). Perhaps even more striking is their assertion that "the most critical component of your ultimate success or failure is the breadth and depth of your relationships" (p. 5). Therefore, they advocate that a personal brand is a vehicle for establishing relationships or roles. The intention is for others to understand truly and fully acknowledge who one is and what one does. However, they are careful to point out that the goal is not to be all things to all people, but rather to establish authentic, branded relationships or roles with those who align with one's values.

The second element of the personal brand dimensions model is standards of behavior or performance. These are the descriptive adverbs and adjectives stimulated in the minds of others. Generally, these lend themselves to being measurable and somewhat objective. They also begin to define and give substance to one's brand, and, therefore, promote distinction. In this manner of promoting distinction, McNally and Speak (2002) echo Montoya and Vandehey's (2002) view that one should not be on a quest to please all people. In other words, they contend that one's standards should be constant and consistent, rather than ever changing in an attempt to appeal to anyone and everyone. They advise, "Focus your standards on the relationships you choose to build with people who truly matter to you" (McNally & Speak, p. 33).

The third element of the personal brand dimensions model is style. This is the manner in which one relates to others. Style, according to McNally and Speak (2002), is one's brand personality in that it makes one unique in the minds of others. It is also generally emotive and subjective. While style may not lend itself well to being measurable, it often can carry as much weight and be equally significant as one's more quantifiable standards. However, McNally and Speak caution that style "cannot have real impact or significantly contribute to the building of one's brand…unless the other two dimensions of roles and standards are firmly established" (p. 36).

Personal brand platform. Referring to the personal brand manifesto, the next element is the personal brand platform. The personal brand dimensions model (composed of roles, standards, and style) sets the foundation for identifying one's personal brand platform. The platform is a specific driving force that energizes a person and "is the single most dominant characteristic of your brand—the one whose nature permeates everything else" (McNally & Speak, 2002, p. 72). One's brand platform is what makes one distinctive and corresponds with one's "most prized personal value" (p. 72). An approach to uncovering one's platform is to ask other people to describe oneself in a word or two. Another means of determining one's brand platform is to review one's standards and style characteristics in order to assess what creates the most passion for oneself. The next step is then to "consistently and distinctly display" (p. 72) these traits to everyone all of the time. This, according to McNally and Speak, is a crucial step in determining one's brand promise.

Personal brand promise. The final element of the personal brand manifesto is the personal brand promise. This is described as "a statement that an organization (or an individual) uses internally to focus its efforts on what its brand must deliver externally to satisfy needs in the real world" (McNally & Speak, 2002, p. 74). A brand promise, although unspoken, is an internal beacon that guides one's decisions and how one relates to others. It is like an internal navigation system one uses when making decisions and taking actions, particularly as they relate to having a meaningful impact upon others. This implicit statement is a constant, unwavering commitment of what one will do on behalf of others, including customers. Brand promises are brief, use action-oriented language, articulate the benefits others receive, are based upon one's brand platform, and are strongly inspirational.

Brand measurement and brand building. Branding does not end with the personal brand manifesto, as another critical component is brand measurement. According to McNally and Speak (2002), measurement is an integral part of maintaining and managing an accurate personal brand. Thus, it is vital that one seeks regular feedback from trusted colleagues, family members, friends, and other associates. This feedback is an indicator of how well one is doing with reaching one's personal brand goals and objectives, and if a gap needs to be filled. Furthermore, McNally and Speak contend that one should measure or assess consistency in one’s brand because inconsistent behaviors, actions, or words will wreak havoc with one’s personal brand. Beyond feedback, McNally and Speak also encourage brand measurement through such anecdotal means as unsolicited comments from others, complaints lodged, and referrals made.

To continue one’s brand building, McNally and Speak (2002) encourage several techniques to define further, manage, and extend one’s brand. The first is to identify standards and guidelines that can strengthen the perception of one’s brand. This may include one’s outward appearance, communication abilities, and rapport with others. Focusing upon what makes one’s brand distinctive, relevant, and consistent will help one develop these guidelines and standards. Another means of further building one’s brand is participating in training programs in order to invest more in one’s skills. Finally, another brand building strategy is to pay special attention to how one recognizes and acknowledges another, whether that be for an accomplishment or for a personal event such as a birthday or anniversary. McNally and Speak contend that recognizing and acknowledging another in a special way is an additional vehicle for creating brand distinctiveness, along with reinforcing the value one places on relationships.

Montoya and Vandehey

Finally, we discuss personal brand from the perspective of Montoya and Vandehey (2002), who lay out several steps for uncovering and establishing one’s brand. First, is an current assessment of one’s personal brand. The current perceptions and images that customers, colleagues, friends, and family hold of an individual is the foundational step for building a personal brand. Via an assessment (i.e., interviews, questionnaires), an individual is able to discover the values, attributes, strengths, and weaknesses that come to mind when others think of him or her. This allows one to see how closely or how differently one's perceptions of oneself are in comparison to how others see him or her. If there is quite a gap between the perceptions, then the emphasis when building one's brand should be on closing it.

The next step, according to Montoya and Vandehey (2002), is to set goals for where one wants to be personally and professionally, including desired income, career, lifestyle, leisure time, residency, and relationships with others. This gives one direction and focus.

Next, one must identify the objective of one's personal brand, which is how one wishes to be known by others. This includes attributes and emotions that one wants to evoke in others, along with being known for certain accomplishments. Montoya and Vandehey (2002) suggest that to identify one's objective, one should ask questions such as, "what word or phrase would you like your target market to use when describing you?" (p, 237); "what emotions would you like your brand to produce in others?" (p. 237); and "how do you want to be remembered?" (p. 237).

Following these steps, one moves into the refinement phase. Here Montoya and Vandehey (2002) outline four key components of a personal brand: (a) target market, (b) specialization, (c) leading attribute, and (d) positioning. These steps are described below.

Target market. Establishing one's target market means determining the clientele with whom one wishes to work. According to Montoya and Vandehey (2002), the benefits of having a target market include higher quality clients, more focused messages, and less time spent on marketing.

Montoya and Vandehey (2002) suggest starting with assessing the customers one has been working with for the past 2 years in order to determine who has the most potential to increase one's income, has a need for one's services, and is an affordable market with which to do business. Additionally, this assessment will help one understand who perceives one's brand as valuable. Montoya and Vandehey argue that choosing the right target market and saturating oneself with knowledge about it is one of the most important factors in building a successful personal brand. They caution to approach this with deliberation and patience, along with a dedication to understand fully the market before deciding upon it. Once the target market is selected, one then tailors one's services to that clientele. Montoya and Vandehey indicate that one should find a need within that market and then customize one's services to fill it. At this point, it is time to develop one's business model. This includes a number of factors, including office location, Web site presence, billing and pricing, and services offered.

Specialization. Next, Montoya and Vandehey (2002) indicate it is time to determine one's specialization. They argue that specialization is the key factor that attaches value to what one has to offer. Specialization includes differentiation, expertise, perceived value, being easily understood, and focusing strengths. Furthermore, Montoya and Vandehey contend that specialization enhances one's credibility and makes one's Unique Value Proposition (UVP) all the more powerful. A UVP is a clear statement that tells potential clients how they may benefit from one's services and what makes one different from others in the same market. A "UVP…is one idea [that] tells prospects how you can benefit them, or why you're different from everyone else in your market" (p. 94).

Montoya and Vandehey argue that specialization is a key ingredient that entices potential clients or others to gravitate toward one. Specifically, they contend:

> Specialization is the key to people attaching unique value to what you offer. In a world where too many people try to be all things to every consumer, being a specialist gives you greater credibility, and makes your unique value proposition, or UVP, that much stronger. (p. 239).

Leading attribute. Montoya and Vandehey (2002) also speak of the importance of having a leading attribute. This is a clear idea that comes to the mind of others when one has a strong personal brand. It is also how one wishes others to be described to other people. They contend that having a leading attribute is a means to convey one's personal brand quickly, as in an "elevator pitch" (p. 242). It acts as a short descriptor and can be used on all of one's printed materials (i.e., business cards, outdoor advertising, Web site). A leading attribute may also act as a means to measure the effectiveness of one's personal brand. By listening to what others are saying and paying attention to trade publications or other industry buzz, one can assess whether one's leading attribute and personal brand are in sync. One's leading attribute is determined by pulling out the most potent idea that one wishes to be known for from one's personal brand statement, which will be described in the following paragraphs.

Positioning. Montoya and Vandehey (2002) also discuss the value of positioning. They advocate writing a positioning as well as a personal branding statement. Beginning with positioning, it differs from specialization in that it deals with how one is perceived by others. Specialization is concerned with the value one offers, whereas positioning entails the emotions one evokes in others. Furthermore, positioning identifies one with a single, powerful idea and it conveys to consumers where one fits in with the competition. Finally, a clear, concise, powerful positioning statement conveys to others three things:

(a) who one is, (b) what one does, and (c) what makes one different or how one creates value.

These three positioning elements equate into one's PBS. Montoya and Vandehey (2002) instruct people to take the three positioning elements and put them into a single sentence to craft a PBS. They caution that some editing is normal with the end goal being a clear, concise statement.

While a PBS must be carefully and concisely crafted, it is something that no one will ever see. A PBS is designed as a private beacon for one's brand. It's a vehicle that is a continual reminder of the professional niche one has chosen and the value one offers to the market. It acts as an invisible directional sign that determines the focus of all of one's messages and marketing. One's PBS is intended to ensure consistency in all that one does in regard to his or her personal brand.

Training

As referenced at the start of this Chapter an overview of training evaluation methodology will be discussed. Because this research entailed a training program it is important to explore the topic of training evaluations. This section of the paper will examine: the purpose of training; evaluating training; pretest and posttest measures; experimental and control groups, and; time series.

Brinkerhoff (2006) offers that the principal purpose of training is to efficiently and effectively assist learners in acquiring new skills and knowledge that are relevant to their job. Furthermore, these new skills or knowledge should affect behaviors the learners demonstrate on the job. Whether that be adopting new behaviors or improving existing ones. Asgar (1990) states that because a training course has specific objectives then only skills directly related to it should be included in the program. Furthermore, he argues that the training activities should mirror what a person does on the job. That is, Asgar says, “If you expect trainees to apply what you are teaching them back on the job, design learning activities that require them to use the same behavior they must in real life” (p. 50). Carnevale and Schultz (1990) take it further by stating, “A training program is a success if it achieves timely results consistent with pre-established participant objectives related to wider organizational goals” (p. S-15).

A method used to determine if the training program has achieved its objectives is that of evaluation. The general aim of evaluation is to compare what was promised or predicted from the training with what the actual or real outcomes were. The intention behind evaluation is to detect what can be improved, validate what is effective, and optimize what individuals and organizations may learn. Bell and Kerr (1987) argue that not only must the training program itself be excellent but that it must also get results. Furthermore, they contend that the results are revealed via evaluation.

A common evaluation method is that of Kirkpatrick (1976) who coined the hierarchical structure of: level 1 – reaction; level 2 – learning; level 3 – behavior; and, level 4 - results. Level 1 entails measuring the participants’ immediate reaction to the training at the time of the training. This is generally conducted via written evaluation forms at the conclusion of the training program. Level 2 is a measurement of the learning that the participants gained from the program. This may include knowledge, skills, techniques or behaviors. Often a pretest and posttest evaluation at the beginning and conclusion of the training program is conducted to assess the acquisition of learning. Level 3 measures behavioral changes back on the job. That is, the new skills, knowledge or behaviors the participants employ back at work. Thus, because level 3 evaluations are concerned with behavior or performance changes back on the job there is a need to record performance both before the training and after going back to work. Finally, Level 4 is a measurement on the organization's return on investment. For instance, how the training program reduced costs, improved quality, increased productivity, and the like.

Phillips (1996) added a fifth level to Kirkpatrick's (1976) existing grouping. This additional level is called return on investment (ROI). The purpose is to assess if the monetary results of the training exceeded the cost of the actual program. Phillips defines the following ROI formula to answer that question:

$$\text{ROI} = \frac{\text{(Net Program Benefits}}{\text{(Program Costs)}} \times 100$$

Returning back to Kirkpatrick, several authors recommend pretest and posttest measures to assess level 2 outcomes (Bell & Kerr, 1987; Carnevale & Schultz, 1990; Cohen, 2005; Warr, Allan & Birdi, 1999). For example, Carnevale and Schultz give the example of Aetna Life Insurance Company who instituted a claims processing training program for new hires. A pretest indicated that the new employees had limited knowledge of how to process claims while a posttest (administered after the training) revealed significant gains in learning. Thus, the pretest and posttest measures provided evaluative evidence of the training's merit. Likewise, Warr, Allan and Bridi argue that, "It is preferable to measure training outcomes in terms of change from pretest to posttest, rather than merely through attainment (posttest only) scores" (p. 351).

Some authors report collecting posttest data 2 to 3 months following a training intervention (Birnbrauer, 1987; Burkett, 2005; Tannenbaum & Woods, 1992). Birnbrauer advocates conducting a posttest evaluation 3 months after a training intervention so that the learners have time to put into practice what they have learned. Burkett indicates that in order to assess level 3 (behavior) data that posttest evaluations should occur 2 months following the training intervention. A specific example that includes a posttest evaluation at the 3 month mark is described by Tannenbaum and Woods. This was a leadership development intervention for supervisors at an operating center of a large financial services company. The program consisted of 9 classroom modules on various leadership topics including problem solving, coaching and counseling, interviewing, performance reviews, and setting personnel policies. Modules were 1 – 2 days in length and were conducted over a 13-week period. The evaluation design included level 1 (reaction), level 2 (learning), and level 3 (behavior) data. At the conclusion of each module level 1 data were collected via a participant evaluation sheet. To assess level 2 data, subject matter tests were created for 7 of the 9 training modules. Learners were given a pretest and posttest at the beginning and end of these particular modules. Improvement in a participant's score after training was an indicator that learning had occurred. Level 3 data were assessed via questionnaires. First, a questionnaire was sent to the learner and his/her respective manager approximately 2 weeks prior to the commencement of the training program. The questionnaire covered 10 performance related dimensions. Consequently, 3 months after the program the same questionnaires were administered again. An improvement in a learner's rating was an indicator that a behavior change had occurred. The overall findings of the study indicated a positive reaction to the training, increased knowledge, and some improved behaviors.

Carnevale and Schultz (1990) assert that pretest and posttest measures by themselves cannot prove that positive changes in learners are due solely to the training.

Thus, in addition to pretest and posttest measures the use of experimental and control groups are also advocated by several authors (Bell & Kerr, 1987; Carnevale & Schultz, 1990; Cohen, 2005; Pine & Tingley, 1993; Turner & Barling, 2005). Because outside influences can cause changes in learners (i.e., economic conditions) then using a control group increases the ability to determine whether changes are indeed attributable to the training. A control group consists of individuals who receive the same treatment as the experimental group except that they do not go through the actual training program. Upon completion of the training program if it is found that the experimental group has made greater performance gains than the control group it may be inferred that the training program is responsible. As Cohen describes it, a control group is required in order to effectively assess the impact of training on job performance. However, Carnevale and Schultz caution that this method is most effective when the experimental and control group members share nearly equivalent characteristics.

Pine and Tingley (1993) offer an example of the use of an experimental and control group. Theirs was a study at Garrett Engine Division in which a 2 day team building program took place with the maintenance group. Each team comprised of a supervisor and various hourly employees representing trades such as electricians, mechanics, and plumbers. All of the teams reported to a common manager. The experimental group received team building training while the control group did not. A posttest level 2 evaluation of the experimental group showed that their knowledge of team building concepts improved as compared with both their pretest levels and scores of the control group.

Bernthal (1995) also advocates the use of pretest and posttest evaluations, along with experimental and control groups. Moreover, he contends that the credibility of the training program is improved if the evaluation's findings can be replicated. Furthermore, he asserts that evaluations should take several forms including self assessments, multi-rater assessments, focus groups, and behavioral simulations. He also advocates conducting not only a pre-training assessment but a long term follow-up one, too. Similarly, Withers (2009) advocates the practice of evaluating more than once and doing it over a period of time to assess what participants have retained.

Another type of evaluation is called time series. Here, training outcomes are collected at periodic intervals both before and after the intervention. One advantage of the time series design is that it assesses if training outcomes are sustained over an extended period. Such an evaluation design often is often used to assess training programs that aim to improve readily observable outcomes (i.e., safety, productivity, absences).

Komaki, Barwick and Scott (1978) describe a time series evaluation that was used in a food manufacturing plant. The purpose of the training intervention was to improve the number of safe work behaviors. In addition, both an experimental and control group was used. The Makeup Department served as the control group, while the Wrapping Department was the experimental one. The experimental group went through a training program on safe work behaviors. Data were collected from both groups via observation. The observations took place 65 times over a 25 week period. Results indicated a dramatic increase in the number of safe behaviors within the experimental group. Specifically, during the first week of observation the experimental group obtained a 100% score in safe behaviors. After the second week the score was at least 90% and throughout the entire observation period it did not fall below 83%. In contrast, the control group did not enjoy improvements during the observation period.

In summary, evaluations help determine the results of a training intervention. Evaluating training can occur at the levels of reaction, learning, behavior, results, and ROI. Factors that can strengthen evaluation include pretest and posttest measures, a control and experimental group, and time series.

Summary

The first lens that this research project addressed was that of executive coaching, which is an evolving leadership development strategy that appears not only to be a mainstay in business, but one that has no signs of slowing down (Morgan et al., , 2005; ICF, 2008a). With its apparent benefits and outcomes (McGovern et al., 2001; Morgan et al.; Natale & Diamante, 2005; Phillips, 2007; Schlosser et al., 2006; Wasylyshyn, 2003), it is no wonder that coaching seems to have found a permanent place at the corporate business table. The results produced by coaching are a result of a number of influencing factors, including the willingness of the client (or executive) to be coached (Johnson, 2007), having a process that frames the coaching relationship (Kilburg, 1996; Natale & Diamante), establishing trust and confidentiality between the coach and coachee (Morgan et al.; Natale & Diamante; Peterson, 1996), and working with a coach who possesses and uses a variety of skills that propels the client's growth and development (Evered & Selman, 1989; King & Eaton, 1999; Tobias, 1996; Whitworth et al., 1998).

Looking at the other lens of this research paper, branding is a long-standing business strategy that entered the world of individual people slightly more than a decade ago (Peters, 1997). Since Peters' seemingly startling pronouncement in a magazine article that, “We are CEOs of our own companies: Me Inc” (p. 84), other authors have written on the subject (Arruda & Dixson, 2007; Lam 2003; McNally & Speak 2002; Montoya, 2002; Montoya and Vandehey, 2002; O’Brien, 2007). Like the effects reported in coaching, these and other authors contend that discovering and living one’s personal brand results in a variety of internally fulfilling and externally satisfying outcomes (Arruda & Dixson; Lam; McNally & Speak; Montoya; Montoya & Vandehey; O’Brien). As with coaching, there are frameworks that guide the process and stages toward uncovering one’s brand (Arruda & Dixson; McNally & Speak; Montoya). Once uncovered, one must be attentive to measuring and continuing to build one’s brand (McNally & Speak; Montoya & Vendehey) in order to maintain and enhance outcomes. Thus, brand building does not have a specific end, but is a continuous process of measurement and refinement.

Thus, melding together the concepts of executive coaching and personal brand was the intention of this research paper. Combined, these two ideas add to the body of research on these two topics.

This qualitative, exploratory study intended to induce the process by which an executive coach may be trained on how to do personal brand coaching, the abilities of the coach pretest, posttest, and post-posttest in regard to specific personal brand matters, and the satisfaction levels of personal brand clients pretest and posttest.

Chapter Three: Methods

This chapter describes the research methods that were used to address the purpose of this study. The focus of this chapter is on the research design, sources of data, data collection procedures, data implementation and integration, ethical considerations, and analysis process.

Research Design: Grounded Theory and Phenomenology

A qualitative approach was well suited to this inquiry because this research aimed to understand: (a) the process by which an executive coach may be trained in personal brand coaching, (b) the abilities of coaches as they relate to particular personal branding areas (as described in Chapter One and later again in this chapter), and (c) the satisfaction levels of coachees as a result of personal brand coaching. A qualitative approach lent itself well for several reasons, as described by Creswell (2003). One reason is that qualitative research takes place in the natural setting of the phenomenon being examined. This may entail the researcher going to the office or other location of the subject(s). Qualitative research employs multiple research methods that are interactive and humanistic in nature. Additionally, qualitative research is emergent rather than highly controlled. This includes flexibility with the research questions and fluidity in the data collection process. Moreover, at its heart, qualitative research is interpretive in that the researcher translates the data. Finally, qualitative research asks the investigator to reflect systematically upon his or her experience, knowledge, biases, interest in, and values about the phenomena being studied. A qualitative approach was used because the nature of this research project aligned nicely with the above mentioned elements.

Specifically, for research question 1, the study followed a grounded theory approach. For research questions 2 and 3, a phenomenological approach was taken. The rationale for this is described in the next two sections.

Grounded Theory

The tactic for research question 1 was that of grounded theory. Glaser and Strauss (1967) originally conceptualized this research approach, with other authors following suit and adding new perspectives over time (Glaser, 1978; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Fundamentally, in a grounded theory project, the researcher seeks to attain a general, abstract theory in regard to a process, action, or interaction that is grounded in the views of the study participants (Creswell, 2003). Thus, a grounded-theory approach was well suited for research question 1, as it aimed to understand the process by which an executive coach may be trained in conducting personal brand coaching.

As indicated by Blumer (1969), grounded theory is based upon symbolic interactionism in that what is considered reality is ever evolving and negotiated among the participating parties. Within the context of grounded theory, there is an interest in process and change, thus the research questions are formed in such a manner (Morse & Richards, 2002). Stated more directly, Morse and Richards contend the following in regard to grounded theory:

> The methods of making and analyzing data reflect a commitment to understanding the ways in which reality is socially constructed. It is these processes of change and social construction that the researcher examines, identifying stages and phases. The assumption is that through detailed exploration, with theoretical sensitivity, the researcher can construct theory grounded in data. (p. 55)

Generally, grounded theory research begins with the seemingly simple question: "What's going on?" (Morse & Richards, 2002, p. 55). From a grounded-theory perspective, this is a perfectly suitable and desirable starting point, as the researcher wishes to “learn from the participants how to understand a process or situation” (p. 55). At its essence, research using grounded theory generally expects change to occur.

A fundamental concept associated with grounded theory is theoretical sensitivity. Here, “the researcher seeks theory, constantly works with data records and records of ideas to tease from them the concepts and the linkages that might generate theoretical insight” (Morse & Richards, 2002, p. 56). The aim of the researcher is to seek integration and alignment with emerging concepts and data. The end result sought by the researcher is to develop a theory that is derived from, or grounded in, data.

Thus, as research question 1 regards the process by which an executive coach may be trained in personal brand coaching, a grounded theory approach was well suited.

Phenomenology

For research questions 2 and 3, a phenomenological approach was used, as it allowed the researcher to understand the meaning of phenomena (Morse & Richards, 2002). This type of research allows for a descriptive, reflective, interpretative, and engaging method for investigating the experience. Phenomenology’s beginnings are attributed to the work of German philosopher Edmund Husserl, and then later by Martin Heidegger. The essence in phenomenological research is on the lived experience. That is, the “… individual’s perceptions of his or her presence in the world at the moment when things, truths, or values are constituted” (Morse & Richards, 2002, p. 44).

Moreover, for research questions 2 and 3, a phenomenological approach was chosen in that it concentrates on the personal experiences and the lived meanings that events have on people. In this case, the phenomena that was experienced by the subjects was the personal brand training (for the coaches), the use of personal brand coaching techniques (by the coaches), and receiving personal brand coaching (for the clients).

To gain a further understanding of the phenomenological approach, a brief description of it is useful. Phenomenological research has four tenets: temporality (lived time), spatiality (lived space), corporeality (lived body), and relationality or community (lived human relations) (van Manen, 1990). In this sense, human existence is meaningful, and thus, the focus is on the lived experience. Furthermore, “Human behavior occurs in the context of relationship to things, people, events, and situations” (Morse & Richards, 2002, p. 45).

Through reading, reflection, and writing, the researcher translates the lived experience into textual context. According to Ray (1994) and van Manen (1990), phenomenological investigators employ a number of approaches in order to gain insights into the research matter, including tracing etymological sources, searching idiomatic phrases, obtaining experiential descriptions, observing and reflecting on phenomenological literature, and continually writing and rewriting. Words or phrases are identified that describe particular aspects of the lived experience, which may be grouped and labeled. Likewise, words or phrases that the researcher deems to be irrelevant may be eliminated. The researcher then clusters and labels groups of expression that are similar in nature.

However, Morse and Richards (2002) caution that phenomenological research is iterative rather than stepwise or linear. Nonetheless, with that in mind, some phenomenological research methods have been identified. Beginning with van Manen (1990), the researcher starts with his or her own experience, which is followed by trace etymological sources of the phenomena and a search for idiomatic phrases. The investigator may also obtain experiential descriptions from other sources such as personal interviews, experiential anecdotes, and descriptions from literature. From there, the researcher conducts thematic analysis by writing and rewriting.

Another phenomenological methodology is a series of five steps, as expressed by Giorgi (1997). These are described as: (a) gathering verbal data, (b) reading the data, (c) breaking data into some kind of parts, (d) organizing and expressing the data from a disciplinary perspective, and (e) fusing and summarizing the data for the purposes of communicating it to the scholarly community.

Finally, a third method of phenomenological research is offered by Spiegelberg (1975), who describes seven steps in order to reach the essence of the phenomenon. It begins with intuition, which entails developing one's consciousness by looking and listening attentively. Next, is analyzing in which the researcher identifies the structure of the phenomenon through conversations with the participant(s). Following that is describing the phenomenon; however, one must be cautioned against making premature descriptions. The next two steps include watching modes of appearing and exploring the phenomenon in consciousness. It is at this phase that the investigator reflects on the relationships or structural affinities of the phenomenon. Finally, the last two stages are suspending belief (phenomenological reduction) and interpreting concealed meanings.

One matter of which phenomenological researchers must be keenly aware is their previous knowledge of the lived experience at hand. That is, in phenomenological research, the investigator is asked to set aside previous notions of the phenomenon being studied so that biases do not creep in. Thus, it is emphasized that the researcher makes use of what is called bracketing, or rather that he or she set aside previous knowledge (Morse & Richards, 2002). As a result, the researcher brackets or sets away theories, previous experience, and prior knowledge in order to encounter the phenomenon in a clean or new manner. Bracketing is accomplished by the researcher making written notes about his or her previous experience and/or knowledge.

Research Design: Coding, Categorizing, Conceptualizing and Abstraction

This section discusses how the data was coded, categorized, conceptualized, and abstracted. It will also discuss similarities and differences among these topics as they pertain to grounded theory and phenomenological research.

Coding entails the researcher taking raw data and beginning to make sense of it. That is, codes are the names or labels given to the concepts that are derived from the information (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Coding is an interactive process that involves such techniques as asking questions about the data and making comparisons between the data. In this regard, coding is digging deep into the data in order to derive concepts to represent the data and then developing those concepts further. Thus, coding goes well beyond simply affixing a label or paraphrasing. Additionally, coding is common to qualitative research, including that of a grounded theory and phenomenological nature. Thus, for this project, the researcher engaged in it for all of the research questions.

Categories are higher-level concepts that are derived from lower-level data and are sometimes referred to as themes. Categories “represent relevant phenomena and enable the [researcher] to reduce and combine data” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 159). Interestingly, “During coding, the data ‘make’ categories as the researcher is alerted to concepts, themes, patterns, and surprises with new meanings” (Morse & Richards, 2002,

p. 132). In other words, new categories come forth as the researcher achieves an understanding of the complex and rich data. It is through the process of interacting with and coding the data that concepts naturally emerge.

