

***Finding Their Way* - An Action Research Case Study on  
Individual Goal Striving, and its Implications for Managerial  
Coaching for Performance**

HENLEY BUSINESS SCHOOL

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Doctorate of Business Administration

by

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## **Declaration**

I confirm that this is my own work and the use of all material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged.

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## Acknowledgements

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## Dedication

*I dedicate this work to my wife Penelope, without whose love and support, none of this would be possible. Avec amour...toujours.*

*I also dedicate this thesis to my children, Gabriel, Malaika and Xavier. Your constant encouragement helped me through the difficult spots. Know that you can do whatever you set your mind to. Give yourself a clear goal, work consistently towards it, reflect on your progress, seek help when you need it, and learn from your failures. If I can do it, so can you.*

*And finally, to my Mum and Dad. Thank you for everything.*

## Abstract

Through a year-long multiple case study, involving 14 participants in two separate organizations in Canada, a qualitative action research project explored how individuals strive for goals, and the role that managerial coaching plays in goal achievement. This study provided answers to three research questions: 1) how do individuals strive for goals in complex, uncertain environments; 2) what are the goal striving characteristics of high performing individuals in complex, uncertain environments; and 3) what influences a manager's choice to coach for performance. Data were collected via 41 semi-structured interviews and were analysed using a grounded approach, primarily through a constructivist lens.

The results of this study indicate that striving for goals in a complex, uncertain environment is an iterative, emergent process of *finding your way*. A framework – the Goal Pursuit Cycle (GPC) – was developed to describe the process of 'finding your way'. This model also served as a framework for coaching and described the process of self-regulation in the language of business. To move through the GPC, the individual made choices and took action. These choices and actions were influenced by the individual's identity and how they responded emotionally to the observed performance gap. Two separate models, and five different constructs, were developed to describe this complex journey. In these models, the constructs of Identity, Emotions, Options & Decisions, Actions, and Results were present and interacted with each other. Emotions were shown to influence the relationship between Observed Results and Reasons for Success/Failure, and Identity was shown to influence the relationship between Reasons for Success/Failure and Self-Confidence.

A set of attributes were demonstrated by high performing individuals in complex, uncertain environments. These attributes (Goal Focus, Persistence, Growth Mindset, and Self-Reflexivity) allowed the high performer to effectively move through the GPC, and 'find their way' to their goals. Individuals that did not demonstrate these characteristics underperformed compared to their peers. In addition, high performers, with low to moderate levels of expertise, proactively engaged their manager for coaching, while low performers, regardless of experience level, rarely sought out this expertise. High performers with high experience did not typically seek coaching from their manager, instead they tended to rely on their own knowledge or that of their peers to overcome challenges.

Managerial Coaching for Performance was studied indirectly, but was found to be effective in elevating an employee's performance when the manager chose to engage in the coaching moment. Two constructs influenced this choice – the Available Time to Coach, and the Appetite to Coach. The Available Time to Coach was found to be influenced by the effort required to action other business priorities, and the manager's span of control. The Appetite to Coach was influenced by the degree to which the employee sought coaching, the manager's fear of the employee's reaction to coaching and the manager's mental energy for coaching.

This study contributed to our understanding of the impact of managerial coaching on performance. It highlighted the influence of Identity and Emotions in the GPC and contributed to the managerial coaching literature by demonstrating how the GPC, as an expression of self-regulation, could be considered as a coaching framework. It contributed to action research methodology by developing four principles to improve the effectiveness of intervention workshops, and added to grounded theory methodology by detailing an abductive thinking process to generate middle-range theory. It contributed to practice by highlighting the characteristics of top performers, which can be used to strengthen



professional development programs for individuals. It also made contributions by visualizing self-regulation as a goal pursuit cycle, and making the concept of self-regulation more approachable by articulating it in the language of business. The GPC also contributed to practice through its use as a coaching framework and the corresponding set of coaching questions that were developed as a result of this study. Lastly, the pathway to the coaching moment highlighted the role of fear and mental energy in a manager's choice to coach, and these insights can be used to develop coaching interventions to help managers overcome these barriers.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

AR	action research
B2B	business-to-business
B2C	business-to-consumer
CT	control theory
DBA	doctorate of business administration
E	element
FOS	feedback orientation scale
FSC	financial services company
GO	goal orientation
GPC	goal pursuit cycle
GPD	goal performance discrepancy
GT	grounded theory
GTM	grounded theory methodology
HNW	high net worth
HR	human resources
ID	Identity
Int1	Intervention 1
Int2	Intervention 2
Int3	Intervention 3
Int4	Intervention 4
Int5a	Intervention 5a
Int5b	Intervention 5b
Int6	Intervention 6
Int7	Intervention 7
IPT	implicit person theory
IT	information technology



LGO	learning goal orientation
MCAT	medical college admission test
MS	Microsoft
OD	organizational development
PGO	performance goal orientation
PMO	project management office
RC	recruiting company
RFT	regulatory focus theory
SA	situational analysis
SCT	social cognitive theory
SDT	self discrepancy theory
SIP	search and information processing
SLT II	situational leadership theory II
SPC	skills and performance coaching
SRIS	self reflection and insight scale
TPM	top performer model

# **1 Introduction**

This thesis begins by establishing the context of the study and subsequent analysis. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the key theoretical challenges and business opportunities that the study addresses, while positioning the researcher's experiences in the context of the research design.

## **1.1 The Need for the Research**

Sales revenue is the fuel that keeps business running. Without revenue, a business cannot survive, and it is the sales teams that are tasked with delivering the fuel, every month, every quarter, every year. In the popular literature, sales coaching is widely recognized as a vital ingredient for the success of any sales team, yet in the academic literature, research on managerial coaching is still in its infancy (Dahling et al., 2015). The youthfulness of this literature is evidenced by the fact that many of its central tenets are still being debated. For instance, Hamlin, Ellinger, and Beattie (2008) found 37 different definitions for coaching, which indicates a lack of consensus on what is (or is not) coaching. Coaching as a managerial skill is also a young discipline, as most managers have never been trained as coaches (Longenecker, 2010) and even if they have, they avoid having a coaching conversation with the employee if they perceive risk in how the employee will react to the coaching (Turner & McCarthy, 2015). Turner and McCarthy (2015) also highlight that there is little evidence of the factors that influence the day-to-day decisions by managers to take advantage of coachable moments. As a result, one research question that will be studied in this thesis is: 'What influences a manager's choice to coach for performance?'

