

By Silvia Tassarotti, MCC

Postcard From Italy

News from the Italian coaching world

Coaching has been a fast growing profession in Italy since the late '90s. Following the Anglo-Saxon influence, it started developing mostly in the business world, particularly with corporate and executive coaching. Perceived with some resistance by Italian management, less keen than other cultures on learning as a golden rule for success, coaching had to overcome several barriers to be able to get to this stage of development.

Firstly, working at the individual level was closely associated with remedial work, only for people who needed fixing. This paradigm had to

honest feedback, challenging the status quo, promoting change, stretching goals and attitudes are invaluable assets for isolated yet powerful managers. Good coaches were able to provide these benefits, thus establishing a strong platform for the success of the profession.

Thirdly, coaching had been tagged as the latest fad, assumed to last for a few years and then disappear. Instead, coaching professionals have been able to demonstrate the validity of the methodology and the importance of the results achieved. Nowadays, coaching has a stable and relevant

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be challenged in order to share a common understanding that coaching accelerates people's development and performance. Positioning coaching as an important benefit given to key people in organizations to further support their success has won coaching a strong level of commitment from line managers and the HR community.

Secondly, Italian management tended to look at self-development with suspicion, judging it to be too soft and distant from real business. But coaching has over time filled a strong, although implicit, need. Having a sounding board to discuss important decisions and receive trustworthy and

position in the learning and development arena for leadership, talent, sales, performance and team development among others. An increasing amount of investment is dedicated to coaching alongside other methodologies like training, assessment centers and executive education.

Fourthly, having established the need for coaching, the challenge was finding the right professionals in terms of experience, profile and skills. As in many other countries, the barriers for entry were quite low. Anyone could start calling him/herself a coach from one day to the other. However, the market has now moved from an initial stage of devel-



opment to a consolidation phase where quality coaches are raising the bar, thus ensuring the level of service. Companies are increasingly selecting coaches based on referral and recognized qualifications (particularly through ICF, given its well-known credentialing process).

Much can be celebrated in Italy regarding the world of coaching.

Being a coach is a privilege. It allows us to nurture people, their potential, their dreams, their aspirations. It supports overcoming barriers, real or perceived, to fulfill what was considered impossible. It creates new possibilities, new futures, new connections, as we did at the ICF European Coaching Conference in Geneva in June.

To be credible, coaches need to walk the talk and put into practice what they want to represent. This is the challenge we are happy to keep pursuing in Italy with the global community behind us.

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