The researcher for this particular study engaged in both coding and categorizing in order to move the data from a complex state toward a theoretical framework. The researcher allowed codes, categories, and themes to emerge from the data as necessary. As the data transformed into themes the researcher collapsed similar themes into one and disaggregated dissimilar ones into two or more. Furthermore, as the researcher analyzed the data she relied upon both direct quotations of the subjects, as well as her own intuition, to create said themes. This occurred in all three of the research questions.

From here, the researcher moved into conceptualizing. This allows for “building frameworks of concepts that map or image the subjects of the research” (Morse & Richards, 2002, p. 133). It should be noted that not all categories develop into concepts. Thus, the researcher in this project engaged in doing so when appropriate and in an effort to move from description to analysis.

Because this research project is both from a grounded theory and phenomenological perspective, abstraction of the data occurred differently, based upon those two research methodologies. From a grounded-theory perspective, abstraction comes from the data, “but it can be informed by previously derived theories” (Morse & Richards, 2002, p. 135). On the other hand, in phenomenological research, abstraction occurs after the data have been obtained, and furthermore, previous knowledge and/or experience is bracketed. In both grounded theory and phenomenological research, “Abstractions come to some extent ‘up’ from the data rather than ‘down’ from prior theory" (Morse & Richards, p. 136). More specifically, in grounded theory, categories are obtained from an analysis of the data and constant comparisons with other situations. In phenomenological research, abstraction comes from the themes and meanings that arise from the data. Another distinction between grounded theory and phenomenological research is how abstraction is performed. In grounded theory, abstraction is done through theoretical sensitivity, conceptualizing, coding, memo writing, and diagramming, for example. In phenomenological research, abstraction is done via being deeply immersed in the data and maintaining an unwavering focus.

Data Sources

The data sources for this study are the training intervention facilitator, executive coaches, and clients. Moreover, as this is a qualitative project and researcher as instrument is a basic tenet of such, then that concept will also be explored in this section.

Data Sources: Training Intervention Facilitator, Coaches, and Clients

In order to gather data, the researcher worked with Karl Speak, a noted personal brand expert, who facilitated personal brand coach training for a selected group of executive coaches. His qualifications are discussed in the next section of this chapter. The researcher became aware of Speak and his expertise in personal brand as a result of one of her doctoral classes at Pepperdine University in which his book was used as a text. The researcher initiated contact with Speak by making a phone call to his office, Brand Tool Box, in Minneapolis, MN. This resulted in Speak participating in the researcher's project by way of designing the training curriculum for the coaches, identifying potential participants, facilitating the workshop modules, and providing training materials to the coaches.

As discussed in Chapter One, the coach-trainees were recruited by Speak and the researcher. The basis for the selection criteria is also discussed in Chapter One, along with any corresponding limitations of both the recruitment and selection processes. It was determined at the start of the project that if recruitment and selection efforts netted a total of 1–5 coach-trainees, then the researcher would interview all of the subjects pretest, posttest and post-posttest and this project would take the form of an indepth case study. If the recruitment and selection efforts resulted in 6–10 coach-trainees, then all of the subjects would be interviewed accordingly and would be participants in the research project. Finally, if 11 or more coach-trainees were recruited and selected, then 6 of those subjects would participate in the research project and be interviewed by the researcher. If this had been the case, then selection of these 6 individuals would have been done according to purposive means. This would have meant that Speak and the researcher would have collaborated to determine which of the 6 best met the selection criteria as discussed in the next section of this chapter, Subject Qualifications.

Speak and the researcher recruited coaches, with the net result being exactly 6. Thus, all 6 of the coaches participated in the study and were interviewed by the researcher pretest, posttest, and post-posttest. As mentioned in Chapter One, these were individuals with whom Speak and/or the researcher had some familiarity or who had been referred by other executive coaches.

Following the training, the coach-trainees began using personal brand coaching with a minimum of one client. Said client was determined by the coach. This may have been an existing or new client, at the coach’s discretion. The rationale for allowing the coach to identify the client relates to concepts described in Chapter Two that discuss critical elements that define the coach-client relationship. This includes, but is not limited to, being in a collaborative alliance (Natale & Daimante, 2005), trust (Morgan et al., 2005; Natale & Diamante; Ting & Scisco, 2006), confidentiality (Morgan et al.; Natale & Diamante), and rapport (King & Eaton, 1999). Thus, to honor the special relationship that exists between coach and client, and to maintain the integrity of said relationship, the coach identified the client.

The coach made initial contact with the client in regard to the research project, including the concept of being coached on personal brand. Once the coach made contact with the client (whom indicated he or she was interested in receiving personal brand coaching), then the researcher followed up with the client. The purpose was to discuss the study and answer any questions the client had. Thus, the coach was the initial point of contact with the client in regard to the study, followed by the researcher. The coach granted the researcher access to said client by providing the researcher with the client's name and contact information.

A letter of invitation was sent to both the executive coach-trainees and coaching clients who participated in the study. This letter included a description of the proposed research, time frame, and requirements that were asked of the study participants.

Data Source: Researcher as Instrument

Qualitative research is characterized by a number of different elements. One is that of the researcher. In other words, the researcher as instrument. As specified by Merriam (1998), “The qualitative researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. Data are mediated through this human instrument, rather than through inventories, questionnaires, or machines” (p. 20). Merriam further argues that the qualitative inquiry aims to reveal contextual as well as underlying meanings when gathering and interpreting data. Therefore, qualitative research requires a data-collection instrument sensitive enough to do so. Eisner (1991) seems to agree stating, “The self is the instrument that engages the situation and makes sense of it. It is the ability to see and interpret significant aspects. It is this characteristic that provides unique, personal insight into the experience under study” (p. 33). As such, interpretive inquiry relies upon the researcher’s ability to encounter, listen, understand, and, therefore, experience the phenomenon (Piantandia & Garman, 1999).

Developing oneself as instrument requires a meticulous examination of one’s worldviews, experiences, preconceptions, biases, knowledge, and the like. Furthermore, it entails recognizing how all of this affects one’s capacity for being open to and resonating with the phenomenon (Piantandia & Garman, 1999). It is because of all of this that it requires extra sensitivity, analysis, and reflection to create a perspective of detached immersion in the phenomenon (Glaser, 1978).

Qualitative research involves continuous reflexivity and self-reflection on the part of the researcher (Pyett, 2003). Reflexivity refers to a “continual evaluation of subjective responses, intersubjective responses, intersubjective dynamics, and the research process itself” (Finlay, 2002, p. 532). That is, reflexivity “provides an opportunity for the researcher to understand how his or her own experience and understanding of the world affect the research process” (Morrow, 2005, p. 253). Reflection allows the researcher to review continuously his or her “own values, assumptions, beliefs, and biases and [monitor] those as they progress through the study to determine their impact on the study’s data and interpretations” (Mertens, 1998, p. 175).

Reflexivity can be achieved by several means, including the researching asking himself or herself such questions as: How might my knowledge and experience be shaping my analysis?; or Is my interpretation true to the data? Additionally, maintaining a reflection journal from conception to completion of the study is another means of reflexivity that the researcher may adopt. Here, the researcher may keep a continuous record of his or her experiences, reactions, opinions, thoughts, insights, and biases. Moreover, reflexivity may include checking methods, analyses, and interpretations not only from a scholarly perspective, but also from that of the population being researched.

Bias is a characteristic of qualitative research that must be continuously considered. By its nature, qualitative research is subjective and, therefore, the researcher must be aware of his or her own biases. This may be accomplished a number of ways, including bracketing and self-reflection. As discussed in this chapter, bracketing is a means by which the researcher sets aside her or her own knowledge, assumptions, and experience with the phenomenon under study in order to have a fresh perspective. The idea here is that this reduces bias or undue influences on the research. This is often done through the researcher writing extensively about his or her knowledge and experience with the phenomenon. Reflexivity, as discussed above, is another means to reduce bias.

Researcher as instrument is a valuable concept to discuss not only because this is a qualitative study, but also because the data collection methodology is by way of interviews and observation. Merriam (1998) points out, “Humans are best-suited for the task of data collection and are best when using methods that make use of human sensibilities such as interviewing, observing and analyzing” (p. 3). Pope and Mays (1995) state, “In qualitative research, particularly in observational studies, the researcher can be regarded as a research instrument. Allowing for the inescapable fact that purely objective observation is not possible in social science" (p. 111).

In regard to this specific study, the researcher engaged in bracketing and reflexivity, including asking herself such questions as: How does my experience as a coach affect my interpretations?; How does my knowledge of personal brand affect my interpretations?; and What biases might be creeping in? Furthermore, the researcher maintained a reflection journal throughout the study.

Subject Qualifications: Speak, Executive Coaches, and Clients

Several qualifications were identified for the subject participants in order to maintain the integrity of the research project. First, as previously discussed in Chapter One, Speak is an expert in personal brand. He wrote a book on the subject, is the CEO of Brand Tool Box (a brand consulting firm in Minneapolis, MN), and has worked with many large corporations. Second, the executive coach-trainees were experienced executive coaches, and yet they lack specific knowledge, skill, and training in personal brand coaching. They also committed to begin immediately using their newly acquired skills with a minimum of one client following the personal brand coach training intervention. Last, the clients were willing to receive and engage in personal brand coaching.

As discussed in Chapter One, the criteria for recruiting and selecting coaches were as follows. One or more years' experience as an executive coach; experience coaching at an upper-management or executive level (i.e., department director, vice president, chief executive officer); possess an interest in personal brand coaching, but is considered to be a novice on the subject; intellectual abilities that allows the differentiation of concepts and their applications; and experience coaching in a variety of industries.

As previously mentioned, the coaches who participated in this study used either an existing or new client, at their discretion, to conduct personal brand coaching following the training intervention. It should be noted that 5 clients participated in the study, rather than 6. This is because 1 client was not in an upper-management or executive type of role.

Demographics: Coaches and Clients

The researcher obtained the demographics of the coaches and summarized them into Table 4 below.

Table 4

Coach Demographics

Item	Coach A	Coach B	Coach D	Coach D	Coach E	Coach F
Years of coaching experience	8	10	15	15	8	6
Coaching certificates	None	Yes	Yes	None	Yes	None
Coaching specialty, if at all	Business owners, career transition, leadership development	Leadership development	CEO, executive teams, entrepreneurs, business owners, career transition, financial strategies	Career, executive, life	Leadership development	Leadership
College education	B.S. MBA	B.S. M.S.	B.A	B.S. M.S.	BA MA	None
Gender	F	M	F	F	F	F
Age Range	45–50 years	50–55 years	50–55 years	40–45 years	50–55 years	60–65 years
State of residence	CA	CA	CA	CA	MN	MN

The researcher also obtained the demographics of the clients which are summarized in Table 5 below.

Table 5

Client Demographics

Item	Client A	Client B	Client C	Client D	Client E
Title	Director	CEO	Director	Designer/consultant	Sr. Manager
Profession	Marketing	Entrepreneur	Consulting	Design/Environmentally Friendly Construction	Environmental Health & Safety
Yrs. In Profession (Range)	20–25 years	10–15 years	1–5 years	5–10 years	25–30 years
Number of Direct Reports	2	5	n/a	n/a	6
Age Range	40–45 years	45–50 years	35–40 years	30–35 years	50–55 years
Gender	F	F	F	F	F
Marital Status	Married	Married	Married	Married	Married
Number of Children	n/a	1	2	n/a	1
Geographic Location	Midwest	West	Midwest	West	West
How long he or she has had a coach	< 1 month	3 years	1 year	1 year	3 months

Data Collection Procedures

As stated earlier, this research project took a grounded theory and phenomenological approach, and collected data that was qualitative (i.e., observation and semistructured interview questions). A qualitative approach was relevant in order to understand the process of personal brand coach training, the effect (if any) on the abilities of the coaches in regard to personal brand coaching, and the satisfaction levels of clients.

Specifically, data for this research project was collected by four means: (a) a semistructured interview with Speak in regard to the training intervention; (b) observation of the training; (c) pretest, posttest, and post-posttest semistructured interviews with the coach-trainees; and (d) semistructured interviews with the clients regarding satisfaction levels pre- and posttest. The researcher orchestrated and/or administered, as well as analyzed, all of the above .

The following three subsections describe how the data were collected. The next full section of the chapter, Data Implementation and Integration, describes the rationale for employing these methods.

Observation

The researcher used observation as one method for collecting data. This specifically occurred during the intervention, or rather the coach training program led by Speak. As such, the researcher was an observer of each training module. Thus, she sat in, but did not participate in the webinar-based training. As such, the researcher did not raise questions, pose opinions, or otherwise verbally engage in the training. Speak and the coaches were aware of the researcher's observation throughout the training modules.

A brief discussion of observation as a data collection procedure is useful to understand the implications of this technique, as well as the researcher's decision to be a silent observer. Techniques of observation may vary mostly because of the visibility and involvement of the researcher in the setting (Morse & Richards, 2002). The spectrum runs from the participant observer to the nonparticipant observer (Creswell, 2003; Morse & Richards). As such, Morse and Richards offer, "No observer is entirely a participant, and it is impossible to observe in almost every non-experimental situation without some participation" (p. 96). Denzin and Lincoln (2003) seem to concur, stating, "All observation involves the observer's participation in the world being studied. There is no pure, objective, detached observation; the effect of the observer's presence can never be erased" (p. 49).

The use of what is referred to as field notes is common in research that involves observation. As such, Morse and Richards (2002) point out that researchers who engage in observation, coupled with their own interpretation, typically make use of field notes. That is, the researcher observes the phenomenon and then goes away to reflect and write. The researcher may include records of the participants' words in these notes. Creswell (2003) states that field notes may be written in an unstructured or semistructured manner.

There are both advantages and disadvantages to employing observation in research studies. One advantage of using observation is that the researcher has firsthand experience with the phenomena being studied. Additionally, the researcher may record information as it is revealed, including unusual, spontaneous activities.

There are also some cautions to keep in mind while engaging in observational data collection. For example, Morse and Richards (2002) offer that the observer's perspective may vary from that of the participant. Furthermore, they contend that there may be a weak link between reported and actual behavior. Another disadvantage, as pointed out by Creswell (2003), is that the researcher may be perceived as intrusive to the participants and/or may experience difficulty in establishing rapport. Furthermore, ineffective or insufficient listening and observing skills impede the researcher's abilities.

For the purposes of this study, the researcher took on the role of nonparticipant observer. While she sat in on the virtual training sessions that were led by Speak, she took the role of a nonparticipant observer. Thus, she did not contribute by asking questions, making observations, offering ideas, giving suggestions, and the like. This was intended to lessen the perception of the researcher being intrusive.

At the conclusion of each training module, the researcher took time to write field notes on what she observed. These field notes were semistructured, as they followed the training outline Speak provided. To reduce the researcher's perspective being different than that of the participants, the researcher engaged in bracketing (as discussed later in the Data Analysis section of this chapter). The intention here is that by setting aside her own notions and experiences of coaching and personal brand, her perspective and that of the participants will be in alignment.

Semistructured Interviews: Rationale for Data Collection Methodology

According to Fontana and Frey (2003), researchers commonly use interviews as a data gathering method. Within the context of the interview there is a basic belief that the results are trustworthy and accurate and that the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee that may develop during the process does not result in a biased account (Atkinson & Silverman, 1997; Silverman, 1993).

Fontana and Frey (2003) further declare the potency interviews can generate, stating, “Interviewing is one of the most common and powerful ways in which we try to understand our fellow human beings” (p. 62). However, they caution that interviews are not neutral tools and should be approached with care, as they are “active interactions between two (or more) people leading to negotiated, contextually based results” (p. 62). They further espouse, “The spoken or written word has always a residue of ambiguity, no matter how carefully we word the questions and how carefully we report or code the answers” (p. 61). Thus, the interviewer should take prudent steps to help ensure he or she is neutral by having a standard set of questions that are asked of all subjects, along with refraining from showing his or her opinion of the research questions and following up to responses with clarifying questions (Fontana & Frey, 2003; Morse & Richards, 2002).

Semistructured interview: Training intervention. For the purposes of collecting data on the process to train coaches on personal brand coaching, a series of semistructured interview questions was used (see Appendix A) by the researcher and asked of Speak. This approach was intended to create a general process to describe the steps of personal brand coach training. The interview lasted approximately 30 minutes and took place over the phone. The interview was documented via note taking and audio recording.

Semistructured interviews: Coaches. To collect data from the coach-trainees, semistructured interviews took place pretest, posttest, and post-posttest. The purpose was to collect data regarding the executive coaches' abilities in personal brand coaching prior to the training intervention, at the conclusion of the intervention, and then 3 months later. Specifically, selected areas of personal brand coaching characteristics were chosen and the coaches were asked questions regarding these. The concept, citation, and interview questions are depicted in Table 6.

Table 6

Research Question 2: Concept, Citation, and Interview Questions

Concept	Citation	Interview Question
Personal brand v. personal image	Arruda and Dixson (2007) McNally and Speak (2002) Montoya (2002)	How do you coach a client on matters of personal brand rather than personal image?
Authenticity	McNally and Speak (2002) Montoya and Vandehey (2002)	How do you coach a client on living a personal brand that is authentic?
Personal brand promise	Arruda and Dixson (2007) McNally and Speak (2002) Montoya and Vandehey (2002)	How do you coach a client on matters regarding developing a personal brand promise?

(*table continues*)

Concept	Citation	Interview Question
Distinctiveness	Arruda and Dixson (2007) McNally and Speak (2002) Montoya and Vandehey (2002)	How do you coach a client on creating a personal brand that is distinctive?

The semistructured interviews took place via telephone and were recorded. Each interview lasted approximately 15–30 minutes. Prior to the interviews, the coaches were sent an e-mail with the following information: a reminder of the purpose of the study, the date and time of their scheduled interview, a reiteration that their confidentiality will be maintained, and a thank you for participating. These steps took place for all three phases of data collection (pretest, posttest, and post-posttest).

Semistructured interviews: Clients. As mentioned previously, semistructured interviews occurred with the clients pre- and posttest. In other words, these interviews occurred just before the clients received personal brand coaching and again 3 months later. The questions were intended to assess levels of satisfaction experienced by the clients, as described previously in this chapter. The questions were based upon the QOLI (Frisch, 1994), and the SWLS (Diener et al., 1985). A discussion of these instruments is useful in understanding the researcher’s rationale in relying upon them.

Beginning with the QOLI (Frisch, 1994), this instrument was used as one basis for formulating the semistructured client interview questions because its aim is to assess the “quality of life and subjective well being to the fields of clinical psychology, health psychology, psychiatry, and other branches of medicine” (p. 1). In particular, the QOLI is “based on an exhaustive review of [clinical] literature…[as well as]… studies identifying particular areas of life that are associated with overall life satisfaction and happiness” (p.

6). Additionally, the areas of life included in the QOLI "are empirically associated with overall satisfaction and happiness" (p. 6). Therefore, given the above rationale, the researcher used the QOLI as one of the foundational sources for the basis of the semistructured client interviews.

The other instrument that laid the foundation for the interview questions for the clients was the SWLS (Diener et al., 1985). This instrument was designed around the concept that subjects should be asked for their overall judgment of their life as a means to measure satisfaction. As Diener et al., argue, "We need to take the person for their overall evaluation of life, rather than summing across their satisfaction with specific domains to obtain a measure of overall life satisfaction" (p. 71). Thus, through semistructured interviews, clients were asked to report their levels of satisfaction as they relate to life.

As discussed in Chapter One, the SWLS is a five-question, 7-point, Likert-type scale. In its original form, the instrument is depicted in Table 7.

Table 7

Satisfaction With Life Scale

Item	Rate 1–7
In most ways my life is close to my ideal	
The conditions of my life are excellent	
I am satisfied with my life	
So far I have gotten the important things I want in life	
If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.	

Note. Rating scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = slightly disagree; 4 = neither agree nor disagree; 5 = slightly agree; 6 = agree; 7 = strongly agree

Interview format. Now that the rationale has been discussed regarding the use of the QOLI and SWLS as the basis of the semistructured client interviews, let us focus upon the interviews. As discussed in Chapter One, the concept, citation, and questions are depicted in Table 8.

Table 8

Research Question 3: Concept, Citation, and Interview Questions

Concept	Citation	Interview Question
Work	QOLI Arruda and Dixson (2007)	How do you describe your current satisfaction level of your work?
Friends	QOLI McNally and Speak (2002)	How do you describe your current satisfaction level of your relationship with your friends?
Relatives	QOLI McNally and Speak (2002)	How do you describe your current satisfaction level of your relationship with your relatives?
Life	SWLS Diener et al. (1985)	How do you describe your current satisfaction level of your life?

The interviews took place via telephone and were recorded. Before the interviews, each client was sent e-mail reminding them of the study, thanking them for their participation, informing them of their scheduled interview time and date, and reiterating that their confidentiality will be maintained. These steps were taken both pre- and posttest.

Rationale for Measuring Satisfaction

Now that the rationale has been established for using the QOLI and SWLS as the basis for client interview questions, it is valuable to also discuss the relevance of measuring satisfaction. According to Diener et al. (1985), life satisfaction is defined as a “cognitive judgmental process dependent upon a comparison of one’s circumstances with what is thought to be an appropriate standard” (p. 71). Accordingly, the less one perceives a discrepancy between one’s aspirations and accomplishments, the higher the level of satisfaction. Diener et al. contend, “Judgments of satisfaction are dependent upon a comparison of one’s circumstances with what is thought to be an appropriate standard” (p. 71). Furthermore, this standard is determined by the individual in question. In this regard, Diener et al. propose that the judgment of how satisfied a person is with his or her current conditions rests upon a comparison standard set by that individual. In other words, this standard is not externally determined or established. Diener et al. offer the example that while health, energy, and the like may be desirable, individuals will place a different weight or value upon them. Similarly, Campbell, Converse, and Rodgers (1976) indicate that the concept of satisfaction varies from person to person in that “what will satisfy one will be totally unsatisfactory to the other” (p. 9). As with Diener et al., Campbell et al. contend that there are two factors that determine an individual’s satisfaction level in any particular domain of satisfaction. That is, how the person perceives the attribute within a domain and the standard against which he or she judges that attribute. Going further, Campbell et al. argue that the individual’s assessment may be derived from any or all of the following criteria: aspiration, expectation, equity, reference group, personal needs, and personal values. Aspiration refers to the situation that the individual hopes to attain. Expectation levels regard the situation that the individual believes he or she is likely to attain in the near future. Equity levels refer to what the individual thinks should be true of his or her situation (if perfect justice reigns) coupled with how much he or she invests in it relative to others. Reference group is what the individual believes to be true of the situations of other people with whom he or she identifies. Personal needs encompass the amount of a specific reward he or she may desire (i.e., amount of savings to feel secure, type of housing to feel comfortable).

Finally, personal values are a criterion that concerns intangibles such as freedom, creativity, equality, independence, and so forth.

Shin and Johnson (1978) view life satisfaction as “a global assessment of a person’s quality of life according to his chosen criteria” (p. 478). Lehman (1983) discusses quality of life as being “the sense of well-being and satisfaction experienced by people under their current conditions” (p. 143). As stated in Chapter One, and reiterated here, Frisch (1994) points out:

> Life satisfaction is equated with quality of life and refers to a person’s subjective evaluation of the degree to which his or her most important needs, goals, and wishes have been fulfilled. Thus, the perceived gap between what a person has and what he or she wants to have in valued areas of life determines his or her satisfaction or dissatisfaction. (p. 2)

Additionally, measurement efforts have centered on the perceptions of life satisfaction as individually evaluated (generally called subjective) and objectively accessible characteristics of a person’s situation (usually referred to as objective; Greenley, Greenberg, & Brown, 1997). The focus of this research project in regard to the coaching clients was on subjective evaluations of life satisfaction.

Data Implementation and Integration

One aspect of the data collection procedures that should be discussed is the implementation sequence. Table 9 depicts the implementation order.

Table 9

Implementation of Data Collection Steps

Subject(s)	Time A	Time B	Time C
Karl Speak	Pretest interview	Intervention/Observation	
Coaches	Pretest interviews	Posttest interviews	Post-posttest interviews
Clients		Pretest interviews	Posttest interviews

Data Analysis

This section will discusses principles of grounded theory and phenomenological research, bracketing, meaning labels, and coding and clustering data into core themes.

Grounded Theory Guiding Principles

In grounded theory, the aim is to understand the subject's experience through a rigorous and detailed approach. It is achieved through an iterative process by which the researcher becomes more grounded in the data. In this regard, the researcher creates richer concepts of how the phenomenon under study really operates. "Grounded theory [provides] the framework for taking observations, intuitions, and understandings to a conceptual level and [provides] the guidelines for the discovery and formulation of theory" (Orona, 1997, p. 182).

A concept at the heart of grounded theory is that of theoretical sensitivity. In this regard, the researcher seeks theory from the data. This is achieved by continuously working with the data to tease out concepts and then linking them together to generate a theoretical framework. In essence, the goal is discovering theory from the data.

Generally, the researcher uses verbatim transcripts and identifies themes from examples contained within. These categories and concepts arise directly from the data. These concepts are then linked into a theoretical framework. The identification of categories and terms by the subjects is referred to as in vivo coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Other concepts Corbin and Strauss (2008) advocate are memos and diagrams. They point out that when a researcher writes a memo or designs a diagram, a certain amount of analysis automatically occurs. Memos and diagrams force the researcher to move beyond raw data into concepts. Additionally, "They enable [the researcher] to use creativity and imagination, often stimulating new insights into data" (p. 120). Thus, memos and diagrams are not simply stagnant repositories of information, but rather living, breathing documents. They contend that memo writing should occur continuously from the beginning to end of the research project, whereas diagrams are more sporadic. However, both "begin as rudimentary representations of thought and grow in complexitiy, density, clarity, and accuracy as the research progresses" (p. 118).

Corbin and Strauss (2008) make a distinction between memos and field notes. While field notes may contain some analytic remarks, memos go into much more depth regarding the subject. Memos are longer and are generally written in a conceptual form after the researcher has left the field. Thus, memos are more complex and analytical than field notes.

Diagrams can prove to be useful to the researcher, as they can raise his or her thinking beyond the facts and into concepts and relationships. This supports the integration of ideas. Diagrams can also reduce the data to their essence. That is, get at the very heart of the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Phenomenological Guiding Principles

Phenomenological research is guided by the principles of epoche, transcendental-phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and a synthesis of meanings and essences (Moustakas, 1994). These principles are described briefly below.

The epoche principle is the process of bracketing (Moustakas, 1994). Prior to interviewing subjects, the researcher creates a written account of his or her experiences in order to bracket that knowledge from the interviewees. As such, the epoche phase asks that the researcher first look at the world through his or her own perspectives, and then set those thoughts and/or experiences aside. Thus, the researcher gains clarity and freedom from past experiences and/or knowledge in order to remain open to the interviewees' perspectives.

The second guiding principle in phenomenological research is known as transcendental-phenomenological reduction (Moustakas, 1994). In this phase, the researcher creates a series of nonrepetitive statements that depict the phenomenon being studied in its totality. The result is "a textual description of the meanings and essence of the phenomenon" (p. 34).

The next phase is deemed imaginative variation (Moustakas, 1994). Here, the researcher forms a description of how the phenomenon is experienced (Creswell, 1998) along with the circumstances that led to an experience and association with it (Moustakas, 1994).

Following that phase is the last one, which is a synthesis of meanings and essences (Moustakas, 1994). In this phase, the researcher constructs an overall account of the meaning and essence of the experience (Creswell, 1998). In this manner, the researcher creates a textual-structural portrayal of the meanings and essences of each subject's experience.

Bracketing

As previously discussed, the researcher employed bracketing during the epoche phase of research. To reiterate, the purpose is for the researcher to set aside his or her previous notions, experience, or knowledge of the phenomenon in order to see it from the fresh perspectives of the subjects.

For the purposes of this study, and in respect of the epoche process or bracketing, the researcher created a description of her own experiences with coaching and personal brand, which appears in Appendix C of this document.