Managerial coaching is a tool that a manager uses to improve an employee's existing skills, competence, or performance (Hamlin et al., 2008). Implicit in this viewpoint is the assumption that managerial coaching is used to reduce a gap that the employee is experiencing. However, the research community lacks consensus on the organizing framework(s) for coaching (Gregory et al., 2011). Indeed, a number of leading researchers (Grant & Cavanaugh, 2004; Hagen, 2012; Hamlin, Ellinger, & Beattie, 2006; Mclean, Yang, Kuo, Tolbert, & Larkin, 2005, Cassidy & Medsker, 2009; Pousa, 2012; Pousa & Mathieu, 2014) have identified that the domain of employee coaching is in need of scientific rigour both for construct clarity and theory development (Pousa & Mathieu, 2014). Similarly, Gregory et al. (2011) called for control theory, which sits at the heart of self-regulation, as a potential organizing framework for coaching. To investigate the usefulness of control theory as an organizing framework for coaching, this study focused on the employee's journey to achieve goals, and the characteristics of those who were high performers. By focusing on *how* an individual pursued goals, and the characteristics of those who successfully achieved their goals, insights into the appropriateness of control theory as a coaching framework could be developed. Consequently, two additional research questions were part of this investigation: 'How do individuals strive for goals in complex, uncertain environments?'; and 'What are the goal striving characteristics of high performing individuals in complex, uncertain environments?'.

**Figure 1-1: Key Literatures for this Study**



## **1.2 Becoming an Action Researcher**

Because of the desire to create practical tools for managers, this study utilized an action research design, and a constructivist grounded approach, to analyze the data and develop the resulting models. The choice of an action research, intervention-based strategy, was made to both gain a deeper understanding of how individuals strove for goals, and to provide a mechanism for the participants to develop tools to improve goal striving. The use of a constructivist grounded approach was also selected in order to best reflect the voice of the participants in the models that were built. However, as Charmaz notes, the theories that constructivists generate are influenced by their own experiences (Morse et al., 2009). Therefore, in setting the scene for this study, it is important to shed light on my professional experiences. In this way, the theory that has been produced, the methods used to generate it, and the thinking that is implicit in the study has some context.

### **1.2.1 A Brief Overview of My Career**

Two threads bind my career; one is academic and the other is professional.

My academic training began at the University of Waterloo, in Canada where I obtained two undergraduate degrees; one in chemical engineering and the other in history. An uncommon combination, but the chemical engineering degree allowed me to engage in studies that had a known job market, while pursuing an arts degree allowed me to engage my interests and develop an appetite for qualitative research.

In a similar way, my twenty-year professional career has been varied and ‘non-traditional’, although always rooted in leading teams to solve problems by combining business acumen, process thinking, problem solving methodologies, and the right data. What has changed over the years is the size, scope and complexity of the problems, the industries and the business functions where I operate. As a new chemical engineer, I followed a traditional path of working in manufacturing and improving processes. Approximately five years into my career, I had the opportunity to improve processes in the financial services sector and became a Six Sigma Black Belt. This in turn led to an opportunity to join the Canadian arm of a global consulting company, where I led or supported transformational projects at our clients. These experiences brought me to the IT industry, where I led the business transformation teams for an IT reseller and later ran the project management office (PMO) for the consulting arm of this company, with oversight responsibilities for all North American consulting projects. Running the PMO for North America was the first time I was not leading projects and was functioning as a pure business leader. Working in this capacity, I realized that I was happier leading change, rather than managing change. With that awakening I eventually left the IT reseller and started a boutique consulting company, where I currently teach, coach, and consult on a variety of topics, however the main focus is on designing and implementing bespoke action learning programs to solve difficult business issues.

On a parallel path, about ten years into my career, I began a relationship with the University of Toronto, School of Continuing Studies. By this time, I was an expert in Lean and Six Sigma, two of the leading process improvement methodologies in use, and the School was looking to build a Lean Six Sigma program to add to their portfolio. I was asked to design, build and teach this program. It was a fortuitous opportunity, and one that I was thrilled to accept, because I came from a family where, for generations, my relatives had become teachers or principals. In my case, the fit with the University was natural, and in the past ten

years, I have taught over 30 courses, consistently been rated one of the top lecturers, and enjoyed every minute of it.

### **Connecting the Dots**

To be able to successfully conduct action research, I needed to have mastered a number of practical skills - workshop design, process improvement, facilitative leadership and change management. My career path up to this point had positioned me to be successful in the AR Cycles. Through the teaching experience and my role as a change agent, I had developed deep skills in designing and implementing workshops to drive change with adults. As a Lean Six Sigma expert, I was extremely comfortable with the concepts and practices of Kaizen and Kaizen Events, as well as the facilitative leadership that is needed to navigate through the uncertain times that change brings. I had also developed a strong capacity for change management, and incorporated action learning as a key mechanism to create buy-in for the emergent solutions. So, when the action research decision appeared before me, I was ready.

### **1.2.2 The Genesis of the Research Study**

It was during my time in the IT industry, when I was leading the business transformation teams, that I began to notice a recurring business problem in the sales teams. I observed that whenever there was a failing sales territory, the business would replace the sales leader with a 'star' sales leader and that within four to six months, the sales performance would start to improve. The business was thrilled that the revenue numbers were up, but as a process improvement expert, I looked at the same evidence and saw systemic failure. How was it that the same sales reps, selling the same products/services, with the same competition, could go from a failed team to a winning team under a new manager? If the sales manager was the key to unlocking the performance of the sales team in the region, what could they

have done to create this improvement? Was it how they set goals? Was it their leadership style? Was it how they coached? Was it how they improved their sales rep's confidence? What was it something else? I knew I needed to learn more about this, and the DBA became the vehicle to study it.

### **1.2.3 Shifting the Research Design from Mixed Methods to Action**

#### **Research**

When starting my DBA research, I elected to focus on examining a set of factors that the literature indicated would influence the coaching-performance relationship. Because of my problem-solving experience, I knew that I needed multiple views on the problem space to triangulate and generate a more nuanced understanding of the issue. As a result, the penultimate plan called for a longitudinal mixed methods research design, with sales coaching interventions focused on the manager. These interventions would allow for observations on how the coaching dyads responded to each new coaching improvement, and potentially shed light on the factors affecting the coaching-performance relationship. In this quasi-experimental design, the sales managers were to be trained on the content of the interventions and allowed to implement them in any manner they desired. Then, each quarter the participants would be interviewed about their experiences with the coaching intervention. To execute this research design, it was assumed that I would be able to remain impartial and have an indirect role, and that the manager would have the skills, the time, and the inclination to execute the interventions. These turned out to be large assumptions, that were false.

**Classic mixed methods. What could go wrong?**

The disconnect between the kind of research I envisioned prior to the start of the study, and the kind of research that was possible for me to conduct in this situation, came to a crashing head during the first round of interviews with the B2B Sales team. Recall, this was supposed to be a study on the factors influencing coaching for performance. However, it was quickly discovered that the manager didn't coach the team. How could coaching interventions be presented to the manager, if the manager didn't coach? The second major issue that presented itself was that the sales reps were supposed to have set goals as part of this study, but during the interview, it was perceived that many of them were making up their goals during the interview, or simply couldn't remember them at all. Wasn't goal setting a key part of this study? In listening to their responses, I recall thinking that it was still possible to salvage the study; their lack of coaching and goal setting was simply 'data' for the study, and it was possible to work with this. The study would have to be modified, and many details would have to be worked out, but it was possible to move forward.