Meaning Labels

As part of the data analysis process, meaning labels were assigned to each significant statement that was coded thematically. This then formed clusters of statements that related to the same or similar themes. Colazzi (1978) contends that a meaning label is a phrase assigned by the researcher that reflects the basic meaning of the significant statement. However, the researcher should be cautioned that some statements can have more than one meaning or expression of thought. To aid in this, Ngwenyama (2001) offers some guidelines aimed at reducing significant statements to their invariant constituents by asking:

1. Does it [the significant statement] contain a moment of the experience that is a necessary and sufficient constituent for understanding it?
2. If so, is it possible to abstract and label it, without violating the formulation presented by the participant? (p. 15)

For the purposes of this project, the researcher read and reflected upon each statement made by the subjects, and then asked: What is the meaning of it? This aided the researcher in developing meaning labels.

Coding and Clustering Into Core Themes

The following paragraphs focus on data analyses methods that this researcher employed during this project. These are coding, themes or categories, and conceptualizing. Coding is the means for simplifying and focusing specific characteristics of the research data (Morse & Richards, 2002). This makes the data pliable, allowing the researcher the ability to categorize and organize the information.

On the surface, coding implies merely labeling. However, the researcher must move beyond that to which Morse and Richards (2002) refer to as “linking” (p. 115). Linking “leads you from the data to the idea, and from the idea to all the data pertaining to that idea” (p. 115). Furthermore, coding serves the purpose of fracturing an idea. That is, breaking the data up. Corbin and Strauss (2008) contend that coding is much more then paraphrasing and is instead an interactive process between the researcher and the data. This includes asking questions of the data and making comparisons between the data. From this emerges concepts.

Topic coding entails gathering material by topic in order to seek patterns among the information and is used in nearly all qualitative research studies (Morse & Richards, 2002). Topic coding is generally used as an initial step leading up to more finely tuned coding once categories are identified. It is also used for information retrieval, description, categorization, and reflection and is employed in nearly all qualitative research projects. “It is necessary in any project where there is emphasis on finding all the data about an aspect of the site or experience studied, or on accurately portraying the distribution of different attitudes, experiences, and so forth” (Morse & Richards, p. 118). Topic coding is generally useful in the first stage of analysis, when the researcher is beginning to ask: What’s going on here? (Morse & Richards). Once categories are identified, then the researcher may use more finely tuned coding.

Topic coding can be achieved in different ways. For instance, if the researcher is using paper to code information then Morse and Richards (2002) suggest that the researcher “identify portions of text as being associated with a particular topic, copy them from the original document, and place them in a labeled topic file” (p. 112). From there, subdivisions within categories may be conceptualized and created. It can also be achieved by manually marking up printed documents, but this is generally reserved for small research projects. Finally, another way to code is via electronic means using a computer.

While topic coding is the most common, it is also the most challenging method to code data in qualitative research. It is an analytic activity, as it requires developing a category, reflecting on where it belongs among all of the growing ideas, ruminating on the data, and determining where data fit with other coded data.

Topic coding then progresses into analytic coding in order to illustrate and develop categories theoretically. From here, the researcher sees new themes, explores more categories and concepts, and pursues comparisons.

Descriptive coding focuses on information about people, places, sites, and so forth (Morse & Richards, 2002). It is a common method in qualitative research because of the need for contextual awareness and is used to store things known about the data (i.e., participants, events). Thus, the researcher may extract or gather this factual knowledge when looking for patterns, explanations, and theories. Descriptive codes are generally used for asking questions of the data, such as: Did men experience the event differently than women?; or Did educated women have a different concept of homelessness than uneducated women?

From these coding methods, themes from the data emerge. Identifying themes or categories is necessary, "When our goal is comprehending and learning, seeing or saying something new, predicting or understanding" (Morse & Richards, 2002, p. 132). This allows the researcher to come to terms with complex data. The identification and coding of themes generally entails copious and detailed memos that are abstract and reflective.

Codes for the data in this research study were developed after the interviews with the training facilitator, coaches, and clients as the data was analyzed and information emerged. Creswell (2003) advocates “getting a sense of the whole” (p. 192) by reading the transcripts and then moving into coding. This relates to Rossman and Rallis’ (1998) contention that qualitative analysis is a continual reflection of the data, including asking questions of the data and writing memos in regard to it. In addition, Denzin and Lincoln (2003) discuss codebooks, which they refer to as organized lists of codes. They suggest, “Good codebooks are developed and refined as the research goes along” (p. 276).

From categorizing, the researcher moves into conceptualizing. As Morse and Richards (2002) offer, conceptualizing is how we move from categorizing to more general, higher-level and abstract constructs.

Ethical Considerations

In this study, ethical considerations for the participation of human subjects were followed. As pointed out by Creswell (2003), “Researchers need to anticipate the ethical issues that may arise during their studies” (p. 62). Typically, such steps include informed consent, right to privacy, and protection from harm (Fontana & Frey, 2003). As such, the subjects in this research project were granted all of these protections.

All research subjects were notified in advance of the purpose of the study and were asked for their consent to participate. Subjects were offered the opportunity to review the written and/or recorded transcripts of their interviews in order to make any changes or clarify any pieces of information. The subjects were assured confidentiality with their individual responses.

Summary

The focus of this research was to understand one process by which executive coaches may be trained in personal brand coaching. Furthermore, this project sought to asses changes (if any) in the abilities of the coaches who participated in the training intervention pertaining to their skill and knowledge of specific personal brand coaching characteristics, as stated earlier in this chapter. Finally, this study aimed to assess the effect, if any, personal brand coaching had upon clients' satisfaction levels.

For the integrity of the study, an individual who is deemed to have expertise in personal brand coaching, Karl Speak, facilitated an intervention. This intervention was a personal brand coach training program for experienced executive coaches who lack personal brand coaching experience, knowledge, and training. The participants of the training intervention were experienced coaches who lacked expertise in personal brand coaching. The clients of said coaches were interviewed to assess changes, if any, in levels of satisfaction.

Chapter Four: Findings

This chapter presents the findings of this grounded theory and phenomenological study. The chapter begins with the results of the first research question: What is the process through which coaches may be trained to then coach on clients on personal brand? The findings that come from this research question were analyzed and are described in a grounded-theory manner. Next, the chapter reveals the results of the other two research questions. The first of which was aimed at the executive coaches and was: How do executive coaches describe their abilities to coach clients in the following matters pretest, posttest and post-posttest? (a) Distinguishing the difference between personal brand and personal image; (b) Living an authentic personal brand; (c) Developing a personal brand promise; (d) Creating personal brand distinctiveness. The third research question was aimed at the clients and was: Immediately following their coach's receipt of personal brand coach training, as well as 3 months later, how do clients report their levels of life satisfaction in regard to work, friends, relatives, and life? Research questions 2 and 3 were analyzed from a phenomenological perspective and their results will be presented in such a manner.

Research Question 1: Findings

The first research question sought to assess the process by which coaches may be trained in personal brand coaching. In light of this, the researcher interviewed Speak individually, and also observed a training program he facilitated for 6 executive coaches. During the training the researcher was a silent observer, took antidotal notes during each session, and transcribed the audio recordings of each session.

Speak designed and facilitated the personal brand training program for executive coaches from May 18 – June 26, 2009. The program was delivered via a webinar-based platform. Coaches called into a telephone conference number, on scheduled dates, and logged into a link on their computer sent by Speak's office. The training took place during five meeting sessions ranging from 60–90 minutes each. The group met once a week, except for one occasion when a week was skipped because of a conflict in Speak's schedule, causing a 2-week gap between the final two sessions. The coaches were provided with the Brand Tool Box Tool Kit consisting of the book, *Be Your Own Brand* (McNally & Speak, 2002); *Personal Brand Handbook* (Brand Tool Box, 2005); and *Personal Brand Tutorial* (Speak, 2009). At the conclusion of the training the coaches were provided with an additional set of these materials to be used with their clients. The researcher was an observer of all of these sessions. She also listened to and transcribed audio recordings of the sessions.

Speak told the researcher that the overall objective of the program was to, "Help individuals use personal brand frameworks to get more out of their lives and to help coaches become more competent so they can coach others" (personal communication, May 13, 2009). Furthermore, by the conclusion of the program, Speak expected to gauge the coaches' competence by them articulating core principles of personal brand and discussing the application of said principles in a coach-client setting. In particular, Speak expected the coaches to be familiar with the three principles of a strong brand, which according to him, are: (a) brands are perceptions; (b) brands are distinctive, relevant, and consistent; and (c) brands make a difference for others. Furthermore, from Speak's perspective, it was expected that coaches would have an understanding of how to coach a client on his or her personal brand platform, assess gaps in perceptions between the client and others, and how to coach the client to manage or close that gap.

Speak reported to the researcher (personal communication, May 13, 2009) that the content and sequence of topics was determined based upon his past experience in conducting similar workshops, presenting information to various audiences, and through speaking engagements. Based upon these experiences, Speak learned to refine the sequence to make the content engaging and impactful.

Speak first held a kickoff session on May 18, 2009, which was intended to introduce participants to the objectives of the program, set group norms, review the curriculum, and dispense the first homework assignment. After giving the coaches some background on himself and his company, Brand Tool Box, he had each one of them introduce themselves, including their coaching background, experience with self-discovery tools, and something unique about themselves.

He then reviewed the overarching learning objectives of the training program, which were to: (a) gain a fundamental understanding of personal brand, (b) apply personal brand concepts to executive coaching, (c) gain a working knowledge of Brand Tool Box Personal Brand Management Tools, (d) develop their own personal brand platform, and (e) assess their own personal brand platform. Following the training objectives, Speak gave the coaches an overview of what would be included in the upcoming four workshop sessions.

The kickoff session concluded with Speak having the coaches write down three words of how people would describe them and he asked them to set this aside for a future session. He then explained the homework assignment, which was to read the book, *Be*

Your Own Brand (McNally & Speak, 2002); complete selected pages of the *Brand Tool Box Personal Brand Handbook* (Brand Tool Box, 2005); develop their brand platform from the handbook; and submit the results to Brand Tool Box's database.

The workshop meetings following the kickoff session provided greater detailed content on personal brand principles and concepts. Sequentially, the topics that were covered in the four remaining training sessions are depicted in Table 10.

Table 10

Personal Brand Coach Training Program

Session Number	Learning Objective	Topics
Session 1 5/29/09	1. The Three Core Principles of a Strong Brand. 2. Defining Your Brand Platform 3. Personal Brand Assessment	Core principles of personal brand: perceptions; distinctiveness, relevancy, and consistency; and making a difference.
Session 2 6/5/09	1. Prioritize the Most Important Values That Are the Core of Your Brand 2. Learn More About the Personal Brand Platform Framework 3. Review Your Personal Brand Platform 4. Personal Brand Promise	Personal brand platform, which consists of one's roles, standards, and styles. Personal brand ethos.
Session 3 6/12/09	1. Learn the Personal Brand Assessment Process and Applications to Coaching	Personal brand assessment to discover how one is perceived by others and compared to how one wishes to be perceived.
Session 4 6/26/09	1. Review Personal Brand Concepts 2. Discuss Personal Brand Coaching Process 3. Review Tools for Personal Brand Coaching 4. Final Thoughts for Implementation of Coaching	Review of concepts from the previous sessions. Interactive discussion on applying personal brand concepts in a coach-client engagement. Materials that will be provided to coaches to use with clients.

The first session on May 29, 2009, began with Speak discussing the benefits of a strong personal brand. Specifically, he indicated that people with strong brands: (a) have a great deal of confidence because they feel they can be more of who they naturally are, (b) make a difference in their relationships with others by using the power of their personal brand, and (c) develop relationships in which their personal brand is recognized more easily and readily. In addition, he indicated that some of the outcomes an individual may experience as a result of a strong personal brand include greater career success, more meaningful and productive relationships, and overall happiness. Furthermore, Speak indicated that his core philosophy is, “Become more of who you are, not less” (personal communication, May 29, 2009). So, for Speak, a strong personal brand is not a veneer but instead entails authenticity. In fact, he said, “A brand is not a snappy slogan, not the car you drive, or the clothes you wear. A brand is something you earn by making a difference in relationships and getting credit for that” (personal communication, May 29, 2009). He emphasized to the coaches, “It’s not a veneer. A brand starts inside.…All brands gain their energy inside or rot inside” (personal communication, May 29, 2009).

Speak also explained the three principles of a strong brand, which are: (a) brands are perceptions; (b) strong brands are distinctive, relevant, and consistent; and (c) strong brands make a difference.

In regard to perceptions, Speak led an interactive discussion with the coaches on the subject. He explained, “Your brand is determined by the perceptions maintained by somebody other than you that describes the total experience of having a relationship with you” (personal communications, May 29, 2009). He went on to explain, “Perceptions play a fundamental role in how we relate to others and how they relate to us. It’s not what we think, it's what they think" (personal communications, May 29, 2009). Speak explained that it's important to leave a perception that is one's authentic self so that how others see one is consistent with how one sees oneself. He articulated this by saying, "The most important thing is to get perceived as who you are" (personal communication, May 29, 2009).

Speak then led the coaches through an interactive discussion on how there can be gaps in perceptions between a person and others. He offered the example of a person who sees himself as well informed, but others see him as a know-it-all. Another example he provided was a person who sees himself as a hard worker while others see him as a workaholic. Speak explained that gaps in perceptions impact how one relates to others and vice versa.

Some of the coaches talked of their own experiences regarding disparities in perceptions. For example, how there are differences between how they perceive themselves and how they believe others perceive them.

Speak offered that in some relationships there are wide gaps in perceptions (of how one sees oneself and how others see one) and in other relationships the gaps are narrow. Speak explained that when the gap is wide, the relationship generally takes more effort, there's a greater sense of caution, communication is not as effective, and overall one tends to have to work harder. On the other hand, he explained that when the gap is narrow, then that relationship is generally characterized by trust, ease, and effective communication. The coaches confirmed that they have had relationships in which the gap is wide and in which it is narrow, and the effectiveness of such relationships have been influenced by the amount of the gap. Thus, as Speak explained, it's in one's best interest to manage perceptions so that one enjoys more effective relationships characterized by narrow gaps.

Speak then moved into discussing distinction, relevancy, and consistency in regard to strong brands. Distinction means that one has a point of view. In other words, one stands for something. Relevancy means that one connects with what others consider to be important. Consistency is demonstrating behaviors repeatedly so that others observe them over time. He asked the coaches which one among distinction, relevancy, and consistency did they believe poses the most challenges for people. Each of those factors was named as the most challenging for people; thus, there was not a common response from the coaches. Speak explained that while all of them are challenging, most people find consistency to be the toughest.

Session 1 concluded with an assignment for the coaches to obtain perceptions about themselves among their professional and personal relationships. This was done through what Speak called the personal brand assessment. The coaches were provided with instructions to send an e-mail to individuals from whom they wished to obtain perceptions. This e-mail would then direct the respondent to a confidential, electronic survey in which he or she would be asked to give his or her three top-of-the-mind perceptions of the coach in question. The results would then be received and tabulated by Speak’s office. The intent of this personal brand assessment was for the coaches to gauge gaps in perceptions between themselves and others.

Session 2, held on June 5, 2009, focused on the coaches: (a) assessing and prioritizing their most important values, which are at the heart of their brand; (b) learning about the personal brand platform framework; and (c) reviewing their personal brand platform. Speak emphasized that brand is about authenticity and values. In his estimation, authenticity is being genuine, and values are the principles by which one lives. He went on to say, “A brand [is one] that best reflects your values so you get credit for who you are” (personal communication, June 5, 2009).

Speak then had the coaches review the values they had previously identified in the *Personal Brand Handbook* (Brand Tool Box, 2005) from their first homework assignment that was given at the conclusion of the kickoff session. He led them through an exercise that caused them to prioritize their values until they ended up with a single one. Speak explained that by being clear on one’s values, then one will be able to better develop one’s personal brand platform.

He then went on to describe the personal brand platform, which is something the coaches had read about from their first homework assignment. He explained there are three elements to a personal brand platform: (a) dimensions, which include roles, standards, and style; (b) personal brand ethos; and (c) personal brand promise. Speak then discussed the three personal brand dimensions, which are roles, standards, and style. Along the way he had the coaches refer to their *Personal Brand Handbook* (Brand Tool Box, 2005).

Roles, he explained, are the relationships that one has with others and are the fundamental reason one is in a particular relationship with another person. He explained that while one has many relationships to manage, it’s important not to try to be a different brand in various relationships. Rather, it’s important to learn to make one’s brand relevant across many different relationships.

Standards, according to Speak, are the fundamental bedrock of a brand and where one has the most leverage in building a strong brand. Standards represent the behaviors and actions that one consistently exhibits. The key with standards, Speak explained, are the perceptions that others have of a person and how others expect that person to behave. Standards regard how others expect a person will do things. In addition, standards are what makes a person distinctive.

Style can be thought of as the personality of one's brand. He explained that style is how one displays one's attitude. Style is how one makes an impression upon another. As Speak reviewed each one of these (roles, standards, and style), he had the coaches refer to the *Personal Brand Handbook* (Brand Tool Box, 2005) and make any changes from their homework assignment as a result of this conversation about these dimensions.

Speak went on to discuss personal brand ethos. He indicated that the ethos is the one qualified value of a person and is the "single most dominant characteristic of your personal brand dimensions" (personal communication, June 5, 2009). A brand ethos permeates what a person does and gives energy to the person. He indicated that the ethos is not only one's most prized value, but also it is what makes one distinctive. He again asked the coaches to review the ethos they had created during their homework assignment and asked them to change it if appropriate.

The session then moved on to Speak describing a personal brand promise. He indicated that a personal brand promise is built upon the ethos and describes how a person makes a difference for others. It is a concise, meaningful, and powerful statement that one uses internally to focus one's efforts on what one's brand must deliver to satisfy the needs in the real world (Speak, personal communication, June 5, 2009). In other words, a brand promise is, “A way to state what you’re committed to being for others” (Speak, personal communication, June 5, 2009). He indicated that the brand promise should be relatively short (less than 10 words), active, action oriented, inspirational, and exciting.

The emphasis of Session 3 on June 12, 2009, was on the coaches’ personal brand assessment, which had been assigned from Session 1, as well as the application of the brand assessment in coaching. Speak began by discussing personal brand measurement, explaining that it is when one assesses one’s brand that one discovers its true status. Speak then had the coaches, for the first time, look at the results of their personal brand assessment. As stated previously, the personal brand assessment was assigned following Session 1 so that the coaches could gather perceptions about themselves. The intent was for the coaches to compare their self-perceptions with how others perceive them, and to assess how narrow or widen the gap between the two might be. Speak and the coaches then engaged in a dialogue about their personal brand assessment results. Speak then directed the coaches to the *Personal Brand Handbook* (Brand Tool Box, 2005) and had them complete an exercise intended to show the current strength of their brand.

He then moved into how a person might build a stronger brand. One method is an exercise he called, Start, Stop, Keep. In this, the individual, or rather the client, in this case, would identify things to do to build his or her brand, stop doing things that hurt his or her brand, and keep doing those that are consistent with his or her brand. This exercise, according to Speak, is a means to build one’s brand. The session ended with Speak asking the coaches to list three things they will do differently to build a stronger brand.

Session 4 held on June 26, 2009, aimed to: (a) review personal brand concepts,

(b) discuss the personal brand coaching process, (c) review tools for personal brand coaching, and (e) final thoughts for implementation in coaching. Speak began with a review of key concepts. He reiterated the three principles of a personal brand: (a) brands are perceptions; (b) strong brands are distinctive, relevant, and consistent; and (c) strong brands make a difference. He then reviewed the personal brand dimensions model, which includes roles, standards, and style.

Speak then went over a possible framework for coaching (see Table 11), but made clear that this was only a suggestion and that he was interested in the coaches' feedback. This suggested process was not intended to be completely consistent nor mirror the training Speak did with the coaches. Rather, it was to provide a possible framework to guide the coaches through the engagement with their client.

Table 11

Suggested Coaching Process

Coaching Session	Topic	Assignment(s)
1	Introduce personal brand concepts and initiate assignments	1. Read, *Be Your Own Brand* (2009), and/or listen to an audio tutorial. 2. Develop personal brand platform. 3. Submit personal brand platform to Brand Tool Box. 4. Initiate personal brand assessment tool.
2	Review key concepts of personal brand	
3	Review client's personal brand platform and personal brand assessment results	1. Refine personal brand platform if necessary. 2. Keep, Start, Stop exercise 3. Personal brand action plan
4	Ongoing coaching	

At the conclusion of the training program, Speak provided materials to each coach so that he or she could begin working with a client. Specifically, Speak gave them the book, *Be Your Own Brand: A Breakthrough Formula for Standing Out in the Crowd* (McNally & Speak, 2002), *Personal Brand Tutorial* (Speak, 2009), *Personal Brand Handbook* (Brand Tool Box, 2005), *Personal Brand Executive Coaching Program Guide* (Brand Tool Box, 2009), and instructions on how to submit and access the Personal Brand Assessment Tool. These materials were intended to equip the coaches with what they needed to work with a client. It should be pointed out that Speak created the *Personal Brand Executive Coaching Program Guide* (Brand Tool Box) specifically for this research. With the conclusion of the coach training program, and being armed with the abovementioned materials, the coaches began working with their individual clients.

Research Question 2: Findings

Research question 2 aimed to understand how the coaches describe their ability to coach clients on particular brand matters pretest, posttest, and post-posttest. Specifically, these matters were in regard to personal brand rather than personal image, living an authentic brand, developing a brand promise, and creating brand distinctiveness. The researcher phone interviewed each coach prior to and immediately following the training program facilitated by Speak, as well as 3 months later.

The researcher transcribed each interview. She also reread and reviewed each transcript and provided a copy of it to the interviewee to ensure accuracy. She employed the use of a qualitative software program, HyperResearch, to aid in data organization.

Employing phenomenological reduction, the researcher immersed herself in the data via reflection, asking questions of the data, and being alert to codes and themes. The researcher engaged in the process of horizonalization in which "every statement initially is treated as having equal value" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 95). Irrelevant statements were omitted. The remaining data, or horizons, were clustered into themes based upon codes assigned by the researcher. In addition to using codes to cluster data into themes, the researcher also read and reread significant statements from the transcripts in order to capture the essential meaning. It should be noted that the researcher did not use a list of preconceived codes, rather she allowed codes and themes to emerge from the data. That is, as the researcher analyzed the data she looked for themes and codes within the context of the subjects' responses. As such the researcher created codes and themes, merged similar ones together, and disaggregated dissimilar ones. In the process, the researcher relied upon direct quotations as well as her own intuition to identify codes and themes.

Imaginative variation led the researcher to reflect upon the data to derive structural themes. Thus, phenomenological reduction allowed the researcher to make the transition into imaginative variation from which themes emerged from the data. This formed a description of how the subjects, that is the coaches in this case, experienced the phenomena of being trained in personal brand coaching and then engaging in it. This led to a synthesis of meanings and essences. Here, the researcher's aim was to integrate the fundamental descriptions of the coaches' experiences down to their essence.

Pre-Test Interviews: Coaches

An overall state of conjecture on the part of the coaches emerged from the pretest interviews. The researcher also sensed an overall state of anxiety or uncertainty from the coaches during the pretest interviews. This demonstrated itself in a number of different ways. For instance, some comments from the coaches included: "Other than that I don't have a clue" (Coach C, personal communications, May 12, 2009); "Well, again, I haven't heard the term yet, so all I can do is look at the phrase [personal brand promise] and take a guess at what it means" (Coach A, personal communications, May 12, 2009); "I'm flunking this test" (Coach B, personal communications, May 11, 2009); and, "I'm sort of speculating" (Coach B, personal communications, May 11, 2009). In addition, the coaches did not incorporate personal brand terminology or concepts into their answers. Finally, other indicators of anxiety and uncertainty were frequent long pauses from the coaches after being asked an interview question. Intuitively, the researcher surmised that the coach did not have an answer at the ready and, therefore, paused for a period of time to think through a possible response. Furthermore, the subsequent response lacked specificity and was absent of personal brand terminology.

In accordance with the concept of "essence" (p. 34) as described by Moustakas (1994) the overarching, prevalent theme that emerged among all of the coaches during the pretest interviews, for all of the interview questions, was conjecture. This theme emerged based upon both the direct responses of the coaches, as well as frequent long pauses following the questions. The pauses led the researcher to perceive that the coach was unsure about how to answer the question at hand. To summarize, the theme from the pretest interviews was conjecture.

Posttest Interviews: Coaches

Results from analyses of the posttest interviews revealed a different story which may suggest that learning occurred. Here, the coaches displayed greater confidence in that they referred to specific personal brand terminology and demonstrated a general understanding of the application of personal brand concepts. They seemed to incorporate naturally this into their answers. They also, somewhat routinely, referred to specific resources, tools, and materials Speak provided during his training program. However, while the theme of conjecture was not present, there still remained a sense of uncertainty and lack of confidence. Coaches commented that as they use Speak's tools and work with clients, that they will feel more self-assured. For example, following an interview question Coach B stated, "Hmmm, I would have to go back and refer to [Speak's] materials to be honest" (personal communication, June 3, 2009). On another occasion after an interview question Coach E said, "Refresh my memory" (personal communication, June 29, 2009). Thus, a certain level of uncertainty or lack of confidence appeared to be evident during the posttest interviews.

Specific themes that arose from the interview questions during the posttest phase are depicted in Table 12.

Table 12

Themes From Posttest Interviews With Coaches

Interview Question	Theme	Aggregate Response
1. How do you coach a client on personal brand rather than on personal image?	Authenticity Perceptions Tools from Speak Gaps between self perception and others' perceptions of client Roles, standards and style Values clarification Use an assessment tool to measure perception gaps	5 4 4 4 4 3 3 2
2. How do you coach a client on living a personal brand that is authentic?	Authenticity Values clarification Feedback from others	6 3 2

(*table continues*)

Interview Question	Theme	Aggregate Response
3. How do you coach a client on developing a personal brand promise?	Values clarification Roles, standards, and style Brand ethos	3 2 2
4. How do you coach a client on a personal brand that is distinctive?	Values clarification Clarity on what distinguishes one from others	4 3

Interview Question 1: Personal Brand Rather than Image—Posttest. In regard to the first interview question, a number of themes arose as depicted above. Beginning with the theme of authenticity, 5 of the 6 coaches mentioned it. Examples of how authenticity was described include Coach B who stated, “The essence [of a personal brand] is to make sure you’re delivering on who you really want to be as a person and who you really are” (personal communication, June 30, 2009). Coach D described it as, “We’re coaching on helping that person get clear on their authentic self” (personal communication, June 30, 2009).

The theme of perceptions emerged from 4 of the coaches. For example, Coach B described brand as being perceptions others have of oneself. Coach F discussed perceptions in terms of the client conducting an exercise in order to gather perceptions about him/herself from others. Although perceptions were mentioned by 4 of the 6 coaches, they did not expound on this concept or describe how perceptions are used in a personal brand coach-client relationship. Rather, the concept of perceptions was mentioned in a rather vague sort of manner. For example, Coach E indicated that perceptions work is important but did not explain why or how to go about it.

In terms of the theme, Tools from Speak, the coaches responded by using different descriptive words. For example, Coach B (personal communication, June 30, 2009) and Coach C (personal communication, July 10, 2009) both used the word “toolkit” to refer to Speak’s materials that were provided during training. Coaches A (personal communication, July 9, 2009), B (personal communication, June 30, 2009) and F (personal communication, July 2, 2009) used the words “book” and “handbook.” However, the coaches did not specifically indicate how they would use these materials that Speak provided during the training program with a client. Rather they referred to these materials but did not describe their specific use.

Gaps between self perception and others’ perceptions of the client arose as a theme with 4 of the coaches. For instance, Coach B discussed helping the client understand how he/she is perceived as well as how to reduce, “…disconnects between yourself and how others experience you” (personal communication, June 30, 2009). Coach D talked about, “Exploring any gaps in how they [the client] are being perceived and how they want to be perceived” (personal communication, June 30, 2009). Similarly, Coach F discussed helping the client understand gaps between how he/she is perceived and how others perceive him/her, and then being, “… supportive to [assist] them to close that gap” (personal communication, July 2, 2009).