The final element that drove the decision to move forward with an Action Research design was the unanticipated responses to the question that was asked at the end of the interview, 'And do you have any questions for me?'. It was envisioned that the participants would ask about some aspect of the study, but almost every individual asked for a professional opinion on something that was going on with their job. It was a conflicting moment. On the one hand, the reason that these teams agreed to sign up for the study was because of their trust in my professional expertise - which they were now asking for. On the other hand, wouldn't the provision of a professional opinion bias the data? In the first interview that this happened, my opinion was withheld; I wanted to keep things 'clean'. But when people continued to ask for a professional opinion on a topic, I realized I couldn't stay silent. At that point, a choice was made. If they asked me for advice, it was given, and coaching began in the interviews themselves; I had decided in that moment that if their manager wasn't going to



coach them, then I would do what I could for them while we were together; they needed someone to be a catalyst, a supporter, and a facilitator of their growth. In the interviews, I patiently listened to their inner dialogues, and provided council to both the sales reps and the sales managers. While on-site, I immersed myself in their world and gave suggestions on how to resolve issues, set goals and manage different stakeholders. Whatever they asked for, I gave. The interviews had become an intervention, and I had become an action researcher. In hindsight, given my twenty years of leading change in organizations, teaching adults and solving business problems, it was only natural that I responded as I did in those situations. Looking back, it is clear that action research was the only way I could have done this research.

### **1.3 Structure of the Thesis**

The thesis begins in Chapter 2, with the elaboration of the relevant theory for this study - self-regulation, goal striving and managerial coaching for performance. The research design is articulated in Chapter 3. In this chapter, the ontological and epistemological choices of this study are discussed, as are the various definitions of research quality from the case study, action research and grounded theory literatures. Based on the work of Coghlan & Brannick (2014), the action research cycles presented in Chapter 4 are analyzed using Mezirow's (1991) 'Content, Process, Premise' technique. Chapter 5 shifts the focus to the data analysis, using a constructivist grounded approach. The development of each of the five models are discussed and the chapter concludes with three case studies that demonstrate how they were applied with a high performer, a low performer and in a team pursuit. Chapter 6 reviews the contributions that this study made to theory, methodology and practice. It also highlights the limitations of the research and suggests recommendations for future studies.

Chapter 7 concludes the thesis with a meta-reflection on the AR cycles and the journey of the DBA.

**Table 1-1: Structure of the Thesis**

Chapter	Title	Description
Chapter 1	Introduction	A context setting overview of the study.
Chapter 2	Literature Review	A review of the key literatures in Self-Regulation, Goal Striving, and Managerial Coaching for Performance
Chapter 3	Research Methodology	A review of the research design, with an emphasis on defining research quality from the point of view of case study, action research and grounded theory
Chapter 4	Action Research Cycles	Analysis of the Action Research Cycles using Mezirow's (1991) 'Content, Process, Premise' technique. Emphasis is placed on elaborating the evolution of the Action Research Cycles over the course of the study.
Chapter 5	Data Analysis & Model Development	A constructivist grounded approach to theory development is elaborated. The resulting theoretical models are discussed, and cases studies are provided to demonstrate the models.

<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Description</b>
Chapter 6	Conclusions	Contributions to theory, methodology and practice are discussed. Limitations of the research and recommendations for future research are suggested
Chapter 7	Reflecting on the DBA	Personal perspectives on the Action Research cycles and the journey of the DBA are shared

## **1.4 Chapter Summary**

This chapter outlined the need for this study from a theory and practice perspective. The study itself is situated in the self-regulation, goal striving and managerial coaching literatures. Given the action research design and constructivist grounded approach to data analysis, an overview of the professional experience of the author was given. The goal of this research is to provide insight into the gaps identified and to generate practical tools that practicing managers could use to improve the effectiveness of their coaching.

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Overview of the Literature Review**

This thesis investigates the factors influencing individual goal striving in sales teams, and their role in managerial coaching for performance. To enable this, the literatures associated with these topics must be reviewed and integrated. The challenge with each of these literatures is that while they are related to each other, each has its own unique lens, and the literatures themselves often don't connect to each other. The self-regulation literature, which examines how individuals self-monitor and self-correct progress towards goals, examines this process at the level of the individual, and looks at within-person differences when describing the factors affecting self-regulatory mechanisms. The goal setting/striving literature also looks at the mechanisms by which individuals achieve goals, but has derived its theoretical contributions by analyzing between-person differences (Sitzmann & Ely, 2011). The distinctions between the goal striving literature and the self-regulation literature are important and Lord et al. (2010) cautioned against generalizing the findings from between-person research findings to within-person motivational theories as the results can be misleading, even when the same set of variables is considered. And the coaching for performance literature has only recently called for control theory, a central principle of self-regulation, to be considered as a possible organizing framework for coaching (Gregory et al., 2011).

The insights from these three schools of thought must be reconciled to create useful knowledge for organizations to improve their people, processes, and technology. As shall be demonstrated in this literature review, and indeed this doctoral thesis, the insights from goal

setting research define the key parameters and strategies for individuals to successfully achieve goals. Self-regulatory theory provides the insights into how an individual must manage themselves through the goal striving process. And the coaching for performance literature provides insights into how coaches should engage in the coaching/learning process with their coachees. In summary, this thesis posits that self-regulation theory and goal setting theory are the fundamentals with which a manager should coach for performance, and this literature review is intended to provide the reader with the theoretical background to examine the results and findings from the case study.

## **2.2 Self-Regulation**

Self-regulation is a psychological construct that is a core aspect of adaptive human behaviour (Hofmann et al., 2012). It is a mechanism to adapt or evolve goal directed activity over time, and as a result, successful self-regulation requires (in order of importance): 1) standards of thought, feeling, or behaviour that an individual endorses, mentally represents and actively monitors, 2) that the individual is motivated enough to invest in the effort to reduce the differentials between their desired state and current state, and 3) they have sufficient capacity to reduce the discrepancy and overcome obstacles that impede progress towards goal. The absence of these success criteria will cause individuals to under-perform (Hofmann et al., 2012).

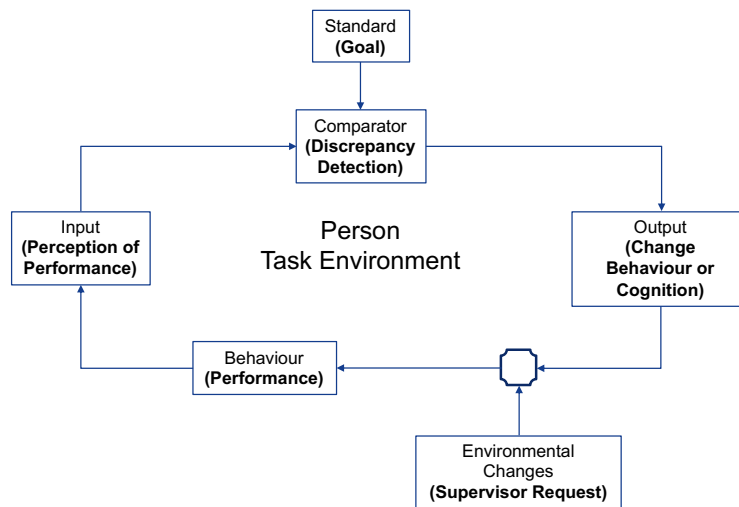
The literature on self-regulation is voluminous (Locke & Latham, 2013), but the theories of self-regulation have been generally categorized by their structures, their content, and their phases (Kanfer et al., 2012). Each of these three categories are discussed below.

### **2.2.1 Structural Theories of Self-Regulation**

Control Theory (CT) and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) describe the structure of self-regulation (Kanfer et al., 2012). These theories introduced foundational concepts of the feedback loop and goals/sub-goals arranged in a nested hierarchy into the self-regulation literature. Historically, CT and SCT have competed against each other as explanations for how self-regulation occurs, but researchers now see them as similar descriptions of two key structural elements of self-regulation - namely goals and sub-goals as a set of hierarchically organized relationships, and the use of a feedback loop to minimize a 'goal performance discrepancy' (GPD) (Karoly, 1993; Lord et al., 2010; Ballard et al. 2016; Neal et al., 2017).

#### **How the Feedback Loop Facilitates Self-Regulation**

It was Karoly (1993) who introduced CT into the self-regulation literature; this brought the cybernetics concept of the negative feedback loop as a central principle of self-regulation (Lord et al., 2010; Ballard et al., 2016; Neal et al., 2017). Figure 2.1 has been reproduced from Lord et al. (2010), and it illustrates the negative feedback loop. In this model, it is assumed that an individual is focused on achieving a specified goal and that they monitor their progress towards their goal. Any discrepancies towards the goal, a 'goal performance discrepancy' (GPD), cause the individual to react and make a choice to either continue along the current pathway towards the goal or change their pathway. The choice that the individual makes is also affected by their environment, and these environmental constraints can also influence the choice of action. Once a final decision has been made (which can be either a reactive decision or a proactive decision), the individual engages in the activity, receives feedback on their performance and uses this as an input to re-enter the feedback circuit (Carver & Scheier, 1990; Lord et al., 2010; Neal et al., 2017).

**Figure 2-1: Negative Feedback Loops in Self-Regulation**

Source: Lord et al. (2010)

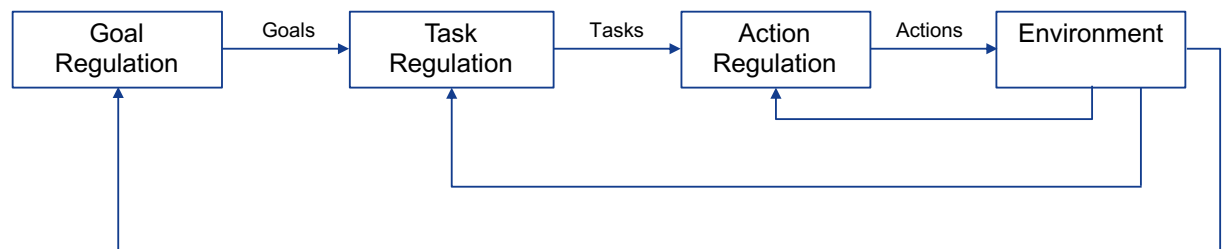
Each loop through the negative feedback cycle is a journey to reduce or eliminate a GPD. The speed with which an individual moves through the cycle is a function of: 1) how important the goal itself is, 2) the rate at which the change target itself responds to any modifications in the individual's behaviour, 3) the degree to which other external or environmental forces might introduce changes that would confound the response signal and make it difficult to discern whether a GPD had been reduced, and 4) the time delay in seeing a change in the GPD after introducing a new action or behaviour (Neal et al., 2017). Positive feedback loops are also possible, but in this case it is only the framing of the challenge that shifts. With positive feedback loops, one is reaching, or striving, for higher goals and creating a positive discrepancy related to a desired future state (Lord et al., 2010), rather than eliminating a failure or reducing a negative gap.

### Goals as a Hierarchy

Both CT and SCT assume a hierarchical structure of goals, with short term goals (proximal goals) lower in the hierarchy and more abstract, longer term goals (distal goals) at the top of

the hierarchical structure (Kanfer et al., 2012). Within the hierarchy, a series of parent-child relationships exist between goals and sub-goals. The parent goal explains why an action is taken, while moving down a level explains how the parent goal is to be achieved or a GPD to be resolved (Lord & Levy, 1994). Thus it is through achieving proximal goals that distal goals are achieved. The figure below (Neal et al. 2017, p. 404), shows the hierarchical relationship between goals, tasks, and actions as well as how they feedback loops are nested.

**Figure 2-2: Hierarchical Nesting of Goals in Self-Regulation**



Source: Neal et al. (2017)

Research has also shown that for frequently performed behaviours, the selection of sub-goals are influenced by a number of factors including affect, constraints at work, and unconscious factors such as habit (Lord et al., 2010). Dragoni (2005) noted that goals can also be primed in workplaces by supervisors and through social processes, such that when this process is repeated across the organization, particular types of goals can predominate (Lord et al., 2010). Goals however, are not static. They evolve based on the feedback an individual receives and can be revised upward or downward, or abandoned, based on the magnitude of the GPD, the individual's causal attributions for the GPD and its resulting impact on self-efficacy (Carver & Scheier, 2000; Ilies et al., 2010).



### 2.2.2 Self-Regulation at Different Levels of Abstraction

Self-regulation also occurs simultaneously at different levels of abstraction, and with each level of abstraction, there is a unique self-regulatory loop (Lord et al., 2010). Lord et al. (2010) highlighted that there are four broad levels of abstraction - micro, low, intermediate, high - and each level has a corresponding cycle time for their respective feedback loop (Johnson et al., 2006). Micro levels of abstraction can have feedback loops in the order of milliseconds. The self-regulation that occurs here operates at the unconscious level. Low levels of abstraction can take several seconds to move through the feedback loop and are driven by habit, conscious choice or unconscious goal emergence. Intermediate levels of abstraction have cycle times of minutes, hours, or days and are typically focused on task achievement. The goals associated with this level are either consciously chosen or automatically primed. Goals with a high level of abstraction typically have a timescale of months or years and are established by cultural, social or value constraints. It is at this level that the working self-concept is activated and managed (Lord et al., 2010).

Regardless of the cycle time and level of abstraction, the nested, hierarchical nature of the goals sitting at each level of abstraction remains true, what differs is how the levels of abstraction influence each other. When the cycle times of adjacent levels are similar, there is a direct relationship between the higher level goal and the adjacent goal (Lord et al., 2010). However, when the regulatory cycle times between the higher levels of abstraction and adjacent levels are significantly different, the higher-level goals behave as constraints, and act indirectly. For instance, having a self-identity as a “productive worker” does not specify how to perform the job, but it creates more general guidelines, constraints, or conditions that need to be satisfied (Lord et al., 2010). Constraints are connections between units in a system that transfer activation or inhibition from one unit to another, and commonly

work in a bottoms-up manner such that available task strategies prime higher-level goals (Lord et al., 2010). Thus, while the hierarchical goal structure is always present, the manner in which each level interacts with each other depends on the cycle times of the feedback loops.