The theme of, roles, standards and style, arose from interviews with 3 of the coaches. While the coaches used the words “styles” (Coach B, personal communication, June 30, 2009), “styles, standards and roles” (Coach C, personal communication, July 10. 2009), and “roles, standards and style” (Coach F, personal communication, July 2, 2009), none of the coaches offered a further definition or description of these items. Although a further explanation was not offered the coaches, none the less, seemed to have a sense that roles, standards and style is a fundamental component of Speak's personal brand teachings. For example, Coach B talked about working through these, "components systematically" (personal communication, June 30, 2009). Coach C stated in reference to roles, standards and style, "I think that definitely there are really important distinctions [among them]" (personal communication, July 10, 2009).

Values clarification as a theme came among 3 of the coaches. Coach A discussed that going through a values clarification process with a client is a normal part of the coaching engagement and is also used in personal brand coaching. Coach B discussed using materials from Speak's *Personal Brand Handbook* (Brand Tool Box, 2005) as a means to help the client gain clarity on his/her values. Coach E indicated that the starting point in coaching on matters of personal brand rather than on personal image is values clarification.

Finally, the last theme to emerge from the first interview question was that of using an assessment tool to measure perception gaps. Both Coach A and F mentioned an assessment tool of Speak's as a means to gather perception data. In particular Coach A talked about using this assessment tool to help the client understand the specific words that others use to describe him/her. While both coaches mentioned Speak's perceptions assessment tool they did not go into detail about it. For instance, they did not discuss when in the coaching process it is used, how it is specifically employed, or how the results are tabulated. In other words, the Coaches merely mentioned the assessment tool as a means to gather perceptions but did not describe it further.

From the perspective of what Moustakas (1994) refers to as “essence” (p. 34), the themes that came from the first interview question were (a) authenticity, (b) perceptions, (c) Tools from Speak, (d) gaps between self-perception and others’ perceptions of client, (e) roles, standards, and style, (f) values clarification, and (g) use an assessment to measure perception gaps. Authenticity was described as the essence of the client’s brand which includes being who one truly is and having clarity on one’s authentic self. Perceptions related to the idea that a brand is based upon the perceptions of others. In addition, a perceptions assessment exercise may be conducted to gather feedback on how one is viewed. Tools from Speak referred to a book and handbook that was provided during the training. The theme, gaps between self-perception and others’ perceptions of client, related to exploring, reducing, and closing disconnects in how the client views him/herself and how others do. Roles, standards and style related to fundamental components of a personal brand that one systematically works through. The theme of values clarification was in regard to something that is a standard process, and often the starting point, in a coaching engagement. In addition, the use of Speak’s materials may aid in the values clarification process.

Interview Question 2: Living an Authentic Brand—Posttest From interview question 2 the themes that arose were: authenticity; values clarification, and; feedback from others.

Perhaps because the question was about authenticity each and every coach referred to the term in his/her answer. Sometimes it was a direct reference in which the word authenticity was used, and sometimes it was an indirect reference in which authenticity was described in a more conceptual framework. For example, Coach C talked about coaching a client to, “become more of who they are” including, “their authenticity and realness in their relationships with others” (personal communication, July 10, 2009). Coach D discussed that an authentic brand is like a compass for the client in that it helps in making decisions and setting priorities. Coach F made an indirect reference to authenticity by stating, “Being true to who they are, their mission, what they feel like they want to achieve, their beliefs” (personal communication, July 2, 2009). However, while authenticity was either directly or indirectly mentioned by each coach, the coaches did not describe specific steps that could be taken to coach a client on living an authentic brand.

Clarifying values emerged as a theme among 3 of the coaches. Furthermore, all of these coaches indicated that values clarification work is a beginning point for creating an authentic brand. In addition, Coach E indicated that the client’s values are an important place to remain focused upon throughout the coaching engagement.

Obtaining feedback from others came out as a theme in 2 of the interviews. For example, Coach B suggested that the client solicit feedback from others to help the client know if he/she is demonstrating an authentic personal brand. Specifically, Coach B said of the client, “They should set up ways [to get feedback] and ask questions of who they interact with to determine if they are aligning with their personal brand” (personal communication, June 30, 2009). Coach D discussed that once the client has developed his/her personal brand promise that he/she should get feedback from others to validate its accuracy.

To summarize, the themes of authenticity, values clarification, and feedback from others came from interview question 2. These themes represent the “essence”

(Moustakas, 1994, p. 34) of the data. Authenticity was described as a becoming more of who one is, being real in one's relationships, and finding one's true self. Values clarification was thought of as the beginning point for creating an authentic personal brand. In addition values should be a focal point during the entire coach-client engagement. Finally, feedback from others was described as a valuable means to assess the accuracy and validity of one's personal brand. In addition, feedback allows the client to understand if he/she is demonstrating an authentic personal brand.

Interview Question 3: Developing a Brand Promise—Posttest In regard to the third interview question, 3 themes materialized: values clarification; roles, standards, and style, and; brand ethos.

Coaches D, E, and F all mentioned going through a values clarification process as an important step in developing a brand promise. However, the coaches did not provide any further detail on how or when to go through a values clarification process. They simply mentioned that a general step in developing a personal brand promise is that of values clarification.

In regard to roles, standards and style, Coaches D and E both referenced that these components help a client develop his/her brand promise. Again, neither of the coaches expounded on how or when to coach a client on these matters. For example, Coach E simply stated, "Look at roles, standards, and style" (personal communication, June 29, 2009). Similarly, Coach D said, "Identify the roles, standards, and style" (personal communication, June 30, 2009). Thus, the coaches did not provide detail on how roles, standards, and style are incorporated into a coaching engagement. Rather, they simply made a general statement in regard to roles, standards, and style in relation to developing a personal brand promise.

Finally, Coaches D and E also made a general reference to Speak's brand ethos as a component of a personal brand promise. However, while Coach D referred to it as a "brand ethos" (personal communication, June 30, 2009), Coach E did not use that specific terminology and instead said that the client tries to, "…come up with something pithy and precise for what [he or she] stands for" (personal communication, June 29, 2009). In addition, the coaches did not specifically discuss how an ethos is developed.

Overall, while themes emerged from this interview question regarding how to develop a personal brand promise, the coaches' answers lacked specificity. The responses were more conceptual in nature and did not describe the steps, sequence or implementation process entailed in developing a personal brand promise. Thus, an overall theme of generalization arose. While specificity was lacking themes yet appeared which were (a) values clarification, (b) roles, standards, and style, and (c) brand ethos. These themes represent the "essence" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34) of the data. Values clarification manifested itself in terms of going through a process to distill client values for the purposes of developing the personal brand promise. Roles, standards, and style were mentioned as components of the client's personal brand promise. Finally, brand ethos was mentioned as statement for which the client stands.

Interview Question 4: Creating Brand Distinctiveness—Posttest. Finally, the fourth interview question resulted in 2 themes: values clarification, and; clarity on what distinguishes one from others.

In reference to values clarification, Coach A stated that she'd have the client focus on his/her deepest core values while Coach B suggested that she'd use a values clarification assessment tool. Coach D stated that because a brand is based upon one's values then by its nature that's distinctive.

Specifically, in regard to clarity on what distinguishes oneself, Coach E stated, "Well, I think it's about understanding what [the client] stands for and what makes [him/her] different from others" (personal communication, June 29, 2009). Coach F described it as what the client can do that distinguishes him/herself from others and called it a "trademark" (personal communication, July 2, 2009). However, the coaches did not offer further specificity on how to actually coach a client on a personal brand that is distinctive.

In review, interview question 4 resulted in the themes of values clarification, and clarity on what distinguishes one from others. These themes get to the "essence" of the data as described by Moustakas (1994). Values clarification was described as something that can be achieved via an assessment tool. In addition, values were viewed as that which is at the deepest core of a person, and that values create distinction. Clarity on distinguishing one from others emerged as that which makes a person different, and may be thought of as a trademark.

Post-Post Test Interviews: Coaches

Results from the post-posttest interviews with the coaches revealed new information that, in general, suggested some behavioral changes may have occurred. The coaches tended to use a bit more specific terminology than during the posttest interviews, and at times described how they specifically applied personal brand coaching principles with their clients. They also continued to refer to various personal brand resources, tools, and materials that had been provided by Speak. However, at times their answers still suggested a sense of uncertainty or were more conceptual in nature rather than specific. This may suggest that they were still in the stage of learning how to coach on personal brand. For example, following one of the interview questions Coach E said, “Hmm, I’m sort of reviewing my notes” (personal communication, October 12, 2009). Likewise, Coach F stated that she had reviewed the training materials the night before the interview so that she would be prepared (personal communication, October 21, 2009). This may suggest that the coach was not yet familiar or confident enough with how to coach on personal brand without first reviewing said materials.

Specific themes that arose from post-posttest interviews are depicted in Table 13.

Table 13

Themes From Post-Posttest Interviews With Coaches

Interview Question	Theme	Aggregate Response
1. How do you coach a client on personal brand rather than on personal image?	Authenticity Values clarification Personal brand ethos Roles, standards, style Perceptions Personal brand promise	5 4 3 3 3 2
2. How do you coach a client on living a personal brand that is authentic?	Perceptions assessment Gaps Values clarification	3 2 2
3. How do you coach a client on developing a personal brand promise?	Values clarification Roles, standards, style Reflection upon one’s personal brand promise Exercises from book/handbook	6 4 3 2

(*table continues*)

Interview Question	Theme	Aggregate Response
4. How do you coach a client on a personal brand that is distinctive?	Authenticity Distinction, relevancy, and consistency	2 2

Interview Question 1: Personal Brand Rather than Image—Post-Posttest. Specifically, in reference to the first interview question about coaching a client on personal brand rather than personal image, a number of themes arose. The two dominate themes were authenticity and values clarification. The theme of authenticity emerged in several regards. For example, Coach D described personal brand as coming from the authenticity of the client rather than personal image which is more externally focused (personal communication, Oct. 13. 2009). Coach E also indicated that brand stems from authenticity (personal communication, Oct. 12, 2009). In particular, Coach B stated, “It’s about being more of who you are, not less” (personal communication, Oct. 21, 2009). The other dominate theme was that of values clarification. The coaches tended to describe using various specific processes to guide a client on clarifying his/her values. For example, Coach C talked about working with her client to sort through values so that the client would be clear on them and why they provide meaning (personal communication, Oct. 21, 2009). Coach E described taking her client through a particular values clarification exercise in which the client described life experiences in order to get at values (personal communication, Oct. 12, 2009). Similarly, Coach D also indicated that she used a specific values clarification with her client (personal communication, Oct. 13, 2009). In addition, the coaches talked about going through a values clarification process early on in the coach-client engagement.

The next most common themes were (a) personal brand ethos (b) roles, standards, style, and (d) perceptions. In regard to a personal brand ethos, Coaches B, C, and F all mentioned that particular term. However, they did not describe what an ethos is or how they would coach a client to develop one. Instead, they simply mentioned the term in the course of answering the interview question. Similarly, 3 of the coaches referred to roles, standards, and style. But again, they did not specifically describe how they would coach a client on these matters. Rather, their answers tended to be a bit more conceptual by simply referring to these terms but without explanation. For example, Coach B simply said, “I’d coach them around the different roles they play, the standards and the style” (personal communication, Oct. 21, 2009). Similarly, Coach F stated, “I also would then look at their roles. That whole standards of who we are, the style [and] how we relate to others” (personal communication, Oct. 21, 2009). Finally, perceptions also emerged as a theme. For example, Coach C talked about gathering perceptions data via a multi-rater instrument and then having his client compare the results against her own self perceptions (personal communications, Oct. 21, 2009). During the training Speak indeed had the coaches go through such an exercise in which they gathered anonymous, confidential perceptions from others about themselves. This information was then complied by Speak’s office and provided to each individual coach. What Coach C is describing seems to be this very same process. Furthermore, Coach C went on to indicate that he debriefed this information with the client to determine both the gaps in perceptions as well as the subsequent strength of the client’s brand. In another example Coach F also talked about helping the client understand how he/she is perceived versus how others view him/her (personal communication, July 2, 2009). However, Coach F did not provide the detail on how to go about this as Coach C did. Instead, Coach F described it in a more conceptual manner. In another like example Coach D talked about, “Exploring any gaps in how they’re being perceived and how they want to be perceived” (personal communication, June 30, 2009). But Coach D did not provide any further description or detail regarding how, why, or when to do perceptions work with a client. Therefore, of the 4 coaches it was Coach F who seemed to describe the process of how to gather and use perceptions data in a coach-client engagement while the others did not.

Finally, a personal brand promise also arose as a theme from the first interview question. As with some of the other themes, this concept was simply referred to but was not described in any level of detail. For example, both Coach C and F mentioned helping the client create a personal brand promise but they did offer any description beyond that. That is, the coaches mentioned the term, personal brand promise, but did not provide any additional context, information, or description of it.

From the perspective of what Moustakas (1994) calls “essence” (p. 34) the following themes arose from the first interview question: (a) authenticity. (b) values clarification, (c) personal brand ethos, (d) roles, standards, and style, (e) perceptions, and (f) personal brand promise. In regard to authenticity the coaches indicated this is an internal reflection of the client and that one’s brand is built upon it. Values clarification was described as a process through which the coach would guide the client. A personal brand ethos was mentioned by 3 of the coaches but was not described in any level of detail. Similarly, roles, standards, and style were also referred to by 3 of the coaches but they did not describe how they would engage a client on these matters. Perceptions also emerged as a theme from 3 of the coaches. Of the 3 coaches 1 described how they would gather and use perceptions data in a coaching engagement. This was portrayed as a process to compare and contrast one's self perceptions to that of others in order to assess gaps. Finally, a personal brand promise also came out as a theme among 2 of the coaches. These 2 coaches only mentioned this concept and did not explain how, when, or why it is used.

Interview Question 2: Living an Authentic Brand—Post-Posttest. The themes from the second interview question, regarding living an authentic brand, were (a) perceptions assessment, (b) gaps, and (c) values clarification.

In regard to a perceptions assessment, Coach B indicated that gathering perceptions data from others is a means to create an authentic brand (personal communication, Oct. 21, 2009). Coach C also indicated that obtaining perceptions feedback is critical as it is an indicator of the degree to which the client is being authentic (personal communication, Oct. 21, 2009). Finally, Coach F also mentioned that understanding how one is perceived helps to create an authentic personal brand.

For 2 of the coaches the theme of gaps arose. Furthermore, this theme emerged in connection with that of perceptions. Both Coach B and C talked about gaps in terms of how the client seems him/herself authentically in comparison to others' perceptions. For example, Coach C discussed getting feedback from others in order to understand the extent of any gaps between the client's self perception and that of others (personal communication, Oct. 21, 2009). Coach B talked about gaining an understanding of the client's authentic self today and any gaps in how he/she views him/herself versus others (personal communication, Oct. 21, 2009).

Finally, values clarification also came out as a theme from the second interview question. In this regard, the 2 coaches talked of the importance of the client being clear on his/her values in order to live an authentic brand. Specifically, Coach D stated, "Well again, it helps to identify what is authentic to them by being clear on their values" (personal communication, Oct. 13, 2009). Coach F simply stated, "I think the values clarification and exercises is important" (personal communication, Oct. 21, 2009).

In review, the themes that came out of the second interview question were perceptions assessment, gaps, and values clarification. These themes represent the "essence" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34) of the data. Perceptions assessment was described as a process to assess the authenticity of one's brand. Gaps, as a theme, related to that of perceptions. In that regard, assessing gaps in self-perception versus others' perceptions help assess the authenticity of one's brand. Finally, values clarification related to clarity of values in order to live an authentic personal brand.

Interview Question 3: Developing a Brand Promise—Post-Posttest. The third interview question, in regard to developing a personal brand promise, revealed the themes of (a) values clarification (b) roles, standards, and style, (c) reflection upon one's personal brand promise, and (d) exercises from the book/handbook.

In regard to values clarification, all of the coaches indicated that it is a foundational piece of one's personal brand. In particular, Coach D described taking her client through a specific values clarification exercise as a step in creating the client's personal brand promise (personal communication, Oct. 13, 2009). The coach also talked about having the client compare the values from that exercise to a set of values from the *Personal Brand Handbook* (Brand Tool Box, 2005) to gain even greater clarity. Coach A stated, “I’d start with values and look for a theme that consistently permeates your standards and style” (personal communication, Oct. 29, 2009). Coach B described values clarification as the starting point for developing a personal brand promise (personal communication, Oct. 21, 2009). The remaining coaches simply stated that values are a component to a personal brand promise but did not provide any further detail.

Roles, standards, and style were mentioned by 4 of the coaches as it relates to creating a personal brand promise. However, while the coaches indicated that roles, standards, and style are components of a personal brand promise they did not describe how to coach a client on these matters. For example, Coach E stated that her client identified her roles, standards, and style but did not specifically explain how she coached the client on these items (personal communication, Oct. 12, 2009). Similarly, Coach F indicated that one’s roles, standards, and style helps create one’s personal brand promise (personal communication, Oct. 21, 2009) but did not describe how to coach a client on these matters. Coach D talked about the client doing exercises in the *Personal Brand Handbook* (Brand Tool Box, 2005) to gain clarity on his/her roles, standards, and style (personal communication, Oct. 13, 2009).

Another theme that emerged was reflection upon one’s personal brand promise. Coach C talked about encouraging his client to reflect upon his/her personal brand promise to let it, “sink in” (personal communication, Oct. 21, 2009). Likewise, Coach F said in reference to creating a personal brand promise, “It’s a deep reflection exercise, I think” (personal communication, Oct. 21, 2009). Furthermore, Coach F indicated that the client needs to reflect to understand how the components of their personal brand promise converge. Coach D also indicated that she had her client reflect upon her promise stating, "I had the client really sit with it …. I really had her consider it [the brand promise]" (personal communication, Oct. 13, 2009).

Finally, the theme of exercises from the book/handbook also came out of interview question 3. Coach D stated that doing the exercises in Speak's book and handbook assisted her client to gain clarity on her roles, standards, and style which then helped to formulate the personal brand promise (personal communication, Oct. 13, 2009). Additionally, Coach E stated that her client completed the exercises in both the book and handbook which then led to the client's personal brand promise (personal communication, Oct. 12, 2009).

In summary, question 3 resulted in the themes of (a) values clarification, (b) roles, standards, and style, (c) reflection upon one's personal brand promise, and (d) exercises from the book. These themes represent what Moustakas (1994) would refer to as the "essence" (p. 34) of the data. Values clarification was described as a foundational piece to create one's personal brand. In addition, values may be clarified through certain exercises. Roles, standards, and style were viewed as a component of one's personal brand promise and may be accomplished through exercises in the *Personal Brand Handbook* (Brand Tool Box, 2005). Reflection upon one's personal brand promise related to allowing the client to deeply consider the promise to ensure it fits him/her well. Finally, exercises from the book were about gaining clarity on one's roles, standards, and style, which then leads to one's personal brand promise.

Interview Question 4: Creating Brand Distinctiveness—Post-Posttest. Interview question 4, in reference to personal brand distinction, resulted in the themes of (a) authenticity, and (b) distinction, relevancy, and consistency.

The theme of authenticity came from 2 of the coaches. Coach C indicated that because the personal brand promise is connected to authenticity then that should lead to distinctiveness (personal communication, Oct. 21, 2009). In addition, Coach C indicated that authenticity comes from the value that one offers. This again, makes one distinctive. In a similar regard, Coach D indicated that because we are all authentically different then that makes one distinct from another (personal communication, Oct. 13, 2009).

Distinction, relevancy and consistency also emerged as a theme. Coach B talked about the client living up to a brand promise that is distinct, relevant, and consistent to others (personal communication, Oct. 21, 2009). This then leads to distinction. More specifically, Coach E said, “I think distinction is tied to relevancy and consistency” (personal communication, Oct. 12, 2009). She then went on to describe her client. She said that her client was able to create distinction by consistently doing something that was relevant to others at her job. Because the client was able to consistently demonstrate certain traits that others viewed as valuable then the client created distinction.

In review, as described by Moustakas (1994), from the vantage point of “essence” (p. 34) the themes of authenticity, and distinction, relevancy, and consistency arose from interview question 4. Authenticity was described as that which leads to distinction, and that the value one offers also creates distinction. Distinction, relevancy, and consistency create a brand promise that is pertinent to others. In addition, consistently doing something that is relevant or valued by others also creates distinction.

Research Question 3: Findings

Research question 3 aimed to understanding satisfaction levels of clients, pretest and posttest, in regard to work, friends, relatives, and life. As described above with research question 2, the researcher employed transcendental phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis of meanings and essences to analyze the data from research question 3. She allowed codes and themes to emerge from the data rather than making any predeterminations of them. Thus, she worked with the data to allow codes and themes to come forth. She relied upon direct quotation and her own intuition throughout this process. Finally, she collapsed similar codes and themes, and disaggregated dissimilar ones.

Research question 3 was aimed at assessing various aspects of client satisfaction prior to receiving personal brand coaching (pretest) and again 3 months later (posttest). The researcher focused on four areas of satisfaction (work, friends, family, and life), based upon personal brand literature, the QOLI (Frisch, 1994) and the SWLS (Diener et al., 1985).

Pretest Interviews: Analysis of Work Satisfaction

In reference to work satisfaction, a few emerging themes came from the pretest interviews with the clients. Among the 5 clients, 3 seemed to express moderate work satisfaction and 2 high work satisfaction. Below is a summary of both the moderate and high satisfaction groups along with the themes that emerged.

Specifically, regarding those with moderate work satisfaction, Client C stated, “I would say my satisfaction level is probably moderate” (personal communication, July 2, 2009). However, Clients A and D rated their level of work satisfaction on a scale. Client D indicated that her level of work satisfaction is a 3 on a 5-point scale, while Client A stated it’s a “5 or 6 out of 10” (personal communication, July 1, 2009). Therefore, among these 3 clients a theme of moderate work satisfaction seems to have appeared.

The other 2 clients seem to experience high satisfaction. In particular, Client B stated, “I’m very satisfied with my current career and company” (personal communication, July 6, 2009). Client E said, “I’m really pretty satisfied with the type of work that I do” (personal communication, July 7, 2009).

Thus, a general theme of moderate to high job satisfaction among all of the clients was found during the pretest interviews. This is evidenced by direct quotes from the clients. Specific themes within the moderate and high group as it relates to job satisfaction also arose. A review of these themes for each group follows.

Within the moderate group, one specific theme was lack of fulfillment. For 2 of the 3 clients who reported moderate work satisfaction, being in a career transition seemed to be the source of the lack of fulfillment. These clients appeared to have a sense of what would fulfill them, but being in career transition seemed to prevent them from experiencing that fulfillment. As one client stated, “I don’t think I’m doing exactly what I’d like to be doing in terms of my job, but I think that when I’m making a career transition there’s a process to go through” (Client C, personal communications, July 2, 2009). Furthermore, these 2 clients felt that if they were not in career transition and were instead doing work they desired, then they believed their work satisfaction would be higher. A theme for the third client was also a lack of fulfillment, but it seemed to stem from a high degree of ambiguity in her current job. This client reported that while she enjoys her coworkers, company, and the commute, what caused her to report moderate work satisfaction was that she is “in a new role [that is] very poorly defined” (Client A, personal communications, July 1, 2009). She described working in a state of high ambiguity where responsibilities are not clearly spelled out among her role and others’ roles. Thus, the lines where one job ends and another begins are fuzzy. She also described not feeling personally fulfilled, stating, “There’s a lack of a sense of making a difference” (Client A, personal communications, July 1, 2009).

Thus, to summarize the overarching theme that arose for the moderate work satisfaction group was a lack of fulfillment. This theme represents the “essence” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34) of the data. Not feeling fulfilled appears to have been influenced by either being in a career transition or working in a high degree of ambiguity. Thus, feelings that result from being in a career transition or in working with a job where there is significant ambiguity led to a lack of fulfillment for these three clients. This in turn caused these clients to report a sense of moderate work satisfaction. These themes are depicted in Figure 1below, which summarizes the work satisfaction levels of clients pretest.

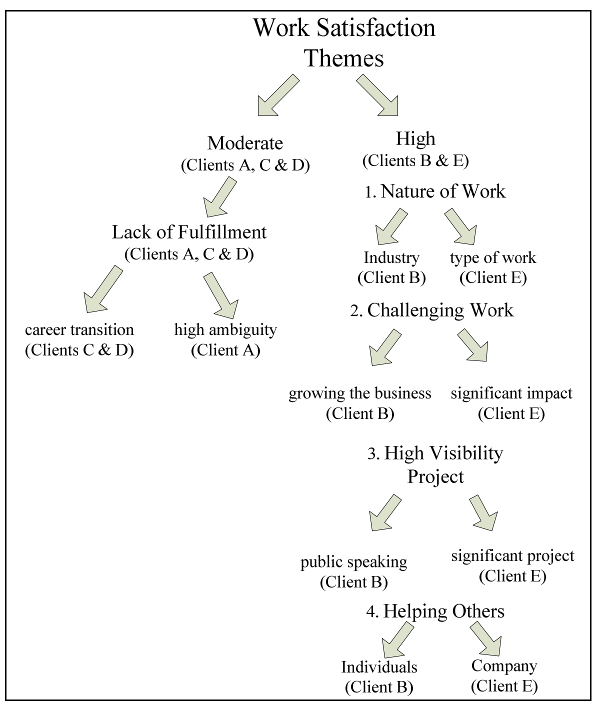

Figure 1. Work Satisfaction Themes Pretest.

Turning our attention to the high work satisfaction group several themes appeared. The major themes were nature of work, challenging work, high visibility project and helping others. Within in these major themes subthemes arose. A discussion of the major themes along with their corresponding subthemes follows.

As mentioned above a main theme that emerged was the nature of work. Both of the clients reported getting enjoyment and satisfaction from the kind of work that they do. As one client said, “I love the industry I’m in” (Client B, personal communications, July 6, 2009). Client E talked about the type of work that she performs and that it is satisfying (personal communication, July 7, 2009).

Challenging work also surfaced as a main theme among the high work satisfaction group. In the case of Client B, growing and sustaining her own business is a stimulating challenge. As CEO of her own company this is something that she is both challenged by and finds satisfying. Client E, on the other hand, commented about a challenging work in another regard. She is leading a large project that will make a significant impact at her place of employment. She stated, “This will be one of the coolest things I’ve done in my career when it’s completed” (Client E, personal communications, July 7, 2009). Thus, the theme of challenging work arose among the clients who reported high job satisfaction. Furthermore, within the theme of challenging work arose growing the business and significant impact.

Another theme that surfaced for the 2 clients who reported high job satisfaction is that of high visibility. In the case of Client B, this came in the form of public speaking, while for Client E, it was from a significant project she was leading at work. This project, in particular, has been going on for the past year and will affect a significant amount of the workforce at her company.

Finally, another theme that arose for the clients with reported high job satisfaction was helping others, although there is a slight distinction that should be made. For Client B, helping others came in the context of directly aiding individuals, while for Client E, it came in the form of assisting the company. To be specific about this distinction, Client B commented, “It [my job] gives me the opportunity to help people” (personal communications, July 6, 2009). In particular, Client B talked of helping other women grow their business, as well as assisting individuals with skin care issues as she works in the beauty industry. Client E discussed how the impact of a project she was leading will benefit the company. The outcome of this project will be felt organization-wide and has been a year or more in the making. She stated, “It’s exciting and the right thing for the company” (personal communications, July 7, 2009). Thus, for the 2 clients who reported high job satisfaction during the pretest interviews, the theme of helping others arose.