### **2.2.3 Content Theories of Self-Regulation**

Content theories focus on the nature and origin of goals, as well as how differences in goals influence self-regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Kanfer et al., 2012). In the context of self-regulation, three theories have particular relevancy (Kanfer et al., 2012), namely Ryan and Deci's (2000) self-determination theory, Higgins' (1997) regulatory focus theory, and Dweck's (1986) goal orientation theory.

#### **Self Determination Theory (SDT)**

Ryan and Deci (2000) proposed self-determination theory as a way of linking motivation and behaviour together. They theorized that the greater the degree to which a task directly linked to one's personal needs and values, the greater the self-regulation. Ryan and Deci (2000) categorized motivation on a continuum moving from Amotivation through Extrinsic Motivation and finally to Intrinsic Motivation. An individual experiences amotivation as a result of not valuing an activity, not feeling competent to do it or not expecting it to yield a desired outcome. On the other end of the spectrum, an individual who is intrinsically motivated feels autonomy about how to work on a task, is competent in regards to the necessary skills to complete the task and has a relatedness to the reason for the task. Between these extremes lies extrinsic motivation, which can be subdivided into external motivation (where an individual performs an activity due to external rewards or punishments; the locus of causality

for these actions is external), introjected motivation (where tasks or behaviours are performed to demonstrate ability and maintain feelings of self-worth; the locus of causality for these actions is still largely external), identified motivation (tasks or behaviours are personally seen as important; locus of causality is somewhat external, but largely internal) and integrated motivation (the tasks have been assimilated with one's self, values and needs; locus of causality is internal) (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Kanfer et al., 2012). The more an individual is internally motivated, the higher the level of engagement in the task, increased behavioural effectiveness, increased persistence, enhanced subjective well-being and better assimilation of the individual within his or her group (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In summary, self-determination theory considers one's motivation in terms of locus of control (internal or external) and provides a frame to understand self-regulation, and the behavioural choices an individual makes.

### **Regulatory Focus Theory (RFT)**

In contrast to SDT, Higgins' (1997) regulatory focus theory shifted the motivational frame, and forced one to consider individual task motivation in two different ways - 'promotion focus' or 'prevention focus'. Higgins described individuals with a promotion focus as people that look towards their hopes and aspirations and seek to minimize differences between their actual selves and their ideal selves, while he described those with a prevention focus as individuals who look at the duties and responsibilities that they are supposed to do and seek to minimize the gap between their actual selves and their ought selves (Kanfer et al., 2012). Those with a promotion focus tend to have an 'approach' motivation, where the striving for goals motivates and inspires action; those with a prevention focus tend to have an 'avoidance' approach and emphasize security, predictability, and the avoidance of losses (Kanfer et al., 2012). Brocker & Higgins (2001) highlighted that an RFT lens allows one to examine how an individual selects goals, to better understand the choices an individual

makes while in pursuit of their goals and how they react emotionally to the GPDs they experience (Kanfer et al., 2012).

### **Goal Orientation Theory**

Goal orientation research began in the 1970's and saw two main theories underpin the current direction of this literature (Locke & Latham, 2013). Dweck (1975) theorized that individuals can adopt either a learning goal orientation (LGO) or a performance goal orientation (PGO), while Nicholls (1975) differentiated an individual's goal orientation by task-involvement or ego-involvement (Locke & Latham, 2013). Those who have a learning goal orientation or focus on task-involvement compare themselves to an internal standard and focus on developing skills, knowledge, and competence and view ability as something that can be changed over time (Dweck & Leggett 1988; Locke & Latham, 2013). Those with a performance goal orientation, or ego-involvement goals, focus on demonstrating competence to others and comparing themselves to others (Locke & Latham, 2013); they believe ability is fixed and cannot be changed (Locke & Latham, 2013).

Vandewalle & Cron (2001) conducted an important quantitative study that explored the role of LGO, RFT (proving approach vs avoiding approach), ability and feedback in terms of an individual's performance over two exams. They found that an LGO had positive relationships with effort, self-efficacy, and goal setting, and a positive relationship with both exam scores. A proving goal orientation (i.e., a focus on demonstrating one's competence compared to others, and the desire to gain favourable judgements from others) had non-significant relationships with self-efficacy and goal setting, but had a positive relationship with effort. For results, the proving goal orientation had a positive relationship with the first exam score, but a non-statistically significant result with the second exam score. An avoiding goal orientation (i.e. a focus on avoiding negative judgements about one's competence, and the

avoiding of negative judgements from others) had a negative relationship with self-efficacy and goal setting, but these relationships were not statistically significant. The negative relationship with an avoiding goal orientation and exam results was not statistically significant in the first exam, but was significant in the second exam. In summary, this study clearly showed the positive impact of a learning goal orientation and feedback over time. It also showed that negative results were only present for those with a performance goal orientation and an avoidance approach. The results from this study also showed that those with a performance and proving goal orientation did not outperform those with a learning goal orientation.

### **Phase Theories of Self-Regulation - The Rubicon Model**

Yet another way to examine the self-regulatory processes has been to consider them from the point of view of the various phases that an individual moves through in the pursuit of goals, and the cognitive mindset associated with each phase. Initial research in this area by Lewin, Dembo, Festinger and Sears (1944) described two phases: goal setting and goal striving (Kanfer et al., 2012). Others have evolved this original thinking; Karoly (1993) posited five phases of self-regulation, Zimmerman (2000) theorized that three phases were sufficient to describe self-regulation, however it was the 'Rubicon Model of Action Phases' (Gollwitzer & Heckhausen, 1987) that characterized the four phases of self-regulation that the literature has coalesced around (Kruglanski, & Higgins, 2013; Kanfer et al., 2012). The phases of the Rubicon model are: 1) Predecision Phase (where goal(s) are evaluated and chosen); 2) Pre-action Phase (where goal planning occurs and early goal directed behaviours happen); 3) Action Phase (where goals are pursued and achieved); and 4) Post-action Phase (where the individual decides whether to continue with the current goal or if a new goal is required) (Kruglanski, & Higgins, 2013). Austin and Vancouver (1996) also described four phases of self-regulation in terms that have more explicitly described the activities of the phase - 1)

Goal Establishment; 2) Planning; 3) Goal Striving; and 4) Goal Revision (Vancouver & Day, 2005).

In their Rubicon model, the authors identified two different cognitive processes that were activated, depending on the phase of self-regulation that an individual was in. 'Cognitive tuning' as they described it, comprised an 'open' or 'deliberative mindset', and a 'closed' or 'implemental mindset'. Decision making activities (Phase 1 of the Rubicon model) required a more open and deliberative mindset because the individual did not know how the goal would be achieved, and therefore needed to be more receptive to any information that would inform the feasibility of the goal, likelihood of success, and desirability of the goal (Kruglanski & Higgins, 2013). Whereas once the Rubicon had been crossed, and a goal had been selected, the individual was more closed in their mindset and an 'implemental mindset' would drive the planning choices in Phase 2. Once goal striving began (Phase 3) an 'actional' mindset would predominate. While the final phase of goal revision would utilize an 'evaluative' mindset, which would be open in its orientation (Kanfer et al., 2012).