To summarize, the following themes surfaced during the pretest interviews for clients who reported high work satisfaction: nature of work, challenging work, high visibility, and helping others. These themes capture what Moustakas (1994) refers to as the “essence” (p. 34) of the data. Regarding the nature of work, the industry and the type of work surfaced as reasons for the Clients’ high satisfaction. As Client E stated, “I’m really pretty satisfied with the type of work that I do” (personal communication, July 7, 2009.) She went on to indicate that the work itself, along with the direction in which it is headed, is also satisfying. Client B also indicated that the both type of work she does and the industry she is in is satisfying. As it relates to challenging work, both clients discussed working in a dynamic, busy job that either requires them to grow and sustain a business or manage a significant project for the company. In regard to the theme of high visibility, this refers either to public speaking appearances or working on a project that will affect the entire company. Finally, helping others surfaced as a theme in terms of assisting individuals or the company as a whole.

Pretest Interviews: Analysis of Satisfaction With Friends

All 5 of the clients reported high friend satisfaction. The themes that emerged were lifelong friends, depth, and communication. Specific comments that indicated high satisfaction included, “I’m very happy with my relationships with my friends” (Client E, personal communications, July 7, 2009), and “I would say my relationships with my friends is pretty high” (Client C, personal communications, July 2, 2009). Client A rated her satisfaction level of her friendships, giving it an 8 out of 10.

One specific theme that emerged was that of lifelong friends. Three of the clients reported having friendships going back to their childhood. For example, Client E stated, “So, I have friendships that have lasted almost 50 years. So, I feel very fortunate to have friends like that” (personal communications, July 7, 2009). Likewise, Client B indicated she has friends going back to third grade (personal communications, July 6, 2009).

Another theme was that of depth. Clients described that they take the time to develop deep friendships and that this gives them a strong sense of satisfaction. As stated by Client D, “I put high importance on friendships, and growing with my friends both spiritually and mentally. I put a lot of effort into my friends” (personal communications, July 1, 2009). Client C said that she has deep friendships in which she shares struggles and feelings from the heart (personal communication, July 2, 2009). For Client A, even though many of her friends live all over the world, she has been able to develop deep relationships in which, “We always know the critical things going on in our lives” (personal communications, July 1, 2009).

Communication also came out as a theme. Being in regular communication, whether that be in person, over the phone, or via e-mail, clients reported staying in touch as a source of high satisfaction. One client reported talking weekly with a friend who lives out of state (Client E, personal communications, July 7, 2009) whereas Client A said that regular e-mail exchanges help her to keep in touch with her friends (personal communication, July 1, 2009).

In accordance with what Moustakas (1994) calls “essence” (p. 34) the themes from the pretest client interviews regarding friendship satisfaction were lifelong friendships, depth, and communication. The theme of lifelong friends manifested itself in accounts of friendships going back to early childhood that is still going on today. For example, Client E reported, “I talked this morning with one of my girlfriends from kindergarten” (personal communication, July 7, 2009). As it relates to depth, clients indicated that they put time and energy into their friendships. This includes being in regular contact, knowing what is going on in each others’ lives, and sharing feelings. In turn this manifested into depth. Finally, communication in the regular form of phone conversations, e-mail or in-person visits emerged from the client interviews.

Pretest Interviews: Analysis of Satisfaction With Relatives

Overall, all clients reported a high level of satisfaction with their relatives. Although for some clients there was evidence of some moderate or low satisfaction as they described their relationships with a particular family member. For example, Client A described high satisfaction with her husband and siblings, but moderate satisfaction with her mother (personal communications, July 1, 2009). Likewise, Client E described high satisfaction with her husband and son, but at the same time seemed to express a desire for a closer relationship with her son (personal communications, July 7, 2009). In addition, Client E expressed low satisfaction with a particular sibling stating, “I have one sister and don’t have great satisfaction with her because of her life choices. But I can’t change that” (personal communication, July 7, 2009). Thus at times, even though all of the client reported high satisfaction, there seemed to be an element of moderate or even low satisfaction for some clients as it related to a specific relative. It should be noted that in responding to the interview question, clients were allowed to define relatives as they wished, and in all cases they chose to refer to those in their immediate family.

Overall among all of the clients the themes that emerged were acceptance, respect and communication.

Beginning with acceptance Client B stated, “We accept each other and that makes for a much happier family dynamic” (personal communication, July 6, 2009). Client A said that among her and her siblings, there is no fear of being judged or of not being accepted (personal communications, July 1, 2009). Similarly, Client D talked about accepting different opinions and ideas in her family, which is a source of satisfaction (personal communication, July 1, 2009).

Another theme that surfaced is respect. This included respecting the others’ needs, wishes, and opinions, and vice versa. In regard to her relatives, Client A expressed this by saying, “I don’t try to change people and they don’t try to change me” (personal communications, July 6, 2009). Also in reference to her relatives, Client D stated, “I respect differences and opinions" (personal communications, July 1, 2009). She went on to say that she tries to see the big picture, including others' opinions of things.

Communication also arose as a theme among the clients. Specifically, communication that is deep and authentic was mentioned. For instance, Client A rated her satisfaction with her siblings as a 9 out of 10, and specifically stated, "I think our level of communication has really, really gotten deep and authentic over the years" (personal communication, July 1, 2009). Client C also talked of having "deep conversations" (personal communications, July 2, 2009).

From the perspective of what Moustakas (1994) calls "essence" (p. 34) the themes of acceptance, respect, and communication arose from the pretest interviews with the clients. Acceptance was captured as not being judged by family members and allowing differing opinions or ideas to be aired. Respect was regarded as understanding the needs, wishes or opinions of others. In addition, respect included not trying to change others and showing deference to differences. Finally, communication was described as deep, authentic conversations with one's relatives.

Pretest Interviews: Analysis of Satisfaction With Life

Among the 5 clients, moderate life satisfaction emerged as the predominate theme among 4 of them. Client E, on the other hand, reported high life satisfaction stating, "I'm happy. I don't look at my life and say, 'I wish.' I don't spend time saying, 'boy, I wish I had this or that" (personal communication, July 7, 2009). She spends time doing things that are important to her and that make her happy. This included having a career she enjoys, meaningful friendships, and good family relationships. Thus, in summary, for Client E, high life satisfaction seemed to relate to being in a career she enjoys, feeling happy with her friendships, and being generally satisfied with her relationships with her relatives.

Of the 4 clients who reported moderate life satisfaction, all defined work issues as the reason that their life satisfaction is moderate rather than high. Thus, the theme of work was revealed. As is discussed below, the themes of pervasiveness, pressure, and achievement emerged as subthemes from the general theme of work. In addition, the theme of time arose, and within that theme emerged figuring out one's career, and the amount of hours spent at work.

In regard to pervasiveness, Client A talked of how positive she feels in general and that her relationships give her joy, but the issue that "isn't working for me is the job part and that's so pervasive" (personal communication, July 1, 2009). She talked of working in a job that is not satisfying and went on to say, "It's really causing some stress and some dissatisfaction (personal communication, July 1, 2009)." Client D also talked of feeling appreciative and positive in general, but that because "there's a hyper focus on my career. I'd say that on a daily basis that's what's on my mind the most" (personal communications, July 1, 2009). She talked of her career "weighing" (personal communication, July 1, 2009) on her. Thus, the idea of pervasiveness arose from these interviews. That is, being in a job that creates feelings of dissatisfaction permeates the clients' lives and goes so far as to reduce their overall life satisfaction.

While Client B's moderate level of life satisfaction was linked to work, it was for other reasons. Client B talked of the pressure to achieve in her business. As the CEO of her own company, Client B said, "[I] put pressure on work and look at the competitors and say, 'Oh, they have that, why don't I have that?'" (personal communications, July 6, 2009). She went on further to say that the pressure to achieve may adversely affect her life “enjoyment” (personal communication, July 6, 2009). Thus, for Client B, the themes that arose were pressure and achievement.

Another theme in regard to life satisfaction for the moderate group that revealed itself was that of time. Specifically, 2 of the 4 clients indicated that time is a reason for their moderate life satisfaction. Within the concept of time, two subthemes emerged, which were figuring out one’s career, and the amount of hours one spends at work.

For Client C, time related to how long she has been working on figuring out her career. “I feel wandering about my career. It’s been a long haul figuring out what the next steps should be. It’s been disappointing that it’s taking longer” (personal communication, July 2, 2009). Thus, with Client C there seems to be a struggle to find a career direction, as well as the amount of time its taking to do so.

In addition, time arose as a theme in regard to the amount of hours clients spend at work. Specifically, both Client A and Client C mentioned the amount of time they have to give to a job that is not satisfying. Client A talked about working 10 hours a day in a job that isn’t what she wants to be doing (personal communication, July 1, 2009). Likewise, Client C also talked about having to dedicate a significant amount of time to a job that isn’t satisfying (personal communications, July 2, 2009).

Following the perspective of Moustakas (1994) and what is referred to as “essence” (p. 34), the overall theme that manifested in regard to clients who report moderate life satisfaction was that of work issues. Within the context of work issues other themes emerged which were pervasiveness, pressure, achievement, time, figuring out one’s career, and the amount of hours spent at work. In regard to pervasiveness, clients described how consumed they are by a job that is not satisfying. They talked of this weighing on them and causing stress. The themes of pressure and achievement related to owning one's own business and staying abreast of the competition. The theme of time surfaced in two regards. One, in terms of the length of time it is taking to determine a career direction, and the other in regard to the amount of hours spent at work.

Figure 2 below depicts the life satisfaction levels of the moderate clients.

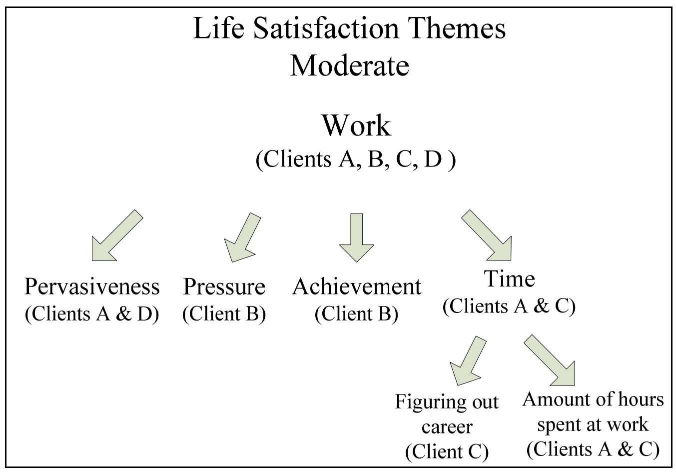

Figure 2. Life Satisfaction Themes Pretest.

Posttest Interviews: Analysis of Satisfaction With Work

In regard to the posttest findings on work satisfaction 3 of the clients reported high satisfaction, 1 reported moderately-high, and 1 stated that her satisfaction ranges from low to high. In analyzing the responses general themes did not emerge as clients reported different reasons for their satisfaction levels. That is, clients gave a wide diversity of responses which lacked commonality. As such, the researcher was not able to develop an "essence" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34) across the data so instead provides a summary of their "lived experience" (Morse & Richards, 2002, p. 44) below. Thus, the following is an account of each client's pretest and posttest work satisfaction levels. That is, themes are addressed within clients as opposed to across clients. Thus, the following is not an overall account of meaning as per Moustakas but rather a summary of the clients' "lived experience" (Morse & Richards, p. 44) as it relates to work satisfaction.

Client A initially reported moderate work satisfaction but during the posttest interview stated that it was now high (personal communication, Oct. 20, 2009). More specifically, during the pretest interview Client A rated her work satisfaction as a, "5 or 6 out of 10" (personal communication, July 1, 2009), and during the posttest interview rated it an 8 (personal communication, Oct. 20, 2009). Thus, per her own account her work satisfaction has changed over time. A number of factors seemed to have influenced her work satisfaction for the positive. For example, before she experienced ambiguity in her job and posttest results revealed that she now has greater clarity about her role. In particular, she stated, "I've been in my role for a year now and I have a good feel for what are the critical areas I need to influence and who I need to influence" (personal communication, Oct. 20. 2009). In addition, she talked about working with her coach on why she felt dissatisfied in her job. As a result, she was able to see that she could influence, or affect, those areas of dissatisfaction for the better. Also, during her pretest interview Client A talked about not being fulfilled because she felt she was not making a difference at her job. Posttest results indicated that her satisfaction has been affected because she now knows how and where she can make a difference. Specifically, she said, "[It's] just really understanding where I can make a difference" (personal communication, Oct. 20. 2009). Finally, during her posttest interview Client A also talked about being able to balance her work and home life which also gives her satisfaction. Specifically, she stated, "It's being able to balance my personal and professional life. It’s interesting and challenging work, but it’s not all consuming either” (personal communication, Oct. 20, 2009).

To summarize, the themes for Client A are role clarity, affecting areas of dissatisfaction, making a difference, and having balance in her work and life. Role clarity came in the form of understanding what and who she can influence in her job. Affecting areas of dissatisfaction came from working with her coach to understand which areas of dissatisfaction she can affect and change for the better. Making a difference stemmed from understanding how and where she can make a difference at work. Finally, having balance in her work and life was related to being in a job that is not completely consuming.

Client B described her work satisfaction as high both pretest and posttest. During the pretest interview Client B talked of the nature of her work, growing her business, being in a capacity of high visibility, and helping others. Specifically, in regard to the posttest interview she stated that her work satisfaction is, “Very high” (personal communication, Oct. 29, 2009). During the posttest interview she indicated that her work is creative in that she works with a variety of individuals and oversees two businesses. She also indicated that she enjoys the industry in which she works. She also stated, “I help people and I get to mentor business owners of spas and salons, and people with the private beauty label. I help people grow their business” (personal communication, Oct. 29, 2009). Thus, for Client B the themes of creativity, and helping others arose. Creativity surfaced in the form of working with a variety of people and managing two companies. Helping others manifested itself in the form of mentoring business owners to grow their business.

During the pretest and posttest interviews Client C talked about being in a career transition. At the time of the pretest interview Client C had not resigned from her current employer but during the posttest interview she indicated that she had given her notice. During her pretest interview Client C described her job satisfaction as moderate while during the posttest interview indicated it ranged from low to high. The low satisfaction level related to her still being in her current job and in a place of transition. However, she reported high satisfaction as it relates to resigning from her job to become self-employed in order to work independently. Furthermore, during this transition phase she is able to work part-time on independent contactor projects. “I’m involved in a couple of other subcontract work [projects] that [are] blossoming and I’m very excited about that” (personal communication, Oct. 22, 2009). From there she went on to say, “My level of satisfaction is high. Incredibly high.” So while being in a state of transition is not particularly satisfying she stated that, “The decision to leave my job [gives me] high satisfaction” (personal communication, Oct. 22, 2009). When asked what it is about her new work that gives her a feeling of high satisfaction, Client C talked about the ability to work autonomously and creatively. Being in charge of her work and doing it in a creative manner is a source of satisfaction for Client C. She also talked about being able to do her work based upon her own unique style and approach. That is, her methods for doing her work would be based upon her inventive style and approach. Client C also indicated that in regard to the coaching it was learning about the personal brand concept of relevancy that made a significant impact upon her. “I think what stood out for me in the coaching is the relevance component” (personal communication, Oct. 22, 2009). As a result the client came to realize that the work she was doing did not have the level of relevance that brought her satisfaction. She stated the following in regard to learning about relevance during the coaching, “It named the struggle I was having. The internal struggle. It gave words to why it didn’t feel right” (personal communication, Oct. 22, 2009).

In review the themes for Client C were: (a) self-employment; (b) subcontracting work; (c) autonomy; (d) creativity; (e) unique style and approach; and (f) relevancy. Self-employment resulted in her choice to resign from her current job to pursue working independently. Subcontracting work manifested itself in feelings of excitement to work on projects that are blossoming. Autonomy and creativity surfaced in regard to being in charge of her work and doing it in an inventive way. Similarly, unique style and approach meant that she would be able to employ her own original methods and style in regard to work. Finally, relevancy was in regard to realizing the internal struggle she was having with her current work. That is, she came to understand that her work did not have the kind of relevance that was satisfying and therefore she had been experiencing an internal struggle.

For Client D it appears that a subtle shift for the positive in work satisfaction occurred pretest to posttest. During the pretest interview she described moderate work satisfaction while at the posttest phase she reported it as moderately-high. During the pretest interview Client D talked about how being in a career transition affected her work satisfaction. “I’m in such a transition phase of developing a new career direction and goals that I’m a little bit not where I want to be” (personal communication, July 1, 2009). During the posttest interview Client D stated she had made progress in her career and feels positive about it. Client D indicated that this progress has influenced her satisfaction level. Specifically, she indicated she is now working in a limited capacity in the field in which she is interested. She talked about this being an exciting opportunity and a platform to learn more about her field of interest. In that same light, she also talked about working for someone from whom she is learning and who is mentoring her. She talked about the mentor as someone who is allowing her to become fully absorbed into the project. In summary, Client D said, “So, I feel pretty positive because I’m moving forward. I’m making progress” (personal communication, Oct. 14, 2009).

In summary the themes for Client D were: (a) industry in which she works; (b) learning; (c) being mentored; and (d) forward progress. Industry in which she works surfaced in the form of now being employed in her desired field. Learning was in regard to feeling excited to learn more about her field of interest. Being mentored was in reference to having a mentor who is allowing her to be fully engaged in the work project. Finally, forward progress was in reference to her career moving ahead in the direction she desires.

During both the pretest and posttest interviews Client E described her work satisfaction as high. Client E talked about challenging work, being on a significant project, high visibility, and helping others during the pretest interview. During the posttest interview she specifically rated her job satisfaction an 8 (personal communication, Oct. 13, 2009). During the posttest interview she again talked about working on a challenging project that will have organization-wide impact and that is also high visibility. Specifically, she stated, “It’s going to change the way environmental work gets done at [company name]. It’s a big impact” (personal communication, Oct. 13, 2009). She also talked about leading this effort including overseeing the team and interfacing with senior executives.

Thus, to summarize, the themes from the posttest interview for Client E are challenging work and high visibility. Challenging work came in the form of working on a significant project that will have organization-wide impact. Being on a high visibility project also relates to this same project in that she is leading it and interfaces with top executives.

To summarize overall, 3 of the clients reported high job satisfaction posttest, while only 2 did pretest. Furthermore, 1 client originally reported moderate work satisfaction during the pretest interview and during the posttest interview rated it as moderately-high. Finally, 1 client described her work satisfaction as moderate during the pretest interview and during the posttest interview indicated that it ranges from low to high. These results are summarized in Table 14 below.

Table 14

Results of Work Satisfaction Pretest and Posttest

Client	Pretest Satisfaction	Posttest Satisfaction
A	Moderate	High
B	High	High
C	Moderate	Low to high
D	Moderate	Moderately high
E	High	High

Posttest Interviews: Analysis of Satisfaction With Friends

As with the pretest interviews, all 5 of the clients reported high friend satisfaction during the posttest phase. As with work satisfaction no particular themes emerged as comments regarding a particular characteristic or attribute were only mentioned once. Thus, the following is an account of each clients “lived experience” (Morse & Richards, 2002, p. 44), rather than a summary of the “essence” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34). That is, themes across clients did not emerge as their individual responses were quite diverse.

Thus, the following simply captures various comments that the clients reported posttest.

Client A rated her satisfaction level of her friendships as a 9 or 10 (personal communication, Oct. 20, 2009). She talked about being present for her friends in a helpful and meaningful way. She also said that her friends support and help her in return. Thus, for Client A, her high friend satisfaction comes by way of (a) being present in a helpful and meaningful way and (b) mutual support.

Client B stated, "My friends are warm, supportive, kind, loving, generous people" (personal communication, Oct. 29, 2009). Even more specifically, she rated her satisfaction level of her friendships a 10 (personal communication, Oct. 29, 2009). For Client B high friend satisfaction relates to friendships that are warm, supportive, kind, loving and generous.

Client C said that her friendships are deep and strong (personal communication, Oct. 22, 2009). She said her friends help her process her thoughts and also challenge her way of thinking. She described her friends as her personal coach stating, "Having friends like that is so special. Having the level of relationship with friends where they are able to cause me to reflect on things that I wouldn't think about" (personal communication, Oct. 22, 2009). For Client C, her high friend satisfaction is in regard to friendships that are deep, strong, challenging, and cause her reflection.

Client D stated, "I feel like my relationships with my friends are great" (personal communication, Oct. 14, 2009). Some of the characteristics that make her friendships satisfying include honesty, trust, and acceptance.

Client E said, "I love my friends" (personal communication, Oct. 13, 2009). She rated her level of satisfaction as a 10. She did not offer more of an explanation of what characterizes her high friend satisfaction, only that she wants many more years with her friends.

Thus, to summarize, both pretest and posttest clients reported high friend satisfaction. The “lived experience” (Morse & Richards, 2002, p. 44) included: being present; being helpful; mutual support; warmth; kindness; love; generosity; deep, strong; challenging; reflection; honesty; trusting; and, accepting. These themes are characterized by specific comments that the clients said as referenced above.

Posttest Interviews: Analysis of Satisfaction With Relatives

Similar to the pretest interviews, all of the clients reported overall high relative satisfaction during the posttest interviews. However, as a reminder, during the pretest interviews there were 2 clients who, although they reported overall high relative satisfaction, also described moderate or even low satisfaction with one particular relative. Posttest results seem to indicate that the satisfaction level for 1 of these clients improved while for the other it remained the same. Furthermore, overall themes did not emerge among the 5 clients from the posttest interviews as comments or attributes were only mentioned once by the clients. That is, their responses were diverse and upon analysis did not result in common themes across clients. Thus, what is described below represents the “lived experience” (Morse & Richards, 2002, p. 44) of the individual clients rather than an “essence” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34) of the data across clients.

We will begin first with a review of the 2 clients who seemed to have moderate or even low satisfaction with a particular relative pretest. Following that will be a discussion on relative satisfaction for the remaining 3 clients.

Beginning with Client A, during the pretest interview she described moderate satisfaction with her relationship with her mother. In particular, she rated her satisfaction a 6 or 7 (on a scale of 10) attributing to it a lack of intimacy (personal communication, July 1, 2009). Then, during the posttest interview Client A rated her level of satisfaction with her mother as a 9 (personal communication, Oct. 20, 2009). Client A stated that since the pretest interview she had taken specific actions to change her relationship with her mother. In particular Client A indicated she learned to define her relationship with her mother based upon what they both needed, not just what Client A needed. That is, Client A had had certain expectations of her mother that her mother apparently was not fulfilling. Client A indicated that this realization came from working with her coach. Specifically, she stated:

> And then I had this conversation with [my coach] and in 1 or 2 conversations we discovered that I'm trying to make the relationship [with my mother] what I wanted it to be rather than what she wants or is capable of. (personal communication, Oct. 20, 2009)

Once Client A came to that realization she was able to redefine her relationship with her mother. Specifically, Client A stated, "The steps I took allowed me to learn that relationships need to be defined by two people and we need to be equally satisfied with the relationship" (personal communication, Oct. 20, 2009). She went on further to say, "I think it's recognizing what can and cannot be done rather than pushing things and bumping your head against a brick wall (personal communication, Oct. 20. 2009)." Thus, based upon her "lived experience" (Morse & Richards, 2002, p. 44) the theme of redefining a relationship emerged from this posttest interview for Client A.

During the pretest interview Client E expressed high satisfaction with her relatives but hinted at a desire for a closer relationship with her son. She seemed to express that she would like him to call more often and share more things with her. Additionally, during the pretest interview Client E appeared to express low satisfaction with her sister stating, “I have one sister and don’t have great satisfaction with her because of her life choices. But I can’t change that” (personal communication, July 7, 2009). During the posttest interviews Client E rated her level of satisfaction with her relatives as an 8 (personal communication, Oct. 13, 2009). In regard to her son, it appeared that a slight shift may have occurred pretest to posttest. Whereas in the pretest interviews she seemed to have hinted at the desire for her son to call more often, during the posttest interview she implied that they talk regularly. She said, “I talk to my son even though he lives 300 miles away. I call him and he calls me” (personal communication, Oct. 13, 2009). In regard to her relationship with her sister, Client E stated, “My sister disappoints me periodically. Other than that I accept her for who she is.” Thus, it appears that Client E’s satisfaction level with her sister remains the same pretest to posttest. In summary the “lived experience” (Morse & Richards, 2002, p. 44) of Client E included the themes of more contact with her son and acceptance of her sister. More contact with her son is in regard to phone conversations, and acceptance is in reference to her relationship with her sister.

Now we will turn our attention to the remaining 3 clients. Beginning with Client B, she talked about having close and respectful relationships with her relatives. “In general I think there is a lot of respect for each other. Whether it’s me respecting my 12 year old nieces or them respecting me” (personal communication, Oct. 29, 2009). Client B went on to characterize her family relationships as “close”(personal communication, Oct. 29, 2009). She also said, “I have high satisfaction with my relationships with my relatives" (personal communication, Oct. 29, 2009). Thus, for Client B the "lived experience" (Morse & Richards, 2002, p. 44) of her relationship with her relatives is characterized by closeness and respect.

Client C stated that she and her relatives support and encourage each other even during difficult times (personal communication, Oct. 22, 2009). Specifically, she stated, "I've been there for my family as we go through [this] hard time" (personal communication, Oct. 22, 2009). She went on to say, "We came out on the other side a little worse for wear but we're stronger" (personal communication, Oct. 22, 2009). In summary, the "lived experience" (Morse & Richards, 2002, p. 44) for Client C as it relates to her relative satisfaction is that of support and encouragement.

Finally, Client D described her relationships with her relatives as trusting, honest, and loving (personal communication, Oct. 14, 2009). Specifically, she stated, "There's a level of trust. And always, always honesty. And a lot of love" (personal communication, Oct. 14, 2009). Client D rated her satisfaction level with her relatives as high (personal communication, Oct. 14, 2009). In summary, the "lived experience" (Morse & Richards, 2002, p. 44) for Client D is that of trust, honesty and love.

Overall, during the posttest interviews all 5 of the clients reported high satisfaction with their relatives. For example, Client A rated her relative satisfaction as a 9 on a 10 point scale (personal communication, Oct. 20, 2009). In another example, Client C stated, "I feel like my relationships with my relatives is high" (personal communication, Oct. 22, 2009). Similarly, Client B indicated that she has good relationships with her relatives (personal communication, Oct. 29, 2009).

In further review, client satisfaction regarding relatives remained relatively unchanged pretest to posttest except for Client A (in relation to her mother) and possibly Client E (in relation to her son). For Client A the theme of redefining a relationship emerged in relation to her mother. This was in regard to redefining a relationship so that it meets the mutual needs of both parties. For Client E, the themes of more contact with her son and acceptance of her sister surfaced. More contact with her son was in regard to telephone conversations with him. Acceptance manifested itself in reference to her relationship with her sister. Satisfaction with their relatives for client B, C and D related to a number of characteristics which were closeness, respect, support, encouragement, trust, honesty and love.

Posttest Interviews: Analysis of Satisfaction With Life

Posttest results revealed high life satisfaction with 4 of the clients. Of the remaining, 1 described her life satisfaction as low to high depending upon the moment of the day. In comparison, the pretest interviews revealed moderate life satisfaction among 4 of the 5 clients.

Among the 4 clients who expressed high life satisfaction one theme that appeared was that of work. For example, Client A stated, “My work is satisfying and provides me with balance” (personal communication, Oct. 20, 2009). Likewise, Client D attributed positive changes in her work situation as affecting her life satisfaction (personal communication, Oct. 14, 2009). That is, posttest Client D is working on a limited basis in her desired field. Client E talked about being in a profession that gives her both personal and professional satisfaction (personal communication, Oct. 13, 2009).

Another theme that emerged among those with reported high life satisfaction was that of family. Client E talked about having a strong family bond and stated, “It’s not that we’re just related, we’re friends” (personal communication, Oct. 13, 2009). Similarly, Client A described her relationships with her husband and family as “incredible” and “great” (personal communication, Oct. 20, 2009).

Among the high group, themes of work and family emerged among clients who expressed high life satisfaction. Work was described as satisfying, balanced, desirable, and professionally and personally meaningful. Family related to having “incredible [and] great” (Client A, personal communication, Oct. 20, 2009) strong bonds and relationships.