#### **2.2.4 Summary of Structure-Content-Phase Theories of Self-Regulation & Impact on Managers**

Each category of self-regulation theory has described its different aspects. Structural theories focused on how distal goals are determined, how they are hierarchically decomposed to create proximal goals, and how the feedback cycle drives the reduction of a GPD. Content theories focused on the choices that an individual makes about which goals to pursue, and their emotional commitment to the goal, which is a critical factor in their task

persistence and the degree to which they self-regulate more generally. Phase theories examine the key steps to achieve a goal, and their related cognitive processes.

## **2.3 Goals, Self-efficacy and Feedback**

### **2.3.1 Goal Setting Theory**

Goal setting theory was inductively developed in 1990 from studies involving over 40,000 participants in eight countries on 88 different tasks (Locke & Latham, 2013). In studying goals that were either assigned to individual, were participatively set with others or were self-set, Locke and Latham (1990) identified a linear relationship between the degree of goal difficulty and performance. They also identified that specific, difficult goals led to higher performance as compared to having no goals, or vague goals. Their other major finding was that performance feedback, participation in decision making, and competition only affected performance to the extent that they lead to the setting of a specific, high goal (Locke & Latham, 2013). Locke and Latham's research also found that the goal-performance relationship was mediated by an individual's choices of the goal directed activities they work on, the effort they put forth on those activities, their persistence over time and the task strategy they used to achieve the goal. They also found that the goal-performance relationship was moderated by the individual's ability to complete the tasks needed to attain the goal, objective feedback of their performance relative to the goal, the individual's commitment to attaining the goal itself, and their access to the situational resources need to complete the task (e.g., financial, technical) (Latham et al., 2016). The research since this theory was first published in 1990 has largely confirmed the initial findings and has more

clearly articulated specific situations where the theory needed to be elaborated more fully (Locke & Latham, 2013).

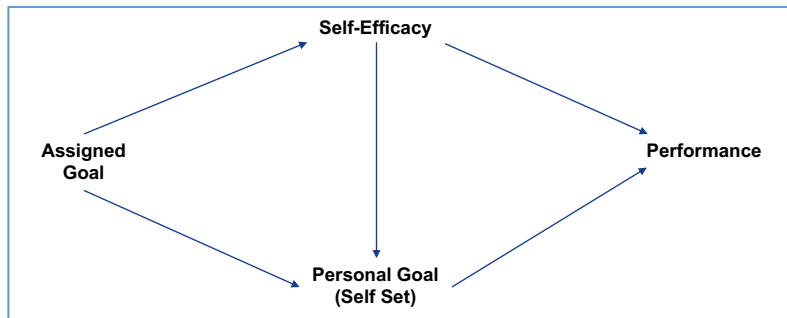
According to goal setting theory, goals have four main objectives: 1) to direct the attention of the individual towards the desired outcome and to enable them to make choices about which activities they will do (or not do) to achieve the goal; 2) to energize the individual, through the use of difficult, yet challenging targets (however goals that are too simple, or too far beyond one's ability to accomplish, actually create conditions for a performance drop off); 3) to increase persistence such that, when given the time, an individual will put more effort towards difficult goals; and 4) to force the individual to creatively use their skills and knowledge to complete the goal (Locke & Latham, 2002). While defining a meaningful goal is a critical first step to achieving it, that alone is not enough to ensure that their employee will achieve the desired outcome. In Figure 2.3, Locke and Latham (2002) argued that assigned goals define the objective to be achieved, and that the achievement of those goals is mediated by the individual's self-efficacy and the subsequent personal goals that an individual selects (based on their capacity to achieve the goal). To set effective personal goals, an individual must be able to successfully break down large goals into smaller 'proximal' goals, which are derived based on one's own perception of what can be accomplished, which in turn is established based on one's self-efficacy about the task (Locke & Latham, 2002).

Setting more difficult goals does not guarantee higher performance. In fact, there have been numerous studies that have shown that goals taken to the extreme can have negative consequences. Locke & Latham (2002) showed that when goals were too much of a stretch, and are taken to the extreme, they can lead to a host of other negative outcomes such as a narrowed focus, inappropriate time horizons, increased risk taking behaviour, unethical



thoughts and action tendencies, inhibition of learning, inhibition of teaming and cooperation and the externalization of motivation (David et al., 2014).

**Figure 2-3: Relationship Among Assigned Goals, Self-Set Goals, Self-Efficacy and Performance.**



Source: (Locke & Latham, 2002)

### 2.3.2 Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is a key construct associated with the concept of employee self-regulation and is derived from Social Cognitive Theory (Pousa & Mathieu, 2015). Wood and Bandura (1989) defined self-efficacy as the “beliefs in one’s capabilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources and courses of action needed to meet given situational demands” (Gist, & Mitchell 1992, p. 184). The concept of self-efficacy was first postulated by Bandura (Bandura, 1977), who hypothesized that individuals self-assess their perceived ability to perform a task, and that this informs their intention to complete the task. In his seminal paper, Bandura (1977) articulated that self-efficacy has a directive influence over the choice of activities and settings that a person undertakes, that it determines how much effort a person will expend on these activities, and how long they will persist in the face of obstacles and adverse experiences. He indicated that there is a positive relationship between self-

efficacy and persistence, in that the greater the self-efficacy, the more persistent one would be in accomplishing the goal, and similarly as self-efficacy decreases, the persistence of an individual to achieve the goal will also diminish. Gist & Mitchell (1992) found that the goals that an individual sets, are a function of their self-efficacy. They also noted that persistence towards those goals was also a consequence of self-efficacy.

It is the individual themselves who assess their self-efficacy. To do this, they assess the task requirements, they reflect on their past experience in completing similar tasks, consider role models in the behaviours/goals being contemplated, they internalize feedback from others, including any persuasive arguments in favour of the goals and lastly, they assess their personal and situational resources/constraints that will affect their ability to complete the task. These variables combine into an overall perception that the individual makes regarding their likelihood to successfully execute the task(s) at hand, which directly informs the level of persistence and the goals they set for the task (Gist, & Mitchell, 1992). In addition, numerous studies (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 1982; Latham & Locke, 2007; Latham & Pinder, 2005; Latham & Seijts, 1999; Locke & Latham, 1990, 2002, 2006; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998) have highlighted that individuals with higher self-efficacy are more likely to self-regulate, persist longer on task, make better choices and to initiate actions to work through a given situation (Pousa & Mathieu, 2015).