Client C stated that her life satisfaction varies and, “It depends on the moment of the day” (personal communication, Oct. 22, 2009). She clarified that it is not just the day, but the moment of the day. She attributed this to the work transition she faces. While on one hand she is confident in her decision and looks toward the future with anticipation, on the other she feels a sense of trepidation. She explained that while at times her life satisfaction is low because of her work transition, she mostly feels high life satisfaction. Specifically, she said, “I’d say [my life satisfaction is] a mix but I’d say the predominant feeling in my life is excitement and that makes my life satisfaction high” (personal communication, Oct. 22, 2009). Thus, for Client C life satisfaction relates to her work and may vary throughout the day but is mostly high. Specifically, the themes of transition and anticipation arose. Transition relates to her leaving one job to become self-employed. Anticipation is in regard to her looking forward to being self-employed.

To summarize, all of the clients reported high life satisfaction posttest. However, at times (as with Client C) there may be moments of low satisfaction.

Chapter Five: Discussion

This chapter presents further conclusions that compare the findings to the literature review. In addition this chapter explores implications, limitations and assumptions of the study, lessons learned, and recommendations for future research.

As discussed in Chapter 2, executive coaching is routinely, if not increasingly, used in leadership development initiatives within organizations. Its effectiveness can be evidenced in several regards. As pointed out by Witherspoon and White (1996b) outcomes from coaching may include better decision making and enhanced self-awareness. Additionally, other results may occur including the achievement of personal and professional goals, increased sales, higher employee satisfaction, enhanced self-knowledge, more effective organizational communication, the ability to successfully manage change, and the capacity to make faster decisions (Natale & Diamante, 2005). Other research indicates that coaching has financial implications upon an organization and can result in a return on investment (McGovern, et al., 2001; Phillips, 2007).

Likewise, the concept of personal brand is on the rise and has been since Peters' (1997) breakthrough article in *Fast Company Magazine.* Several outcomes have been associated with personal brand such as an increased number of clients, a higher income, a steady stream of business, enhanced credibility, and greater recognition (Montoya & Vandehey, 2002). Additionally, having a more successful and fulfilling life based upon one's values and authenticity is also viewed as a result of a strong personal brand (McNally & Speak, 2002). Another outcome of a strong personal brand is that of differentiation which makes a person stand apart from others (Arruda & Dixson, 2007; Montoya & Vandehey).

The purpose of this study was to examine executive coaching and personal brand together. The first research question sought to understand how an executive coach becomes trained in personal brand coaching. The second research question was aimed at exploring a coach's mastery of how to coach on particular personal brand matters. Finally, the third research question aspired to reveal how receiving personal brand coaching affects, if at all, client satisfaction. In the next section each research question and its subsequent conclusions will be explored further.

Research Question 1: Conclusions

Research question 1 stated: What is the process through which coaches may be trained to coach clients on personal brand?

As discussed throughout the paper a brand expert, Karl Speak, conducted a computer-based training program for 6 executive coaches. The content of the training followed the structure below as depicted in Table 15.

Table 15

Summary of Personal Brand Coach Training Program

Session Number	Learning Objectives	Topics
Session 1	1. The Three Core Principles of a Strong Brand 2. Defining Your Brand Platform 3. Personal Brand Assessment	Core principles of personal brand: perceptions; distinctiveness, relevancy and consistency; and, making a difference.
Session 2	1. Prioritize the Most Important Values That Are the core of your Brand	Personal brand platform which consists of one's roles, standards, and styles. Personal brand ethos.

(*table continues*)

Session Number	Learning Objectives	Topics
	2. Learn More about the Personal Brand Platform Framework 3. Review Your Personal Brand Platform 4. Personal Brand Promise	
Session 3	1. Learn the Personal Brand Assessment Process and Applications to Coaching	Personal brand assessment to discover how one is perceived by others and compare to how one wants to be perceived.
Session 4	1. Review Personal Brand Concepts 2. Discuss Personal Brand Coaching Process 3. Review Tools for Personal Brand Coaching 4. Final Thoughts for Implementation of Coaching	Review concepts from the previous sessions. Interactive discussion on applying personal brand concepts in a coach-client engagement. Materials will be provided to coaches to use with clients.

The findings of this training program show similarities and differences with the literature review. It should be noted that the researcher was unable to find studies or data on a personal brand coach training program. Thus, the researcher is assuming, based upon the literature review, that certain content may likely be included in such a program. Keeping this assumption in mind a discussion on what is consistent with the literature review in comparison to Speak's content, along with what is inconsistent, follows. Because the literature review focused upon the works of Arruda and Dixson (2007), McNally and Speak (2002), and Montoya and Vandehey (2002) the discussion that follows will do the same. It should also be noted that the facilitator of the training program, Speak, is in fact the co-author of the book, *Be Your Own Brand: A Breakthrough Formula for Standing Out From the Crowd* (McNally & Speak). Therefore, much of the training curriculum is consistent with the content of that book.

In addition to a comparison with the literature review the following discussion will also include some commentary on how each training session seemed to go from the perspective of the researcher. That is, from an observational standpoint the researcher will discuss what seemed to work well in each session and how the coaches appeared to respond to the content.

Session 1: Discussion

The concepts of perceptions, distinctiveness, relevancy, consistency, and making a difference were topics that were covered in Session 1. All of these concepts are found in the literature (Arruda & Dixson, 2007; McNally & Speak, 2002; Montoya & Vandehey, 2002).

Beginning with perceptions, McNally and Speak (2002) discuss how they play a role in personal brand. Specifically, McNally and Speak say that, "A brand reflects a perception or emotion maintained in somebody else's mind" (p. 11). Montoya & Vandehey (2002) discuss perceptions in terms of gathering feedback from others to determine how one is currently viewed. Both McNally and Speak, and Montoya and Vandehey advocate the importance of understanding the perceptions others hold of oneself. Subsequently, if there is a wide gap between how one views oneself and how others do then the task is to take action to narrow it.

Such concepts regarding perceptions were routinely commented on by Speak during the training program with the coaches. During Session 1, Speak explained that, “Your brand is determined by the perceptions maintained by somebody other than you that describes the total experience of having a relationship with you” (personal communication, May 29, 2009). At session 1 Speak had a particular graphic on the computer screen to demonstrate the power of perceptions. This particular graphic depicted two circles against different backgrounds which made the circles appear to be different in size. However, he explained to the coaches that the circles are in fact exactly the same size. He used this as an illustration that perceptions are powerful because even after pointing out that the circles were the same size the coaches commented on how they looked different. This exercise appeared to resonate with the coaches and seemed to drive home the message of how powerful perceptions really are. He then moved on to discuss that perceptions play a fundamental role in how one relates to others. He explained that the gaps in perception between how one views oneself and how others do are sometimes wide and other times narrow. He offered that when the gap is narrow the relationship is more effective and has an aura of ease about it. Thus, it is in one’s best interest to understand the breadth of gaps and manage them. Throughout this period in the session he asked the coaches to discuss their own experiences in regard to perceptions. Some of the coaches discussed experiences they had had and others talked about some of the perception difficulties their clients have had. Thus, the conversation on perceptions was interactive in nature and seemed to pique the interest of the coaches.

Moving on, Speak then discussed distinctiveness which is a concept that is shared with all three authors (Arruda & Disxon, 2007; McNally & Speak, 2002; Montoya &

Vandehey, 2002). Arruda and Dixson discuss that personal brand distinguishes a person from other people even if their skills and abilities are similar. Montoya and Vandehey use the term differentiation rather than distinction. They describe it as being viewed as new and original when compared with others. McNally and Speak offer a slight twist to what it means to be distinctive. Rather than merely being different, it is about standing for something and having a distinct point of view. As they state, “Your brand starts to become strong when you decide what you believe in and then commit yourself to acting on those beliefs” (p. 14).

During the training program, Speak referred to distinction as having a point of view. As he described it, distinction means that one must have a point of view and stand up for it. He also indicated that distinction includes not trying to be everything to everyone but instead maintaining focus on a few key matters (Speak, personal communication, May 29, 2009). From an observational point of view, it seemed that the idea of distinctiveness was described in rather conceptual terms rather than concrete. That is, Speak did not offer examples to illustrate distinctiveness which likely would have been helpful to the coaches. He also did not incorporate any exercises on distinctiveness that likely would have spurred learning on the part of the coaches. Rather, distinctiveness was described conceptually rather than presented in a tangible, experiential manner.

Relevancy is a concept associated with McNally and Speak (2002). They contend that a brand matters when it is relevant to the needs of others. Simply stated, “Relevance begins when a person believes that you understand and care about what’s important to them” (McNally & Speak, p. 15). Furthermore, relevancy gains momentum each time one demonstrates to another that what is important to the other is also important to oneself.

During the training, Speak described relevancy as paying attention to what someone else considers important (personal communication, May 29, 2009). That is, for a brand to matter it must be relevant to others. It must have meaning and value. However, he did not go much beyond this explanation in the training. That is, as with the concept of distinction, relevancy was described rather conceptually than concretely. In retrospect, it likely would have been helpful for Speak to have illustrated relevancy with an example or two from his own experience. That is, he has worked with countless clients over the years and had he relayed a story or two of how a client changed from being irrelevant to relevant it would have made this concept more tangible. And, the coaches may have gained some insight on how to coach a client on relevancy.

Consistency is a concept discussed by Arruda and Dixson (2007), as well as McNally and Speak (2002). Arruda and Dixson talk of steadfastly expressing one's brand consistently. McNally and Speak indicate that consistency is the hallmark of any strong brand. In fact, they contend that consistent behaviors result in a clear brand. That is because consistent behaviors create dependability because others rely upon oneself to act in a certain manner.

In regard to the training, Speak indicated that consistency means demonstrating behaviors repeatedly. Eventually, over time, others will observe these repeated behaviors and come to rely upon them. He also stated that being consistent takes discipline (personal communication, May 29, 2009). Again, it would have been helpful for Speak to have infused an example or two of someone he knows who learned to demonstrate consistency over time. For example, he mentioned that being consistent takes discipline and it would have been effective for him to have relayed a story of someone who faced this challenge. Such an example would have added more weight and significance to his contention that among consistency, distinction and relevancy, “Most people think being consistent is the most difficult” (Speak, personal communication, May 29, 2009). Furthermore, such an example may have given the coaches some insight on how to work with their client on this particular topic.

Finally, the concept of making a difference is discussed by McNally and Speak (2002). McNally and Speak contend that a premise of brand is to define how one wishes to have a meaningful impact on others. In other words, a personal brand meets the needs of and makes a difference to others.

During the training Speak said, “A strong brand is not about being different, it’s about the difference you make,” (personal communication, May 29, 2009). He also indicated that individuals with strong brands use their qualities and characteristics to make a difference with or impact upon others. As with other topics mentioned above, the idea of making a difference was discussed in a conceptual rather than concrete manner. Again, an example or two from Speak’s own experience would likely have been helpful.

A review of the literature reveals that a training program on personal brand would likely include the topics of perceptions, distinction, relevancy, consistency, and making a difference. However, of the authors discussed above there are differences and nuances among all of them on these topics. Hence, while it is reasonable to think that such topics might be covered in a training program, precisely how they would be addressed would likely vary. Each author has their own unique perspectives on these topics and their training program would likely reflect these differences.

As discussed above, it likely would have been effective for Speak to have infused more examples and experiential exercises throughout the session. The coaches seemed to resonate with that approach in regard to perceptions, and a similar methodology may have been just as effective with the other topics. In addition, Session 1 concluded with an assignment for the coaches to gather perception data about themselves. Perhaps an assignment around any of the other concepts would have been useful, as well. Such an approach likely would have moved a theoretical concept into a more concrete one.

Session 2: Discussion

Session 2 focused upon values, personal brand platform, and personal brand promise. A review of the literature indicates that values were mentioned by Arruda and Dixson (2007), and Montoya and Vandehey (2002), but McNally & Speak (2002) were the ones who focused upon them the most. A review of the literature indicates that a personal brand platform is a concept limited to McNally and Speak. Finally, concepts around a personal brand promise are discussed by all three authors (Arruda & Dixson; McNally & Speak; Montoya & Vandehey).

Arruda and Dixson (2007) see values as one’s operating principles. They offer that values are part of one’s belief system and follow a person no matter where he/she goes. In particular, Arruda and Dixson point out that knowing one’s values is vital in career making decisions because it helps one determine if a job is a good match or not. Montoya and Vandehey (2002) indicate that values are apart of one’s brand by stating, “[Personal brand] is what you stand for - - the values, abilities, and actions that others associate with you” (p. 11). McNally and Speak (2002) contend that values are a core building block to personal brand development. In their estimation, “Your personal brand is based upon your values, not the other way around" (p. 15). Thus, identifying one's most important values is a fundamental component of creating one's personal brand.

During the training program, Speak had the coaches go through two values clarifications exercises. One was done outside of the training program while the other happened during it. The overall point was for the coaches to clarify their most important values and to then identify their single most prized one. That is, Speak had the coaches refine and narrow their own values. From an observational point of view, the coaches worked mostly on their own during these exercises and there was limited interaction among the entire group. Perhaps if Speak had asked a coach or two to describe what it felt like to narrow his/her values and what the resulting list of values were then it would have generated some interaction among the coaches. Such an approach may have sparked additional learning and insight among the group. The overall purpose of the values clarification exercises was in preparation for their personal brand statement which is discussed below.

The training session then moved on to the topic of a personal brand platform. Turning to the literature, McNally and Speak (2002) indicate that a personal brand platform is the single most dominate characteristic of one's brand. Furthermore, this characteristic correlates with one's most treasured value. Because it is the most dominate aspect of one's brand, based upon one's most prized value, it is what makes a person distinctive. The more a person demonstrates their personal brand platform then the more obvious it will be to others. Subsequently, the more a person's brand will become associated with it.

Related to the personal brand platform are roles, standards, and style which are also described by McNally and Speak (2002). Roles refer to the nature of one's relationships. The various roles that one might play may include employee, spouse, parent, neighbor, accountant, teacher, and so forth. Standards relate to behaviors. Examples include flexibility, opinionated, independence, creativity, good listener, and collaborative. Style refers to how one relates to others and the attitude that one expresses. As McNally and Speak define it, style is akin to one's brand personality. Examples may include friendly, intense, aggressive, passionate, introverted, and energetic.

During the training, Speak described the elements of the personal brand platform including roles, standards and style. He indicated that roles are about relationships, standards are one's personal qualities, and style is the manner in which one interacts with others (Speak, personal communication, June 5, 2009). In addition, the coaches had read about and completed a draft of their own personal brand platform, roles, standards, and style from their first homework assignment. Thusly, Speak was reviewing a concept that the coaches had some familiarity with. As he reviewed these concepts he had the coaches refer to their *Personal Brand Handbook* (Brand Tool Box, 2005) and make any adjustments on their homework based upon the discussion. From an observational standpoint, it may have been effective if Speak had had the coaches share their brand platform. Presumably a brand platform is something that is rather private to a person, so Speak would have had to take certain measures to establish safety and comfort within the group. Perhaps prior to the session he could have send out an e-mail to each coach individually asking if he/she would be comfortable sharing his/her platform. The results of having each coach share his/her platform would likely have been twofold. One, is that it likely would have created greater group cohesiveness among the coaches themselves. Secondly, is that it may have given the coaches insight on how to work with their client to help him/her develop his/her own platform. Thusly, having the coaches share their brand platform would have added to the richness of the session and may have helped the coaches with how to work with their client on this matter.

Returning to the literature, the idea of a personal brand promise is discussed by all three authors (Arruda & Dixson, 2007; McNally & Speak, 2002; Montoya & Vandehey, 2002). However, each set of authors has their own unique opinions on the matter. It should be noted that Arruda and Dixson, as well as Montoya and Vandehey, refer to it as a personal brand statement whereas McNally and Speak call is a personal brand promise.

According to Arruda and Dixson (2007) a personal brand statement is intended to describe what makes a person unique. The statement describes what a person has to offer to others that is special. In addition, it is meant to guide decisions, be a reminder of one’s life purpose, and help set one’s priorities. Unlike McNally and Speak (2002), and Montoya and Vandehey (2002) who both contend that a brand promise is a silent statement that one has for oneself, Arruda and Dixson view it as a communication tool. They contend that a brand statement is a vehicle to concisely and clearly communicate what one has to offer to others that is valuable. Additionally, it is a tool that is particularly helpful with one’s career. For instance, it is a statement that may be included on a resume. In addition, if a person is faced with a career related decision the brand statement can help the person evaluate what he/she should do.

Montoya and Vandehey’s (2002) approach with a personal brand statement is from a marketing stance. That is, they declare that a personal brand statement serves as a compass for marketing purposes. While it is a statement that is not shared with others, it serves as an internal guidepost to create the identity one wants to have with one's business prospects and target market. As Montoya and Vandehey state, "You've got a constant reminder of the professional niche you've chosen and how you offer value to your market" (p. 96).

McNally and Speak (2002) indicate that a personal brand promise is a succinct, meaningful, and inspiring statement that describes how one helps others. A brand promise is intended to help a person make conscious decisions and choices that are consistent with his/her brand. Furthermore, McNally and Speak see a brand promise as a commitment of what one is willing to do or be for others.

In regard to the training, Speak described that a brand promise is a concise, meaningful, and powerful statement that is a commitment. More specifically he said, "[It's] a statement you use internally to focus your efforts on what your brand must deliver to satisfy the needs in the real world. [It's] a way to state what you're committed to being for others" (Speak, personal communication, June 5, 2009). As mentioned earlier, it may have been useful for Speak to have asked the coaches share their brand promise. Again, this may have created greater group cohesiveness and helped the coaches learn how to work with their clients in regard to the client's brand promise. Additionally, perhaps a homework assignment could have been to ask the coaches to keep a list between now and the next session of the things they did that demonstrated their brand promise. Such an activity may have helped them solidify their own promise and again may have helped them in terms of later working with their own client.

Returning back to the literature, concepts around values and a personal brand promise or statement are common among the three authors. Again, however, it should be noted that each set of authors has their own unique perspective on these topics. Therefore, how these topics may be presented in a training program will likely vary. In addition, a personal brand platform (along with the components of roles, standards and style) was limited to McNally and Speak (2002). Therefore, it may be inferred that the possibility of this topic being in a training program is less likely. That is, unless the training program relied upon the works of McNally and Speak then it likely would include concepts related to a personal brand platform.

To summarize, a review of the literature indicates that values clarification and a personal brand promise or statement would likely be a topic in a personal brand training program. As with other topics, though, the literature indicates differences among the authors cited. Therefore, while it may be inferred that these topics would likely be apart of a training program the specifics of the content would probably vary. Furthermore, the literature seems to indicate that concepts around a personal brand platform would not likely be in a coach training program unless said program relied upon the works of McNally and Speak (2002).

In regard to the training, it may have been useful if there had been greater sharing among the coaches in regard to their own values, brand platform, and brand promise. This would have created greater interaction among the group, as well as enhanced cohesiveness. It likely would have also given the coaches insight on how to work with their own client.

Session 3: Discussion

The topics in session 3 were to learn the personal brand assessment process and its applications to coaching. The personal brand assessment, as described by Speak, is a tool to gather perception data about oneself. As covered in Session 1, perceptions are key to personal brand.

Beginning with the literature, both Arruda & Dixson (2007), and Montoya and Vandehey (2002) advocate gathering perception data about oneself. Arruda and Dixson offer an on-line assessment tool that gathers anonymous feedback on various areas such as strengths and weaknesses, personal attributes, the type of car or animal one would be, and the role one best plays on a team. The idea behind the assessment is that, “Your personal brand ultimately exists in other people’s hearts and minds,” (Arruda & Dixson, p. 46). Therefore, it is valuable to understand the perceptions others hold of oneself. Montoya and Vandehey suggest simply talking to others to obtain feedback. This may include asking what immediately comes to mind when one’s name is heard, the values associated with oneself, and one’s strengths. However, prior to asking for feedback, Montoya and Vandehey suggest that one first write down how one believes he/she is perceived, as well as how he/she would like to be viewed. Then after asking for feedback and compiling the results, one can compare what he/she wrote down in relation to what others said. According to Montoya and Vandehey if there is a significant difference between what one wrote down and the feedback received, then one can begin working on closing that gap.

During the training program, Speak had the coaches go through a personal brand assessment exercise. In this regard, he had them use an on-line tool to gather anonymous feedback in regard to how they are perceived. The data were sent to Speak's office where it was compiled. It was later provided to the individual coaches during Session 3. The point was for the coaches to receive anonymous, confidential feedback on how they were perceived. This then provided insight into their current personal brand. During Session 3 Speak indicated that this feedback would help the coaches see how wide or narrow the gap is between how they view themselves and how others do. Thus, this is an indicator of where their brand is now and where they would like it to be.

Session 3 proved to be quite interactive among the coaches as they shared their reaction to the perception data. Speak asked each coach, "What stood out for you?" (personal communication, June 12, 2009). All of the coaches individually discussed their assessment results and their reactions to the information. This resulted in a lively conversation among the group. In general, the coaches expressed that they learned something about themselves and that this had been an insightful exercise. They were also able to see similarities and differences in the feedback which helped them begin to understand the strength or weakness of their brand. From an observational point of view, it seemed quite helpful to have had the coaches talk about their assessment and what they learned as a result.

Returning back to the literature on personal brand, the idea of gathering perception data is discussed by a few authors (Arruda & Dixson, 2007; Montoya & Vandehey, 2002). The literature would suggest that this may be done via a computer-based platform or one-on-one interviews. The literature suggests that gathering such data not only provides insights into how others perceive oneself, but may also indicate significant differences.

The next topic in this session was using a perceptions instrument with a client. The researcher did not find literature on applying a perceptions assessment instrument in a coach-client engagement. However, as discussed above, during the training session the coaches experienced this through feedback they themselves received. In regard to using a perceptions instrument with clients the coaches seemed to agree that it would be effective and useful. As Coach C stated in regard to working with a client, “This is a foundational piece” (personal communication, June 12, 2009). In addition, the coaches cautioned using care in debriefing the results with a client. Coach A stated, “Be careful debriefing it. Put some structure around [the words] and move them into a positive place. Use it as a tool to get [the client] more polished on brand that they are trying to create” (personal communication, June 12, 2009). Thusly, through an interactive dialogue the coaches seemed to concur on the purpose and usefulness of the perceptions assessment instrument, but also offered care and caution when debriefing it. Additionally, from an observational standpoint, the coaches seemed interested in talking about how to work with a client in regard to a perceptions assessment instrument. That is, having such a dialogue seemed to be effective and useful.

Session 4: Discussion

The topics for Session 4 were: (a) review personal brand concepts; (b) discuss the personal brand coaching process; (c) review tools for personal brand coaching; and, (d) final thoughts for implementation of coaching.

Although Session 4 began with an overview of personal brand concepts (which have been described above under the other session summaries) the main crux was on coaching a client on personal brand.

During the course of this study the researcher was unable to find literature on personal brand coaching or personal brand coach training. Thus, there is not a discussion on what was found in the literature in comparison to Session 4 of the training. Likewise, the researcher did not find coaching tools or materials on personal brand. Therefore, there is not a discussion comparing the materials provided by Speak to the coaches against the literature.

After Speak reviewed the key concepts of personal brand he provided a possible framework for coaching. This was described in Chapter 4 and is summarized in Table 16.

Table 16

Suggested Coaching Process

Coaching Session	Topic	Assignment(s)
1	Introduce personal brand concepts and initiate assignments	1. Read, *Be Your Own Brand*, and/or listen to an audio tutorial. 2. Develop personal brand platform. 3. Submit personal brand platform to Brand Tool Box. 4. Initiate personal brand assessment tool.
2	Review key concepts of personal brand	
3	Review client's personal brand platform and personal brand assessment results	1. Refine personal brand platform if necessary. 2. Keep, Start, Stop exercise 3. Personal brand action plan
4	Ongoing coaching	

The coaches commented on the usefulness of the above suggested coaching process and that it gave them a framework for working with a client. It also helped them conceptualize the flow of the coaching by seeing it depicted in a visual manner.

In addition to this framework, Speak also reiterated that the coaches would receive the following materials from his office: the book, *Be Your Own Brand: A Breakthrough Formula for Standing Out in the Crowd* (McNally & Speak, 2002); Personal Brand Tutorial (Speak, 2009); *Personal Brand Handbook* (Brand Tool Box, 2005); *Personal Brand Executive Coaching Program Guide* (Brand Tool Box, 2009); and, instructions on how to submit and access the Personal Brand Perceptions Assessment Tool.

In addition, the coaches raised some questions in terms of working with a client. Of particular interest seemed to be the outcomes that a client may expect to experience as a result of personal brand coaching. For example, Coach B said, “What are the outcomes we’re trying to achieve? What is the outcome the client can expect?” (personal communication, June 26, 2009). Similarly, Coach A asked, “What kind of behaviors or changes should [the client] make or do as a result [of this coaching]?” (personal communication, June 26, 2009). Another coach wanted to know if there are particular circumstances that may occur in a client’s life that may prompt him/her to seek personal brand coaching. For example, the coach asked if being in a career transition may be a reason for a client to pursue personal brand coaching (Coach E, personal communication, June 26, 2009). As time was running short in the training session, Speak indicated that he would provide a written response to all of these inquiries which would be included in the packet of materials that the coach would receive. Thus, there was not a discussion on these questions during the actual training session.

In summary, the final session was rather interactive in nature. Of particular interest were the suggested coaching process and the outcomes a client may expect from the coaching.

In retrospect, it likely would have been useful to have spent more time in each of the sessions discussing how to apply the particular topic in a coach client relationship rather than waiting more toward the end. While this is not to suggest that the previous sessions were absent of conversations about how to work with a client, this is merely to say that a greater emphasis on it likely would have been useful. This may have better armed the coaches with more information as they readied themselves to work with a client.

Further Discussion: Additional Training Topics Based upon Literature Review

The literature suggests that other concepts may be included in a coach training program on personal brand. The following discussion focuses on concepts presented by Arruda and Dixson (2007), McNally and Speak (2002) and Montoya and Vandehey (2002).

Arruda and Dixson (2007) suggest that, “Personal branding is the most effective way to clarify and communicate what makes you different, special, and valuable to employers and customers – and use those qualities to guide your career” (p. 29). Thus, Arruda and Dixson advocate personal branding as a means to advance one’s career.

The beginning steps to develop one’s personal brand are to define one’s vision, purpose, goals, values, and passions (Arruda & Dixson, 2007). They contend that such self-exploration and analysis allows one’s unique brand to emerge. Thus, it may be inferred that a coach training program on personal brand could include exercises and activities a coach may use with a client to manifest the client’s vision, purpose, goals, values, and passions. There are several tools a coach could perhaps employ to help accomplish this including values clarification exercises (Lazar & Bergquist, 2004) and appreciative inquiry (Gordon, 2008).

Arruda and Dixson (2007) also advocate establishing one's brand community for the purposes of successful career planning. This community includes one's supervisor, colleagues, friends, family, peers, and competitors. Arruda and Dixson contend that those individuals who plan their careers with the most success are the people who interact with their brand community regularly. The rationale is that members within one's brand community talk with each other which then reinforce one's brand. Additionally, the members talk with others outside of the community which then extends one's brand. Perhaps a coach training program could include exercises to identify the members of one's brand community.

Arruda and Dixson (2007) also describe what they call a brand, "communications wheel" (p. 100). This is meant as a model to carefully communicate one's brand to one's target audience. The wheel may include various mediums such as printed articles, web-based platforms, speaking engagements, volunteer work, and interviews. While Arruda and Dixson's use of the model is aimed at career or job search activities, it appears that there are applications beyond that. For instance, the communications wheel could help a client identify ways to reach out to new customers or better establish him/herself in the community. In considering the components of a coach training program on personal brand, it is feasible that the communications wheel, or something akin to it, be included. That is, the coach could learn exercises and activities used to guide a client to establish his/her unique communications model. This may serve as a vehicle to establish and convey one's brand.