### **2.3.3 Does it Matter Who Develops and Assigns the Goal?**

Research on assigned goals versus participatively-generated goals versus self-set goals has found that as goal difficulty was held constant, and as long as the logic or rationale for the assigned goal was given to the individual, an assigned goal was as effective as one that is set participatively (Locke & Latham, 2013). Research has also found that self-set goals are

often lower than those established through a participatory process or are assigned (Latham et al., 2016). Therefore since higher goals lead to higher performance, to maximize performance outcomes, managers should work either collaboratively with their team members to establish goals or directly assign goals (with the rationale for the goal clearly articulated).

### **2.3.4 Types of Goals, Task Complexity and Goal Striving Strategies**

There are two types of goals, a performance goal or a learning goal. A performance goal emphasizes the achievement of a specific outcome (e.g., a score of 80% or more on the exam, increase EBITDA by 2%). Setting specific, challenging performance goals have been shown to be highly effective for simple tasks, where the knowledge and skills to complete the task are available to the individual (Latham, & Locke, 2007). When tasks are complex however, learning goals (e.g., “discover and implement three improvements to performing this task”) have been shown to be more useful than performance goals in generating higher performance outcomes (Mone & Shalley, 1995; Winters & Latham, 1996; Seijts & Latham, 2001). This is because learning goals focus an individual’s efforts on discovering new strategies or procedures to perform the task effectively (Latham & Locke, 2007). Seijts and Latham (2001) identified that a learning goal activates self-regulatory processes such as: search, planning, monitoring and evaluation of strategies. In contrast, performance goals activate pre-existing strategies (Locke & Latham, 2013). Seijts and Latham (2001) also discovered that the assignment of a specific learning goal led to even higher performance than a ‘do your best’ goal, or a specific, challenging performance goal. This finding has also been confirmed by Drach-Zahavy and Erez (2002).

Self-efficacy was found to mediate the relationship between task strategy and performance for complex tasks (Locke & Latham, 2013). In their 2001 study, Seijts and Latham noted that the self-efficacy of those individuals with specific, challenging performance goals decreased over time, while the group with learning goals saw self-efficacy increase as they discovered task strategies to achieve their goal and performance improved. This improved performance in turn increased self-efficacy, which then generated an increased commitment to pursue new task strategies. Drach-Zahavy and Erez (2002) also studied the impact of types of goals (learning, performance, 'do your best') on complex tasks while participants are under stress. They found that when a significant change was introduced to the study participants, there was no change in performance for those who had learning or 'do your best' goals. However, there was a negative effect for those who had specific, challenging goals and perceived the change as a threat to their ability to achieve the goal (Locke & Latham, 2013).

### **2.3.5 Pursuing Learning Goals and Performance Goals Simultaneously**

Donovan and Williams (2003) studied Dweck's goal orientation (GO) theory and found that goal orientation was a moderator for performance. In their study, athletes with a learning GO increased their goals compared to the previous year, while those with a performance GO lowered their end-of-season goals when mid-year results were below expectation (Latham & Locke, 2007). Brett and VandeWalle (1999) found that goal orientation acted as a mediator between goals and performance and that those with a learning GO tended to select a learning goal while those with a performance GO tended to select a performance goal that was attainable (Latham & Locke, 2007). Seijts et al. (2004) identified that for a complex task, a specific learning goal outperformed a specific performance goal and a do your best goal.

In a landmark study, Masuda et al. (2015) conducted two related experiments to explore the effects of simultaneously providing individuals both learning and performance goals of varying difficulty. In these quantitative studies, four goals types were given to the participants (a distal learning goal, a distal performance goal, a proximal learning goal and a proximal performance goal). The first of the two studies focused on self-set goals, while the second study focused on assigned goals. In both studies, total goal difficulty was assessed, and performance, self-efficacy and task strategies were monitored. In their first study, which focused on self-set goals, they found a negative curvilinear relationship between the total self-set goal difficulty and performance, such that the best performance occurred when total goal difficulty was of an intermediate level. They also found that the higher the number of self-set learning goals, the greater the number of strategies that were learned. They also found that self-efficacy predicted the level of self-set goal difficulty (Masuda et al., 2015). The second study focused on experimentally manipulating the degree of difficulty of assigned goals (a proximal learning goal, a distal learning goal, a proximal performance goal, a distal performance goal), and examined the impact on performance, self-efficacy and task strategies. Results from the experiments also demonstrated a negative, non-linear relationship between total assigned goal difficulty and performance. Self-efficacy again mediated the non-linear relationship between total goal difficulty and performance. And as in the first study, the number of assigned learning goals predicted the number of strategies learned, which in turn predicted performance (Masuda et al., 2015). The second study also highlighted that the best performance occurred not when total goal difficulty was maximized, but rather when it was at a moderate level. When total assigned goal-difficulty was too low or too high, it resulted in less than peak performance. Performance-goal effects were mediated by either task strategies or self-efficacy (Masuda et al., 2015).

### 2.3.6 Task Strategies as Moderators of Performance

Task strategies have also been examined as moderators of goal-performance outcomes. In this model (as opposed to the model where task strategy is proposed as a mediator in goal-performance outcomes), it is proposed that individuals with superior strategies will perform better than those with faulty strategies (Locke & Latham, 2013). Strategies in this context are defined as “a plan or pattern of decision making or actions designed or undertaken to achieve a goal” (Locke & Latham, 2013; p. 95). In reviewing the literature, Wood et al. (Locke & Latham, 2013) identified four categories of strategies. These were task-specific strategies, strategy development, search and information processing (SIP), and strategies to manage one’s own self-regulation. They identified that all four strategies have an impact on performance, but the magnitude of the impact was a function of the proximity of the strategy itself to the actual execution of task behaviours. Those strategies that could be quickly enacted had a higher impact on performance than those that took longer to develop and implement. Task-specific strategies that utilized an individual’s existing knowledge had the greatest impact on task performance. The next greatest impact came from strategies in which effort was focused on testing, refining and developing task specific strategies. Effort spent on thinking about the problem, or searching for information on new strategies and/or processing this information has the least direct effect on performance. However, these latter activities, and the knowledge generated from them, were seen to be fundamental to task strategy development and considered as mediators of task strategy-performance.