A concept intertwined with the communications wheel is the, “three C’s” (Arruda & Dixson, 2007, p. 63). These are clarity, consistency, and constancy. As discussed in Chapter 2, the purpose of the “three C’s” (Arruda & Dixson, p. 63) is to remain visible and steadfast in the minds of one’s target audience. Clarity refers to knowing who one is and who one is not. In other words, understanding one’s unique promise of value and how this value magnetizes others to oneself. Consistency is about steadfastly expressing one’s value in the same manner regardless of the communications tool being used. That is, the content and style of one’s brand message remains consistent. And finally, constancy refers to communicating regularly. As with the communications wheel, a coach training program could entail how to guide a client on the, “three C’s” (p. 63). Perhaps some skills that the coach may employ to help the client in regard to the, “three C’s” (p. 63) would be listening, asking probing questions, challenging, and reflecting (Hudson, 1999).

Finally, Arruda and Dixson (2007) discuss one’s brand environment. As described in Chapter 2, a brand environment includes one’s appearance, office and business tools, one’s brand identity system (colors, fonts, images), and one’s professional network. Arruda and Dixson contend that one’s environment communicates a message about one’s brand. Thus, one’s environment should reinforce the brand message one wishes to communicate. Considering the significance of environment as it relates to brand it is then feasible to contemplate a coach training program that would include content on it. Here, perhaps, the coaches would learn how to coach a client on aligning their personal brand with their physical environment.

Concentrating on concepts from Arruda and Dixson (2007) a coach training program would likely emphasize career development matters. Such a program would be apt to entail training the coaches on how to coach a client on: (a) vision, purpose, goals, values, and passions; (b) brand community; (c) communications wheel; (d) the three C's of clarity, consistency, constancy; and, (e) brand environment. In summary, a coach training program utilizing the framework of Arruda and Dixson would likely aim to help a client with career matters.

We now review personal brand concepts as advocated by McNally and Speak (2002). Much of the content in Speak's training mirrored that of McNally and Speak. This is likely because, as mentioned earlier, Speak is in fact the co-author of the book, *Be Your Own Brand: A Breakthrough Formula for Standing Out From the Crowd* (McNally & Speak). Consistent with their work, Speak's training focused on: (a) the core principles of a brand which are perceptions, distinctiveness, relevancy, consistency, and making a difference; (b) creating the personal brand manifesto (also referred to as the personal brand platform) which includes identifying one's roles, standards, and style; (c) values clarification exercises; and, (d) a perceptions assessment instrument.

McNally and Speak (2002) discuss brand measurement and brand building which are concepts that were not specifically examined during Speak's training. McNally and Speak advocate that it is critical a person continue to build his/her brand to make it strong. One vehicle for doing so is to seek feedback from friends, family, colleagues, customers, and the like. Such feedback allows one to understand if one's brand is perceived consistently among many groups of people or not. It should be noted that while brand measurement and building were not concepts that were specifically scrutinized during the coach training program, Speak did suggest a brand building technique he called, “Start, Stop, Keep” (personal communication, June 26, 2009). In this regard the coach would help a client determine things to start, stop, and keep doing that would build a strong brand.

Other concepts presented by McNally and Speak (2002) to build one’s brand include paying attention to one’s appearance, communication skills, and relationships with others. Being attentive to these matters can help a person refine his/her brand and make it stronger. McNally and Speak also advocate continuous learning, such as taking workshops, as a means to build one’s brand. Finally, another vehicle for building a person’s brand and becoming more distinctive is to acknowledge other peoples’ birthdays and special occasions in a unique manner.

We now turn our attention to Montoya and Vandehey (2002). They offer the following explanation of personal brand and its value:

> Personal branding [is] the process that takes your skills, personality and unique characteristics and packages them into a powerful identity that lifts you above the crowd of anonymous competitors. Personal branding is the most powerful success and business building tool ever devised. (Montoya & Vandehey, p. 2)

Thus, business development and marketing are fundamental components of personal brand as Montoya and Vandehey see it. As such, a coach training program that uses the principles of Montoya and Vandehey would likely concentrate on teaching coaches to coach clients on matters of business development and marketing.

Specifically, concepts such as target market, specialization, leading attribute, positioning, and branding channels are all associated with Montoya and Vandehey (2002). These will be explored and related back to a coach training program on personal brand.

A target market is, “The precise group of individuals or companies who are on the receiving end of your personal brand message; the parties you want to turn into clients” (Montoya & Vandehey, 2002, p. 280). This begins with an assessment of previous and current clients. As a potential target market is identified Montoya and Vandehey recommend asking questions such as, “Do I enjoy working with this group”? (p. 79), “Does it have the potential to increase my income?” (p. 79), “Do its members need what I provide?” (p. 79), “Based upon their culture, values and background, will they perceive the value in my personal brand?” (p. 79). Once the target market is determined, then Montoya and Vandehey suggest learning all one can about it. As it relates to a coach training program on personal brand, if there is an emphasis on business development and marketing then helping a client identify his/her target market may prove to be useful. In this regard, the coach would learn skills to coach and guide the client to pinpoint a target market that is most suitable to him/her.

Specializing is about focusing in on the scope of what one does. Rather than appealing to everyone, the concept behind specialization is to provide a particular range of services. This allows one to stand out from those who seek to be everything to everyone. Thus, the resulting effect includes differentiation, presumed expertise, and perceived value. Applying the concept of specialization to a coach training program may mean teaching the coach how to guide a client to uncover his/her specialization. This may include training the coach on how to coach a client on differentiation, presumed expertise, and perceived value. As such, the intent is that the client would have a clear understanding of his/her specialization.

A leading attribute, according to Montoya and Vandehey (2002) is how one describes oneself to others. It is the ability to describe one's personal brand quickly as in an, "elevator speech" (Montoya & Vandehey, p. 242). More specifically, it is a distinctive and compelling descriptor that has both intellectual and emotional appeal. Additionally, this quick descriptor can be used on all printed materials such as business cards and brochures. A leading attribute comes from one's personal brand statement. The idea is to extract the most compelling, powerful idea from the statement and that then is the leading attribute. In looking at this in regard to training coaches, such a program could include content on how to help a client discover his/her leading attribute. This perhaps may be accomplished through asking powerful questions (Whitworth, et al., 1998), and reflecting (Hudson, 1999).

Positioning is about implanting in the minds of one's target audience a single powerful idea regarding what one has to offer. Furthermore, it evokes an emotional response in the audience. Specifically, positioning communicates: (a) who one is (b) what one does, and (c) what makes one different or how one creates value. Thus, the aim of positioning is to further hone one's place in the market. Again, as it relates to a training program, coaches could be taught concepts on coaching clients on positioning.

Finally, branding channels are in reference to communicating one's brand to one's target market. The purpose of these channels is to communicate one's abilities, values, specialization, position, and philosophies to influential individuals. Branding channels include client recommendations, professional referrals, direct mail, networking, seminars, public relations, warm calling, and websites. In regard to a training program, coaches could learn concepts related to coaching on branding channels. This perhaps may include asking powerful questions (Whitworth, et al., 1998), challenging (Hudson, 1999), goal setting (Peterson, 1996), and reflecting (Hudson).

Relying upon concepts from Montoya and Vandehey (2002), a coaching training program would likely emphasize coaching clients on business development and marketing concepts. This may include training coaches on how to coach clients on creating a target market, specialization, leading attribute, positioning, and branding channels.

Further Discussion: Speak's Training Program

Overall, Speak's training program provided the coaches with a solid foundation upon which to work with a client. Also, the content seemed to cover the essential elements of personal brand. In addition, Speak graciously provided two sets of identical materials to the coaches. One set for themselves that they used during the training, and another that they used subsequently with the client. Thusly, it would appear that the coaches were nicely equipped for working with a client.

In retrospect, there are some additional methods to the training that may have deepened the coaches' learning and abilities to work with a client. These suggestions relate to infusing more practical exercises into the training, offering more illustrative examples of concepts, and creating greater interaction among the coaches. From an observational standpoint incorporating these suggestions would have only enhanced what was already an effective training program.

As mentioned throughout the discussions on the various training sessions, it likely would have been useful to incorporate more practical exercises into each session. In this regard, the coaches could have experienced a concept or idea in a more first-hand manner. For example, perhaps an exercise on being distinctive or relevant would have been effective. Or maybe an exercise on how the coach can better demonstrate his/her own personal brand promise would have been useful.

Additionally, it likely would have been useful for Speak to have illustrated concepts with more examples from his own experience. Such examples would have made a concept more concrete. Illustrative examples on consistency, distinction, and relevancy, for example may have made these concepts more tangible. Furthermore, in doing so it seems that the coaches would have more clearly seen how to apply these concepts with a client.

As mentioned earlier, it likely would have been effective for the coaches to have done more sharing throughout the training. Perhaps they could have shared their own personal brand platform and promise with the group. In addition, maybe they could have shared something in regard to their most prized values, and how that relates to their platform and promise. Such sharing would have deepened the dynamics of the group, and it likely would have provided insight on how to coach a client on these matters.

In summary, more practical exercises, additional illustrative examples, and greater interaction among the coaches would have only made the program all the more strong. Nonetheless, the coaches seemed to have learned a lot in regard to personal brand as a result of the training. In addition, along the way it appeared that they enjoyed the experience.

Research Question 2: Conclusions

Research question 2 asked: How do executive coaches describe their abilities to coach clients in the following matters pretest, posttest, post-posttest?

a. Distinguishing the difference between personal brand and personal image.

b. Living an authentic personal brand.

c. Developing a personal brand promise.

d. Creating personal brand distinctiveness.

As such, the coaches participated in a training program. A review of the literature suggests that evaluation is intended to compare what was promised from a training program with what actually happened as a result. A common method of doing so is that of Kirkpatrick (1976) who identified a hierarchical evaluation structure of: level 1 - reaction; level 2 – learning; level 3 – behavior, and; level 4 – results. Phillips (1996) added to Kirkpatrick's work with an additional level he called return on investment (ROI).

In regard to this study, the researcher aimed to assess level 2 (learning) and level 3 (behavior) data. We will start with a discussion on level 2 data, per the pretest and posttest interviews, and the move on to examining level 3 data per the post-posttest interviews.

As discussed in Chapter Two, several authors advocate the use of pretest and posttest measures to assess level 2 outcomes (Bell & Kerr, 1987; Carnevale & Schultz, 1990; Cohen, 2005; Warr, Allan & Birdi, 1999). As such, the researcher conducted pretest and posttest, as well as post-posttest, interviews with the coaches in regard to the personal brand matters as depicted in research question 2. The pervasive theme from the pretest interviews was that of conjecture. That is, the coaches seemed to speculate or guess at the answers to the questions. This is supported by responses such as: "Other than that I don't have a clue" (Coach C, personal communications, May 12, 2009); "Well, again, I haven’t heard the term yet, so all I can do is look at the phrase [personal brand promise] and take a guess at what it means” (Coach A, personal communications, May 12, 2009); “I’m flunking this test” (Coach B, personal communications, May 11, 2009); and, “I’m sort of speculating” (Coach B, personal communications, May 11, 2009). The literature supports that pretest data would likely reveal limited knowledge of a subject with the respondents (Cohen). For example, in a study described by Carnvale and Schultz, pretest data indicated that respondents had little knowledge of a particular subject. In this case, the respondents were new employees at Aetna Life Insurance Company who were found to have limited knowledge of how to process claims.

Literature suggests that learning may be evaluated via posttest measures (Carnevale & Schultz, 1990; Tannenbaum & Woods, 1992). As such, the researcher conducted posttest interviews with the coaches immediately after Speak’s training program. These interviews suggested that learning did in fact occur. This is evidenced in several ways. For instance, the coaches referred to specific brand terminology, as well as materials and exercises used by Speak. For example, several of the coaches referred to helping the client gain clarity on his/her roles, standards, and style as part of working on his/her personal brand. In another example, some of the coaches discussed the importance of helping the client understand how he/she is perceived and comparing that to his/her own self perception. Finally, half of the coaches discussed the importance of having the clients go through a values clarification process in order to develop his/her personal brand promise. During the pretest interviews none of the coaches had referred to these matters nor did they use any other personal brand terminology or concepts in their responses. Thus, it may be inferred that learning occurred.

However while learning seemed to occur, as discussed in Chapter Four there still remained a sense of uncertainty among the coaches. For example, after an interview question Coach B stated, “Hmmm, I would have to go back and refer to [Speak’s] materials to be honest (personal communication, July 3, 2009). While in response to another interview question Coach E said, “Refresh my memory” (personal communication, June 29, 2009). These responses seem to suggest that some uncertainty existed.

In addition, oftentimes during the posttest interviews the coaches did not explicitly explain how to coach a client on a particular brand matter. That is, their answers tended to be either conceptual in nature or somewhat vague. For example, when asked how they would coach a client on developing a personal brand promise the responses tended to be ambiguous rather than specific. While the coaches responses included values clarification, and identifying one’s roles, standards, and style (which are concepts that were taught by Speak), they did not discuss the actual steps involved to achieve a personal brand promise. In short, their responses lacked specificity and instead were more conceptual in nature. Thus, the posttest interviews suggested that while learning occurred there still remained a level of both uncertainty and vagueness.

Retuning back to literature on posttest measures, some authors advocate gathering such data 2 to 3 months after a training intervention (Birnbrauer, 1987; Burkett, 2005; Tannenbaum & Woods, 1992). Specifically, Birnbauer recommends conducting a posttest evaluation 3 months after training so that participants have the opportunity to use what they learned. The researcher in this project conducted not only posttest interviews immediately following Speak’s training, but post-posttest interviews as well, that occurred 3 months later. The rationale was that the researcher was interested in knowing how behavior was affected, if at all, after the coaches had a chance to coach a client.

The post-posttest interviews revealed that some behavioral changes may have occurred among the coaches. This is generally evidenced by the use of specific personal brand terminology and some examples coaches described in working with their client. However, it should be noted that it appears there were limited behavioral changes among the coaches. The following paragraphs will describe the behavioral changes that appear to have occurred.

A behavioral shift seemed to have occurred from posttest to post-post test in regard to values clarification. For example, during the posttest phase responses from the coaches in regard to values clarification were more conceptual in nature than specific. However, the post-posttest interviews revealed details on the specific process the coaches used to help their client clarify his/her values. In particular, Coach E gave the example of how she had her client describe various life experiences in order to get at values (personal communication, Oct. 12, 2009). Coach C said that he worked through a values sort exercise with her client in order to identify key values (personal communication, Oct. 21, 2009). Finally, Coach D said (personal communication, Oct. 13, 2009) that she used a specific values clarification process with her client and then had the client compare those results to another values exercise in the *Personal Brand Handbook* (Brand Tool Box, 2005). This kind of detail varied from the posttest interviews in which the overall responses of all the coaches was rather vague in nature. For example, during the post-test interviews coaches discussed that a values clarification process was a normal step in any coaching engagement. It was also mentioned that materials from Speak's *Personal Brand*

Speak (Brand Tool Box, 2005) may be used to clarify values. However, the posttest interviews overall did not contain the same level of detail on the specific process the coaches used to clarify values that the post-posttest interviews did. Thus, it may be inferred that a behavioral change may have occurred in regard to coaching a client on values.

From an analysis of the posttest and post-post test interviews it appears that a behavioral change has occurred, at least for 1 coach, as it relates to perceptions. During the posttest interviews the concept of perceptions was mentioned by 4 of the coaches although it was in a conceptual and vague manner. They referred to perceptions but did not provide detail in terms of how or why it is used in personal brand coaching. During the post-posttest interviews 3 coaches also mentioned perceptions and of them Coach C described it with some level of detail. The other coaches however, did not. Coach C discussed his client using a multi-rater instrument in order to gauge self-perceptions against those of others. He went on to say that he then debriefed the results with the client to assess gaps in perceptions as well as the strength of the client's brand. Overall, based upon this comparison of posttest and post-post test data regarding perceptions, it may be inferred that coaches possess knowledge that perceptions play a role in personal brand coaching, but it is unclear the degree of their abilities or mastery to coach on this matter. That is, except in the case of one coach who seemed to have demonstrated a behavioral change from posttest to post-posttest by describing how he employed it with his client.

In regard to using Speak's book and handbook it appears that a behavioral shift may have occurred for 2 of the coaches. During the posttest phase coaches may have referred to Speak's materials but they did not describe how or why they would employ them. Alternatively, the post-posttest interviews showed a slight difference in this regard. Specifically, Coach D stated that the exercises in the book and handbook helped her client gain clarity on her roles, standards, and style (personal communication, Oct. 13, 2009). Coach E stated that her client did exercises in Speak's *Personal Brand Speak,* (Speak, 2005) in order to identify her personal brand promise (personal communication, Oct. 12, 2009). Thus is appears that these 2 coaches made use of Speak's materials in order to coach their client on matters of personal brand. This is an indication of a behavioral change.

In summary, any behavioral changes that may have occurred from posttest to post-post test appear to be minimal. They appear to be limited to values clarification, perceptions, and the use of Speak's book and handbook. Additionally, any behavioral changes that may have occurred appear to have happened with a limited number of coaches.

Research Question 3: Conclusions

Research question 3 intended to assess satisfaction levels of clients before and after receiving personal brand coaching. Specifically, the question asked clients to describe their levels of satisfaction in regard to work, friends, family, and life. As discussed in Chapter One, the primary basis for inquiring about these domains of satisfaction came from the QOLI (Frisch, 1994), and SWLS (Diener, et al, 1985). Clients were interviewed pretest, just as they were to about to engage in personal brand coaching, and then posttest, three months later.

Literature on training evaluation methodology would suggest a change in client satisfaction from pretest to posttest (East & Jacoby, 2005; Tannenbaum, 1992; Weinstein, 2007). An illustrative example of this comes from a life insurance company. It was found that new employees increased their knowledge of how to process claims after they received training (Carnevale & Schultz ,1990). Their knowledge was measured via pretest and posttest means. This example may be applied to a coaching relationship particularly when the client is being coached on a new subject. In the case of this research study, clients were coached on personal brand for the first time. Thus, it may be inferred that clients may experience a change in satisfaction after receiving personal brand coaching.

Work Satisfaction: Pretest and Posttest Discussion and Interpretation

In reference to work satisfaction, pretest measures revealed that 3 of the clients described moderate levels of satisfaction, while the other 2 expressed high levels. The themes that arose from the moderate group were a lack of fulfillment, being in a career transition, and being in a job with significant ambiguity. These themes caused these clients to describe their work satisfaction as moderate. The themes that emerged from the high group were nature of work (meaning the industry and type of work), having challenging work, having a high visibility project, and helping others. These themes prompted these clients to describe their work satisfaction as high.

Posttest results seem to indicate an increase in satisfaction for 3 of the clients. Specifically, this appears to be the case for Clients A, C, and D.

Pretest Client A reported moderate work satisfaction and posttest indicated it was high. This seemed to be attributed to: greater role clarity; being able to influence or affect areas of dissatisfaction in a positive fashion; making a difference; and, having balance in her life.

Client C reported moderate work satisfaction pretest and posttest indicated that it ranges from low to high. However, it should be explained why Client C feels both low and high satisfaction at the same time. The low satisfaction is partly attributed to being in a job in which she does not feel there is a suitable match between her talents and skills, and the job. Specifically, Client C stated in reference to her current job, “What I bring to the table is not necessarily a good match. There just wasn’t a connection that what I bring to the table was relevant. And that’s where the dissatisfaction comes in” (personal communication, Oct. 22, 2009). In addition, Client C also talked about the difficulty of being in a transition and that at times it causees her to feel dissatisfied. In particular she stated, “Where I am is in transition and that is not particularly high” (personal communication, Oct. 22, 2009). Conversely, she feels high satisfaction with her decision to leave her current job and feels anticipation about self-employment. Specifically, Client C commented, “The decision to leave my job is high satisfaction (personal communication, Oct. 22, 2009).” In light of becoming self-employed Client C stated, “My level of satisfaction is high. Incredibly high,” and she rated it an 8 on a 10-point scale (personal communication, Oct. 22, 2009). Furthermore, she is currently working on some independent contractor projects in which she said, “I feel like I’m in my element when I’m doing [that] work” (personal communication, Oct. 22, 2009). In addition, as she talked about her future work she stated, “And I’ll be doing work that I love to do” (personal communication, Oct. 22, 2009). Thus, while she may at times experience low satisfaction she also feels high satisfaction. In addition, she has made the decision to leave a job that causes her low satisfaction to pursue work that she “loves” (personal communication, Oct. 22, 2009). Thus, it may be inferred that her work satisfaction has increased pretest to posttest. Finally, Client C indicated that learning about relevancy from her coach helped her understand why she was dissatisfied with her current job.

Finally, Client D reported moderate work satisfaction pretest and moderately high satisfaction posttest. The shift in satisfaction appears to be related making to progress in her career aspirations. At the time of the posttest interview Client D had secured a part-time job in her desired field which is that of environmentally friendly construction. Specifically, Client D stated she is working with an environmentally friendly builder on a large project that makes her feel excited (personal communication, Oct. 14, 2009).

Thus, for these 3 clients it appears that an increase in job satisfaction has occurred. In addition, 1 of the clients cited that being coached on relevancy helped her understand why she felt dissatisfied with her current job. While it is not wholly clear what it was about the coaching that caused an increase in work satisfaction (except for the one example of relevancy as cited by Client C) it does appear that such a positive shift occurred for the 3 clients.

For the remaining 2 clients, high satisfaction was reported both pretest and posttest. Both clients work in jobs that they enjoy. In particular, Client E stated:

> My career is important to me and I do work that is meaningful. I don’t just go to work and make widgets that nobody cares about. I work in a profession that can save people’s lives and save the environment (personal communication, Oct. 13, 2009)

Client B stated, “It’s very creative and I like the industry I’m in and I like the people I work with” (personal communication, Oct. 29, 2009). Because these clients had high work satisfaction to begin with it may be of no surprise that they felt the same way posttest. Therefore, it may be inferred that the coaching did little to influence this domain of satisfaction and/or that the coaching did not broach the subject of work.

As noted in Chapter Four, common themes did not emerge among the clients posttest. While the reasons behind this are not entirely clear, it could simply be attributed to that people experience work differently. Thus, their reasons for satisfaction will vary because people are satisfied by different things at work. Perhaps another reason is some of clients described greater work satisfaction posttest and the factors that caused a shift in satisfaction are simply different. That is, Client A found greater role clarity, Client C had resigned from her job to become self-employed, and Client D had found work that she had been seeking. Thus, for these clients, the reasons for a shift in their work satisfaction are simply different.

Turning our attention to the literature on personal brand we find a number of authors who indicate a strong brand may result in several positive work related outcomes. For instance, Montoya and Vandehey (2002) discuss higher earning potential, increase in clients, and a consistent flow of business. Arruda and Dixson (2007) discuss career advancement, increased compensation, and greater credibility as possible work related outcomes of a strong personal brand. The clients, however, in this study did not indicate they experienced any of these things. It should be noted though, that they did not express a desire for these outcomes at the pretest or posttest interview. Thus, these possible outcomes as described by Montoya and Vandehey (2002) and Arruda and Dixson (2007) may not be things that were important during the time of the study.

However, there may be some parallels between the literature and the outcomes that Clients A, C, and D specifically experienced. For example, Client A found greater role clarity in her job which apparently increased her work satisfaction. Arruda and Dixson (2007) indicate that a strong personal brand allows an individual to set him/herself apart from others who have similar skills and abilities. While Client A did not specifically talk of doing this, perhaps in the course of her gaining more role clarity she also did things that differentiated herself from others. It is possible that this could have had the effect of setting her apart from others and thusly creating greater role clarity. In regard to Client C, she talked about being coached on the concept of relevancy (McNally & Speak, 2002), and how that helped her make the decision to leave her current job. Specifically, she said, “What stood out for me in the coaching [was] the relevancy component” (personal communication, Oct. 22, 2009). McNally and Speak discuss relevance as, “Your relevance to a client or customer is determined not only by your product or service but by how it (and you) can proficiently solve their problems and meet their needs” (p. 16). This is somewhat akin to what Client C indicated when she talked about being able to approach her work according to her own unique style and methodology to meet the needs of her customers. Finally, Client D, found work that is meaningful to her and in the industry in which she is interested. The parallel here perhaps relates to the literature on values. A number of authors discuss that brand is built upon one’s values (Arruda & Dixson; McNally & Speak). In particular, McNally and Speak say, “To develop a strong personal brand takes very clear values” (p. 54). In her posttest interview Client D talked about doing work that makes her “excited” (personal communication, Oct. 14, 2009). While she did not specifically talk about her values during the pretest or posttest interviews, it may be surmised that by working with her coach she gained greater clarity on them which may have helped her find work that she enjoys. In addition, during the post-posttest interview with Client D’s coach the coach indicated that they two of them did values clarification work. Therefore, there may be a parallel between their values clarification work and increased work satisfaction for Client D.

Friend Satisfaction: Pretest and Posttest Discussion and Interpretation

In terms of satisfaction levels in regard to friends, pretest measures indicated high satisfaction levels among all of the clients. The specific themes that emerged were lifelong friends, depth, and communication. In regard to lifelong friends, some of the clients reported friendships going back to early childhood that are still active today. The clients also reported having deep friendships as a result of investing time and energy into them. For example, Client D described putting effort into her friendships in order to grow them. As it relates to communication, the clients reported that being in regular contact makes them feel satisfied. Consistent communication, whether that be in person, over the phone, or through e-mail, is a source of satisfaction as it relates to friends.

Posttest measures related to friendship revealed that all of the clients still have high friend satisfaction. The clients talked about different characteristics or attributes of their friendships that give them high satisfaction. This included: (a) being present, (b) being helpful, (c) support, (d) depth, (e) strength, (f) challenging ways of thinking, (g) honesty, (h) trust, and, (i) acceptance. For example, Client A stated, “I feel I’m able to be present for my friends when and during the events that are important to them or when they are having issues [then] I’m able to be present [and] helpful in a meaningful way” (personal communication, Oct. 20, 2009). Client B talked about having close, deep, and strong friendships (personal communication, Oct. 29, 2009). Putting it simply, Client E stated, “I love my friends. So, I’m a 10 there” (personal communication, Oct. 13, 2009).

Thus, there was no change pretest to posttest in terms of satisfaction with friends. It may be inferred that because the clients all had high friends satisfaction from the start that the coaching either had little influence in this domain and/or that the coaching did not even touch upon the subject of friends.

It should again be noted that common themes did not emerge posttest as it related to satisfaction with friends. While the reason for this is not wholly clear, perhaps a contributing factor is that there are simply a variety of ways to describe one's friends. That is, there are many verbs, adverbs, and so forth that one may use to characterize one's friendships.

Turning to the literature on personal brand, McNally and Speak (2002) indicate the following about friendships:

> Many people find friendships to be on of their most valued privileges. True friends can provide us with genuine compassion in dark times, celebrate our achievements without envy, and laugh at our foibles and eccentricities as we laugh at theirs. (p. 85)

They go on to say that friendships can become even deeper and more meaningful when one infuses one's brand promise into them. The results of this study indicate that all of the clients had high friend satisfaction both pretest and posttest. Therefore, the coaching may have had little to no effect in this domain of satisfaction. So while friend satisfaction may not have changed in this study, the literature according to McNally and Speak (2002) indicates that one may deepen one's friendships though instilling one's brand promise into them.

Relatives Satisfaction: Pretest and Posttest Discussion and Interpretation

In regard to pretest satisfaction levels with relatives, the data revealed high levels of satisfaction among all of the clients. However, as noted in Chapter Three, at times there was some evidence of moderate or low levels of satisfaction for some of the clients with particular family members. To illustrate, Client A expressed high satisfaction with her husband and siblings, but moderate satisfaction with her mother (personal communications, July 1, 2009). Similarly, Client E reported high satisfaction with her relatives overall but low satisfaction with her sister (personal communication, July 7, 2009).

The pretest themes that emerged were acceptance, respect, and communication. Acceptance revealed itself in the form of valuing different opinions, and not judging others. Respect was demonstrated through (a) understanding others' needs, wishes or opinions (b) not trying to change others, and (c) showing deference for differences. Communication was described as that which is deep and authentic.

The outcomes of the posttest measures indicated that overall the clients still feel high relative satisfaction. Themes, however, did not emerge as comments were only made once rather than by multiple clients. Some of the characteristics of their relationships with their relatives that cause high satisfaction include trust, honesty, love, support, encouragement, sharing, communication, and listening.

In addition, posttest analysis revealed that Client A's level of satisfaction with her mother had increased from moderate. Pretest Client A rated her satisfaction level with her mother as a 6 or 7 on a 10 point scale (personal communication, July 1, 2009) and posttest rated it a 9 (personal communication, Oct. 20, 2009). As discussed in Chapter Four, Client A talked about how she learned to base her relationship with her mother on what they both wanted rather than just on what she wanted. As a result she redefined her relationship with her mother which seemed to have positively affected her level of satisfaction. As Client A indicated she gained insight on her relationship with her mother through working with her coach (personal communication, Oct. 20, 2009). However, Client A did not specify exactly what she and her coach did to redefine her relationship with her mother. Therefore, it is unclear if a specific personal brand coaching technique, exercise, concept or the like affected this positive change, or if it was something else that occurred in the coaching. Therefore, it cannot be inferred specifically that personal brand coaching attributed to an increase in satisfaction with Client A.

It appears that a slight shift in satisfaction may have occurred for Client E in regard to her son from pretest to posttest. During the pretest interview Client E hinted that she would like her son to call her more often but during the posttest interview she implied that they talk regularly. In particular she said during the posttest interview, “I talk with my son even though he lives 300 miles away. I call him and he calls me’ (personal communication, Oct. 13, 2009). While this difference may be very subtle pretest to posttest it appears that a slight increase in satisfaction with her relationship with her son may have occurred. However, it is unclear as to what this is attributed and it is unknown if the personal brand coaching had any affect at all or not.

In summary, from pretest to posttest clients reported overall high satisfaction with their relatives. In the case of Client A, it appears that working with her coach helped her increase her level of satisfaction with her mother. But it is unknown if it was specifically personal brand coaching that attributed to this or something else that occurred during the course of the coaching engagement. In regard to Client E, there may have been a slight increase in satisfaction with her son. However, the degree and depth of this shift is unclear, and how or if personal brand coaching attributed to it is unknown. Overall, clients cited high levels of satisfaction with their relatives from pretest to posttest. Therefore, it may be inferred that because clients overall reported high satisfaction with relatives pretest to posttest that the coaching had limited influence in this regard and/or that the subject did not come up during the engagement.

As with the categories of work and friends, common themes did not emerge for that of relatives. Again, the reason for this is speculative rather than concrete. Perhaps one reason is that people relate to their relatives differently and thus describe those relationships with various terms.

Looking at the literature, McNally and Speak (2002) discuss the various roles that we all play. This includes being and having relatives. They go on further to say that roles are the fundamental reason for being in various relationships. "For most people, being loved, valued, and appreciated by a spouse or life partner - - and loving, valuing, and appreciating in return - - are benefits they hope to experience in one exceptional relationship in their lives" (McNally & Speak, p. 82). They go on to say that success in such special relationships is attributed to both parties being willing to learn and grow together in a relationship built upon respect and care. While it is not clear if specifically personal brand coaching itself had an influence in the change of relative satisfaction level for Client A she did indicate that by working with her coach she was able to redefine her relationship with her mother. Furthermore, according to Client A this resulted in greater satisfaction. Again, it is unclear if she and the coach specifically did personal brand coaching to reach this outcome or if it was some other kind of coaching in which they engaged. Regardless, McNally and Speak seem to indicate that having a strong personal brand may have positive outcomes on one's relationships with their relatives.

Life Satisfaction: Pretest and Posttest Discussion and Interpretation

Pretest data revealed moderate life satisfaction among 4 of the clients, with high satisfaction for 1 of them. Of the 4 clients who reported moderate life satisfaction, the theme of work revealed itself. These clients all described work issues as the reason that their life satisfaction was moderate rather than high. Within the theme of work pervasiveness, pressure, achievement, and time emerged as subthemes.

Because work seemed to be the predominate reason clients reported moderate life satisfaction pretest then a comparison to question 1 on work satisfaction is useful. Pretest data to question 1 regarding work revealed moderate satisfaction for 3 of the 5 clients. Pretest data to question 4 regarding life revealed moderate satisfaction for 4 of the clients. Thus, moderate levels of satisfaction were reported by the majority of the clients in both categories (work and life) pretest. Furthermore, the single client who reported high life satisfaction also expressed high work satisfaction. Additionally, in answering the pretest question about life satisfaction clients focused upon work as the reason for moderate levels of satisfaction rather than high. It is therefore not surprising that the majority of clients reported moderate satisfaction for the question on life pretest. Table 17 below summarizes the levels of work and life satisfaction pretest.

Table 17

Summary of Pretest Satisfaction Levels for Work and Life

	Pretest Work	Pretest Life
Client A	Moderate	Moderate
Client B	High	Moderate
Client C	Moderate	Moderate
Client D	Moderate	Moderate
Client E	High	High

Posttest results showed high life satisfaction with 4 of the clients. Of the remaining clients, 1 indicated her life satisfaction fluctuates from high to low depending upon the moment of the day.

For the clients who reported high life satisfaction posttest the theme of work emerged. That is, they attributed their life satisfaction to how they were feeling with their work. For example, Client A indicated that she now has a comfortable balance between her work and personal life (personal communication, Oct. 20, 2009). In another example, Client E expressed that her work is meaningful to her (personal communication, Oct. 13, 2009). Therefore again, because the clients seemed to reference their work satisfaction as an influencing factor to their life satisfaction then it is useful to compare posttest levels of each. Table 18 below summarizes posttest satisfaction levels for work and life.

Table 18

Summary of Posttest Satisfaction Levels for Work and Life

	Posttest Work	Posttest Life
Client A	High	High
Client B	High	High
Client C	Low to high	Low to high
Client D	Moderately high	High
Client E	High	High

Therefore, a review of the data pretest and posttest seems to suggest that work satisfaction and life satisfaction are somehow associated with each other. While this is not a definitive conclusion it is merely one of speculation based upon what the clients reported. To support this speculation let us examine 2 clients in which both their pretest to posttest levels of satisfaction in work and life rose. Client A reported moderate work satisfaction pretest and high work satisfaction posttest. Likewise, she reported moderate life satisfaction pretest and high life satisfaction posttest. Thus, both work and life satisfaction rose pretest to posttest. In a similar vein, Client D reported moderate work satisfaction pretest and moderately-high work satisfaction posttest. She reported moderate life satisfaction pretest and high life satisfaction posttest. Therefore, by her account both work and life satisfaction improved pretest to posttest. Again, these illustrations are not intended to be conclusive but rather a speculation regarding a possible association between work and life satisfaction.

In regard to the personal brand coaching all of the clients received, it is unknown how or if the coaching had any affect upon the clients' life satisfaction. While during the posttest interviews Client A and Client C indicated that the coaching had an affect upon their work satisfaction, none of the clients referenced their coaching experience when responding to the posttest question on life satisfaction. Therefore what influence, if any, the personal brand coaching had upon the clients' life satisfaction is not known.

In addition to work, another theme that emerged among clients who reported high life satisfaction posttest was that of family. As examples, Client E talked of having a close-knit family (personal communication, Oct. 13, 2009), and Client A described family relationships as "incredible" and "great" (personal communication, Oct. 20, 2009).

In terms of the personal brand coaching it is not clear what effect it had, if any, on the clients' satisfaction with life. The only possible example comes from Client A. As described in Chapter 4, during the posttest interview Client A indicated that by working with her coach she was able to redefine her relationship with her mother for the better (personal communication, Oct. 20, 2009). Client A offered this piece of information when she was specifically asked about her satisfaction level with her relatives. However when asked about her life satisfaction Client A did not speak of her coaching experience.

When she talked of her life satisfaction posttest, Client A focused upon her relationship with her husband and friends, and being satisfied at work (personal communication, Oct. 20, 2009). In other words, she did not talk about her coaching experience. Thus, it is unclear what effect, if any, the personal brand coaching had on her overall life satisfaction.

Looking at the literature on personal brand the concepts of work and relationships are discussed. Specifically, Arruda and Dixson (2007) discuss work as it relates to personal brand. In particular, they talk of creating career triumph and fulfillment as a result of a strong personal brand. In that regard they say, “[Personal branding] is the most effective and innovative strategy you can use to achieve professional success and fulfillment” (p. 25). Similarly, Montoya and Vandehey (2002) also discuss various career benefits as a result of having a strong personal brand. This may include a higher income, a steady stream of business, and overall greater career success. Turning our attention to McNally and Speak (2002) the concept of relationships is discussed. They talk about creating deeper and more fulfilling relationships with immediate family members and friends by infusing one’s personal brand into them. In particular they state, “Friendships can reach even deeper and more meaningful levels when people learn how to apply their brand promise into those relationships” (p. 85). They indicate that the same is true with a spouse, significant other, or child. Again, while Client A did not discuss personal brand specifically in her posttest interview on life, she did talk about her relationships with her spouse and friends, and her feelings about work. The literature on personal brand covers these subject matters and suggests that brand can have positive influences in these areas.

As described in Chapter 4, Client C indicated her life satisfaction fluctuates throughout the day. She attributed this to being in a state of transition with her work. She indicated she resigned from her regular, full-time job to become self-employed. While she feels satisfied with this decision and looks forward with anticipation at being self-employed there is still a periodic sense of trepidation (personal communication, Oct. 22, 2009). However, despite these intermittent feelings of apprehension Client C indicated that she predominantly feels excited and described her life satisfaction as high (personal communication, Oct. 22, 2009).

In summary, 3 of the clients reported higher life satisfaction pretest to posttest while 1 indicated that it fluctuates from low to high but is mostly high. The themes of work and family arose from the posttest interviews. In particular, it appears that work and life satisfaction may have an association with each other. Finally, it is unknown how or if the personal brand coaching had any effect upon the clients' life satisfaction.

Literature on personal brand suggests that a person may create a more successful, gratifying, and fulfilling life (McNally & Speak, 2002) as a result of developing a strong personal brand. While any parallel between the clients' levels of life satisfaction and the personal brand coaching they received is merely speculative it is nonetheless worthy to note.

Implications

The findings of this study have potential implications for the coaching industry, coaches, and clients. This section will discuss the implications for all of these parties.

Beginning with the coaching industry, as mentioned in this project the researcher was unable to find literature or evidence of personal brand coaching. While there are many specialties in coaching (behavioral coaching, career coaching, leadership development coaching, organizational change coaching, strategy coaching, diversity coaching, alignment coaching, spiritual coaching, philosophical coaching, etc.: Lazar & Bergquist, 2004; Morgan et al., 2005; Ting & Sisco, 2006) the researcher was unable to find information on personal brand coaching. Thus, an implication for the coaching industry is that this could be yet one more specialty within the industry. This, perhaps, has the possibility of broad implications given the apparent public interest in personal branding. As mentioned in Chapter One, a recent search on Amazon revealed that there are 3,887 books on the subject of personal brand. Furthermore, as also referenced in Chapter One, a Google search on personal brand resulted in over 54,000 hits. Thus, it may be inferred that there is significant public interest in personal branding. If that is indeed the case, then the implications for the coaching industry are possibly profound. Personal brand coaching perhaps has the capacity to not only be a new specialty within the industry, but maybe an exploding one. Further implications could include coach training programs, books, and conferences. In addition, another possible implication is an ICF special interest group on personal brand coaching. The ICF sponsors special interest groups for coaches on a variety of subjects such as career coaching, conflict coaching, quarter-lifer coaching, spirituality coaching, global executive coaching, Spanish speaking coaching, and leadership coaching. As such, it is possible to imagine the development of a personal brand special interest group.

A possible implication for coaches is a new specialty they may acquire to add to their skill set. Learning to be a personal brand coach may broaden a coach’s experience and skills, thus making him/her more diversified. Additionally, becoming a personal brand coach may be a means to attract clients. If it can be inferred that there is indeed significant public interest in the subject of personal branding, then it may also be surmised that having this skill as a coach could attract new clients. Thus, it may be a means to both acquire a new set of skills as well as appeal to new clients.

Implications for clients may include a number of matters as discussed in the literature review. These benefits or outcomes may include higher earning potential, increased credibility, business expansion, enhanced fulfillment and satisfaction, and greater confidence (Arruda & Dixson, 2007; McNally & Speak, 2002; Montoya & Vandehey, 2002). In addition, possible implications as supported by this research project include higher job and life satisfaction.

In summary, the feasible implications of this study have the potential to influence the coaching industry, coaches, and clients. These possible implications offer positive impacts and potential rewards to all of these parties. The resulting effect could entail an expansion of the coaching industry with a new specialty, the creation of a new set of coaching skills for coaches, and both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards for the clients.

Limitations and Assumptions of the Study Revisited

Discussed in Chapter One, were the presumed limitations and assumptions of the study when the research first started out. This section will review those limitations and assumptions now that the study is complete, and will discuss new ones that have since arisen.

As discussed in Chapter One, this study was limited to a specific set of coaches who were recruited by the researcher or Speak. These coaches were either acquainted with Speak or the researcher, or were referred by another executive coach. Thus, they were not coaches who were purposely setting out to be trained in or seek knowledge of personal brand coaching. Furthermore, the coaches were trained by Speak who has a certain process, methodology, and philosophy when it comes to personal brand matters. Thus, the process by which he trained the coaches may differ from others who may teach coaches how to do personal brand coaching. As such, the process described in this study may not be generalized to other personal brand coach training programs.

In addition, as discussed in Chapter One, the clients received a certain kind of coaching which was that of personal brand. Therefore, their experience may not be generalized to other clients who receive a different kind of coaching. Furthermore, the clients were chosen by their executive coach. In some cases, the coach and client had been working together for a period of time, and in other cases it was a newly established relationship that was formed for the purposes of this project.

In addition to the above limitations there are other matters of which the reader should be made aware. As discussed in Chapters One and Four, Speak trained the coaches via a virtual training delivery platform. That is, the training was not in person, but rather it was held over the phone and computer. It is possible that such a training delivery may have influenced the coaches’ learning and interaction with each other. For instance, had the training been in-person then possible exercises in which the coaches were paired up could have occurred. This may have resulted in greater group cohesion as well as facilitated deeper learning. While the researcher is not aware of any concerns from the coaches in regard to the delivery method of the training, it is simply a possibility that a virtual rather than an in person delivery system may have influenced learning and interaction in a manner that was not optimal.

Furthermore, another limitation is that the researcher does not know how the coaching was delivered to the client. That is, the researcher does not know if the 6 coaches and 5 clients engaged in face-to-face or phone coaching, or a combination of both. Therefore, this study is not able to assess how or if the delivery method affected the effectiveness of the coaching.

Finally, another possible limitation of the study is that 3 of the coach-client relationships were brand new and 2 were already in existence. That is, 2 of the coaches and clients had already been working together, while the other 3 had not. Therefore, it is possible that the experience of the established coach-clients was different than that of the new ones. While this project did not aim to study if the experiences of newly paired versus existing coach-client relationships differ, this is certainly an intriguing question to consider.

Assumptions made at the beginning of the study included that the coaches and clients would be truthful in their interview responses, the researcher would be able to effectively bracket her previous experience, and that Speak would provide an honest reflection of personal brand coaching. Upon reflection, it appears that all of these assumptions came to light. From the researcher's perspective and best estimation, it appears that the coaches and clients were truthful to all of the interview questions. In addition, the researcher wrote about her experience as a coach and interest in personal branding. Furthermore, prior to each training session and subject interview the researcher took a few moments to put herself in an appropriate frame of mind. She did this by reminding herself of her role as objective researcher. She also took time to quiet her mind, as Moustakas (1994) recommends, by taking in several deep breaths and reflecting upon the training session or interview in which she was about to partake. As Moustakas points out this is a practice that helps the researcher set aside biases and prejudgments so that the matter before him/her can be received from a fresh, new, and open perspective.

Furthermore, it was also assumed that the clients would experience a change in their levels of satisfaction. The outcome of this research suggests that clients experienced an increase in work and life satisfaction. However, the reader is reminded that the client sample size of this research project was small. Thus, the apparent outcomes are limited by a small group of clients and cannot be generalized to a larger population.

It was also assumed that coaches would experience a difference in their mastery of personal brand coaching over time. The results of this research seem to suggest that the coaches experienced a change in their learning and behavior from pretest to posttest to post-post test. Again, as with the clients, this research project included a small number of coaches. Thus, due to the small sample size any apparent changes in the coaches' mastery of personal brand coaching cannot be generalized to a larger population.

Lessons Learned

Upon reflection of this project there are some lessons that the researcher learned that are discussed below.

Coaching Schedule

From the outset of this project the researcher allowed the coaches and clients to determine their own coaching schedule. That, is the coach-client could determine how many times per month they wanted to coach during the 3-month research period. The rationale was that the researcher did not wish to put too many parameters on the coach-client relationship. In addition, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, because the coach-client relationship is a unique one the researcher wanted them to establish a schedule that best suited their workings together. Upon reflection, it likely would have been helpful for the researcher to ask each pair to engage in coaching at least two times per month. This structure would have provided an additional framework for the relationship. It may have also prevented an issue that arose which is described in the next paragraph.

In the same vein, it would have been helpful for the researcher to have established a beginning date by when the coaching should start. While the researcher told the coaches that the coaching engagement should begin immediately after the training program with Speak, it would have been more effective to have provided an actual start date. One of the coaches was not clear that that direction indeed meant immediately after the training which ended on June 26, 2009. Rather, she was more prepared to start coaching in August or later. As a result she did not have a client at the ready and had to scramble to find one. The client she was able to secure did not hold a managerial or higher position and therefore was not able to be included in the study. Thus, upon reflection, it would have been more clear, effective, and helpful for the researcher to establish a beginning date for the coaching engagement to start. This information would have been helpful to the coaches and clients, and may have prevented the abovementioned scenario. In retrospect, the researcher should have been more clear about this expectation and communicated it in a more effective manner.

Coach Recruitment

Between the researcher and Speak a total of 6 coaches were secured for this project. In retrospect it would have been helpful to have recruited a few more, perhaps a total of 10, to mitigate possible problems such as the one described in the paragraph immediately above. Had there been a few more coach-clients who participated in the study then the loss of a single client would not have had such an impact.

Interviewing Coaches and Clients

In regard to the interview questions with the coaches the researcher generally used the same words or phrasing during each of the interview sessions. For example, with the coaches the first interview question was, “How do you coach a client on matters of personal brand rather than personal image?” and that was generally the manner in which the researcher phrased the question pretest, posttest, and post-post test. In retrospect, it likely would have been more effective to ask the posttest and post-posttest questions in a different manner to obtain more detailed answers. For instance, the posttest question could have been phrased, “Now that you’ve completed a training program with Karl Speak, how do you coach a client on matters of personal brand rather than personal image?” Furthermore, the post-posttest question could have been worded something to the effect of, “Reflecting upon the coaching with your client, how do you coach a client on matters of personal brand rather than personal image?” As a result, the results of the research study would have been more detailed and perhaps would have reflected a greater degree of learning and behavioral changes on the part of the coaches.

In regard to the clients, the researcher could have asked more follow-up questions that were specifically about the coaching. For example, during the posttest interviews clients A, C and D indicated higher job satisfaction than during the pretest phase. Thus, during the posttest interview rather than simply asking, “How do you describe your current satisfaction level of your work?” the researcher could have followed-up with specific questions about the impact the coaching may have had in this domain of satisfaction. This may have resulted in more details about any specific personal brand techniques, concepts, exercise, and the like that influenced the client's satisfaction.

The researcher believes that had she asked the post-test and post-posttest interview questions with the coaches, and the posttest interview questions with the clients in a different manner then more detailed responses may have been garnered. This would have added greater depth and richness to the results of the study.

Continuous Improvement

Upon reflection of the training program it perhaps would be wise to flesh out some topics to a greater depth and breadth. In particular, it may be useful to expound upon the topics of distinction, standards, and consistency.

The researcher observed that in the course of answering interview question four, regarding how to coach a client on a brand that is distinctive, the coaches' answers were rather vague. In fact, none of the coaches provided any level of detail on how to coach on distinction. Thus, it may be inferred that distinction was a topic that was not wholly clear to the coaches. Therefore, it would have been useful for that topic to have been delved into more deeply.

Furthermore, some of the coaches expressed confusion about the concept of standards. While Speak offered examples of standards and tried to explain the concept, it none the less was a source of confusion for some of the coaches. Therefore, for any future coach training programs it likely would be useful to determine how else the concept of standards may be taught. Perhaps there are exercises that could be incorporated that would facilitate such learning. Or perhaps comparing and contrasting what is and what is not a standard would be helpful.

Finally, it might be useful to also elaborate on the topic of consistency. During Session 1, Speak mentioned to the coaches that among relevancy, distinction, and consistency that consistency is the most difficult one for people to manage (personal communication, May 29, 2009). With that in mind, it likely would have been useful to have elaborated on this further. This perhaps could be accomplished through examples or via a homework assignment for the coaches to do things that consistently reinforces their brand.

Recommendations for Future Research

Upon reflection of this project, other research comes to mind that may advance studies on executive coaching and personal brand. While what is described below is by no means an exhaustive account of possible future research, it is a starting point.

A possible future research project could entail the use of a control and an experimental group. This could be achieved in several ways. One is that the coach training segment of the research could use a control and an experimental group of coaches. In this regard, the experimental group would participate in the training program and receive all of the materials. The control group, on the other hand, would receive only the participant materials and not be a part of the training program. They in essence would self-teach themselves by reading the participant materials. The two groups could then proceed with coaching 1 client over the 3-month study period. As with the original research, the coaches in both the experimental and control groups could be interviewed pretest, posttest, and post-post test to assess their mastery of personal brand coaching. In this regard, the outcome of the data may more strongly suggest if changes in coach mastery are affected by the training or lack thereof. Furthermore, the outcome of the data may reveal if, overtime, there are differences in the mastery of personal brand coaching between the experimental and control groups.

Another possible research project could involve a particular type of coach and client. That is, in this research study, the coaches represented a wide range of coaching specialties and the clients characterized a variety of industries, professions, ages, and so forth. A future study could focus in on a group of coaches and clients that have a single common characteristic. Perhaps, for example, coaches who specialize in career transition and clients who find themselves in-between jobs might make good subjects for a study. In this regard, the researcher could assess how personal brand coaching affects, if at all, the mastery of career transition coaches and satisfaction of their clients. A study that focuses in on career transition coaches and clients may be particularly useful as the literature on personal brand suggests that individuals with a strong brand have greater career success (Arruda & Dixson, 2002; Montoya & Vandehey, 2002).

Perhaps another research study could entail a coach training program that could be led and facilitated by another personal brand expert beyond Karl Speak. Because Speak is indeed that of McNally and Speak (2002) then much of his work with the coaches in this study mirrored the concepts in the book, *Be Your Own Brand: A Breakthrough Formula for Standing Out From the Crowd* (McNally & Speak). Should another research study employ a different facilitator who is a personal brand expert, then that would add to the body of knowledge on how to train coaches in this particular field.

In addition, another possible study could focus on the goal achievement of the clients rather than satisfaction levels as this study did. That is, the study could assess the degree of goal achievement that the clients reached after having received personal brand coaching. In this regard, at the beginning of the study period the researcher could interview both the coaches and clients to find out the goals that they mutually established. Then, at the end of the study period the researcher could interview the coaches and clients again to assess to what degree the goals were achieved from their individual perspectives.

Finally, another possible study could involve determining the optimal number of coach training sessions. In this particular study there was a kick off session followed by 4 training modules. A future study could compare and contrast two or more training programs of varying lengths in order to identify the ideal number of modules. The resulting optimal number may be determined by the amount of learning and behavioral changes among the coaches posttest and post-posttest.

The above describes several options for possible future research. This study examined executive coaching and personal brand as it relates to a coach training program, coach mastery, and client satisfaction. Additional research will only add to the results of this study.

Summary

This chapter discussed the conclusions and interpretations of this research study. In addition, the chapter reviewed the limitations and assumptions that were initially set out at the start of this project. Next, the chapter discussed how those limitations and assumptions played out in the course of the study, along with new ones that arose. In addition, a discussion on lessons that the researcher learned during the course of the project were also discussed. Finally, recommendations for possible future research were reviewed.

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APPENDIX A: Interview Questions for Karl Speak

1. Describe the overall objective of your training program.
    a. How will you know if the objective has been met?
2. What is the content of your training program? In other words, what material does it cover?
    a. How did you determine the content of the training program?
3. Describe the sequence of the topics.
    a. How did you determine that sequence?
4. Describe the participant materials.
5. What is the delivery method(s) of your training (i.e., virtual, podcast, in-person)?
6. At the conclusion of the training program what personal brand expertise should the executive coach now possess?
    a. How will you know if the executive coach-trainees learned the material?
    b. How might the executive coach-trainee apply their newly learned knowledge and expertise in personal brand executive coaching?
7. Following your training program how might the coach-trainees continue to enhance their mastery in personal brand executive coaching.

APPENDIX B: Bracketing

I first became aware of the field of coaching approximately eight years ago. It piqued my interest and subsequently I became a certified coach and began to gain experience in the field. The concept of a personal brand came to my attention during my doctoral studies at Pepperdine University where the book, *Be Your Own Brand: A Breakthrough Formula for Standing Out in the Crowd*, (McNally & Speak, 2002) was an assigned text in one of my classes.

Coaching intrigued me from the first time I heard of it because I am a firm believer in self development. I also feel a strong sense of reward when I am able to help another person learn more of who he/she is and thus become a happier, more fulfilled individual. After I became aware of the coaching profession I sought to become a coach first by taking a class at California State University Long Beach. From there, I enrolled at CTI (Coaches Training Institute) and not only completed their core set of classes but also went on to finish their coach certification program.

I have coached individuals both within the organizations in which I have been employed, as well as outside those companies. I mainly coach individuals who are in a supervisory or managerial level job. Oftentimes these individuals have found themselves in a leadership role and yet they have not been given specific supervisory or managerial training. Thus, having a dedicated coach is something that has been of benefit to them (at least that is what I am told).

Close to the time I was to begin the dissertation phase of my studies at Pepperdine University is when I chose to write on the topic of personal brand. Being a firm believer in self development, and being curious about my own brand, it seemed like a perfect topic. Because I see brand as being intimately tied to one's values, choices and authenticity I naturally gravitated toward the work of David McNally and Karl Speak (2002), co-authors of, *Be Your Own Brand: A Breakthrough Formula for Standing Out in the Crowd.*

One January 2009, morning I finally mustered up the courage to call Karl Speak's office to inquire if he would collaborate with me on my dissertation. It is still amazing to me that that cold call resulted in him designing and delivering a coach training program on personal brand! I feel incredibly blessed to have had Karl play an integral role in my dissertation project and will be forever grateful to him.

Thus, my dissertation marries two concepts that are near and dear to my heart - - coaching and personal brand. I hope to continue to intertwine these together as my career progresses.

APPENDIX C: Coach Training Curriculum

Training Delivery: Online video and audio conferencing. Each session to last one hour.

Session 1: Introductions and Overview of Training Process and Study.

Session 2: Principles of Personal Brand

The following concepts will be presented:

- the three elements of personal brand
- power of perceptions
- distinctiveness
- relevancy
- making a difference
- overview of the process of brand platform development and brand assessment

Homework: Each participant will be asked to develop their personal brand platform

Session 3: Review Personal Brand Platform Assignment and Cover the Principles of Personal Brand

This session will focus on a review of the key concepts presented in session number one and will reinforce the concepts of personal brand platform development which is a key application tool in the executive coaching experience.

Session 4: Application of Personal Brand Principles to Executive Coaching

A template for using personal brand in the executive coaching process will be presented and refined by the group. The final process will become the standard for using personal brand for the study.