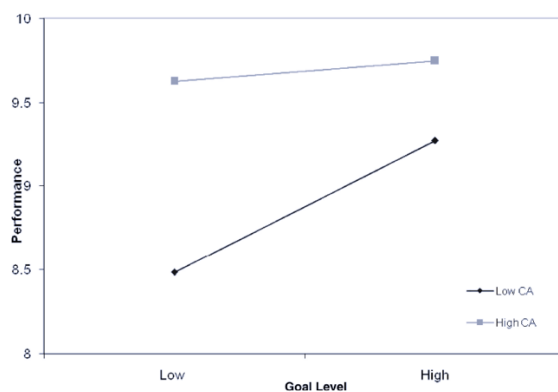
Wood et al. (Locke & Latham, 2013) conducted a meta-analysis of goal orientation and the use of the four categories of strategies noted above. They found that individuals with a performance-avoidance goal orientation did not engage in greater use of SIP strategies to achieve their goal, and indicated that this result was consistent with evidence that individuals

with a performance orientation do not actively seek new knowledge, and prefer to work on tasks they know they can already perform (Dweck, 2006; Seijts, Latham, Tasa, & Latham, 2004). For individuals with a performance-approach goal orientation, there was a small positive relationship between the use of self-regulation strategies and SIP strategies to achieve goals, and that individuals with a performance-approach GO were more likely to have greater use of self-regulation strategies, or SIP strategies, than an individual with a performance-avoidance GO. However, they found that while a performance-approach goal orientation is more likely to lead to greater use of self-regulation strategies and SIP strategies than a performance-avoidance GO, the relative performance impacts of either of these GO's was low compared to either of the mastery GO's (Locke & Latham, 2013). Individuals with a mastery-approach GO utilized both self-regulation strategies and SIP strategies, and there was a strong positive correlation between the use of these strategies and performance results. The results were so conclusive that the authors went on to say "the observed positive effect of a mastery approach GO on the use of productive strategies for both managing the self, and engaging in the development of new task strategies, is generalizable and does not need to be qualified by considerations of potential moderators" (Locke & Latham, 2013, p. 102) . This finding is supported by a separate meta-analysis conducted by Sizmann & Ely (2011) which focused on the literature associated with the role of self-regulation on learning. They found that self-regulation strategies also had a strong positive effect on performance and that specifically goal level, persistence, effort and self-efficacy had the strongest effects on learning. Wood et al. (Locke & Latham, 2013) also reviewed the literature in the context of strategies as a moderator of goal-performance. They found mixed support for the moderator model and that the majority of studies found a significant interaction effect between goals and strategy on performance, and as a result proposed that the mediator model more strongly supports the mechanism by which goals and strategies affect performance (Locke & Latham, 2013).

### 2.3.7 Cognitive Ability, Learning Goal Orientation and Performance

Research has also been conducted on the impact of learning goals, cognitive ability and goal commitment on performance. Latham et al., (2008) found that individuals with a high learning goal, performed at a higher level than those with lower learning goals. An important finding from this study was the learning goal-difficulty x cognitive-ability interaction on performance. The performance data showed that individuals with higher cognitive abilities were relatively unaffected by the difficulty level of the learning goal (low vs high), and outperformed those with lower cognitive abilities. However, individuals with lower or moderate cognitive abilities, benefitted significantly from setting a learning goal that increased goal difficulty. So much so, that the performance level of the low cognitive ability individuals who were assigned a high learning goal neared the level of those with high cognitive abilities (see Figure 2.4) (Latham & Locke, 2007).

**Figure 2-4: Interaction Between Goal Level and Cognitive Abilities on Performance**



Source: Latham et al., (2008)



### 2.3.8 Individual vs Team Goals

Teams are the primary mechanism for accomplishing business goals. In the context of goals, team performance is enhanced when a person's goal is aligned with the team's goal (Latham & Locke, 2007). DeShon et al. (2004) examined self-regulatory processes around multiple goals (individual goals and team goals) and feedback on both goals, in pursuit of a team outcome. The researchers noted that in this scenario, there was a self-regulatory process for an individual's goals and a separate team-regulatory process on the team's goals. They also noted that the ideal case occurs when the individual's goals and team's goals are congruent, thus allowing the GPD's of both goals to be reduced simultaneously. However, the challenge occurs when the individual goal and the team goal are not aligned. In this case, the individual makes a choice regarding which GPD to reduce first (DeShon et al., 2004). In their quantitative study on the role of feedback on goal striving towards both individual goals and team goals, DeShon et al. (2004) found that the established findings from the goal setting literature about individual goal pursuit extended to a small team (there were 3 members in each team). As hypothesized, the researchers found that differences in the types of team feedback (positive or negative) correspondingly led to an increase or decrease in team-efficacy. They also found that the focus of the feedback was also important for team goal commitment. If an individual received individual feedback, they became more focused on pursuing their individual goal, whereas if they received feedback about the pursuit of the team goal, they subsequently allocated more effort towards the team goal. From a goal orientation point of view, the study also showed that there was a positive correlation between a team that had a mastery orientation and their respective goal commitment. Both team-mastery and team-performance orientations were also positively correlated to team-efficacy. The researchers also found that team goal and team-efficacy resulted in increased team-focused effort. An unexpected finding from the study was that the use of team strategies was affected by team-efficacy and team goal commitment, but not by

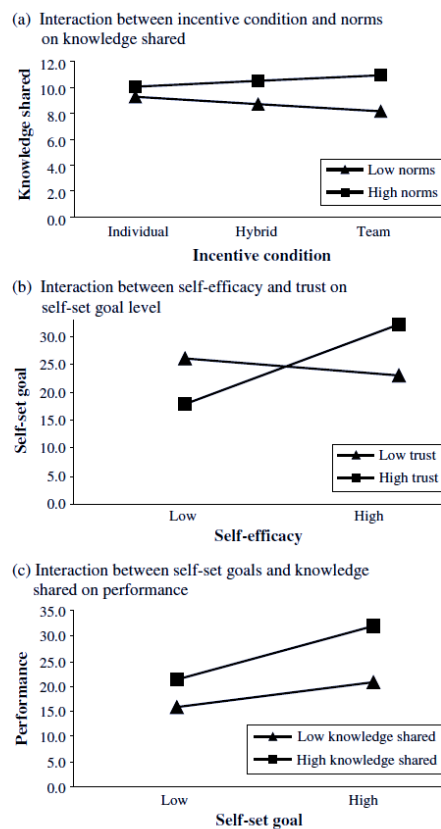
team goals. The researchers believe that the lack of relationship between team strategies and team goals was an unintended consequence of how feedback was given for those teams pursuing individual goals. They also looked at goal orientation at the team level and found that a performance orientation at the team level was positively related to team-efficacy, but had no other direct or indirect effects. However, for overall performance, mastery orientation showed the highest performance at both the individual and team levels, and that a team-mastery orientation combined with team feedback yielded the greatest impact on results.

### **2.3.9 Knowledge Sharing and it's Impact on Team Performance**

Motivation, incentives and trust are important elements in knowledge sharing and goal pursuit in a team environment. Quigley et al. (2007) studied these elements in a business simulation focused on two business units trying to maximize the collective performance of both teams. One aspect of this study examined the interactions between incentives (individual, hybrid and team) and norms on knowledge sharing (low norms, high norms) between the teams. They found that in all the experimental conditions, knowledge sharing was greater when there were high knowledge sharing norms, regardless of incentive type, with the greatest knowledge sharing occurring with team incentives + high norms, followed by high norms + hybrid incentives, with the lowest knowledge shared in the condition of high norms + individual incentives. In the condition where there were low norms on knowledge shared, the relationship between incentives and knowledge shared was the opposite. In this scenario, the best condition was the use of individual incentives, followed by hybrid incentives and lastly team incentives. The research team also investigated the relationship between self-efficacy and self-set goals in conditions of low trust and high trust between the parties. They found that when trust was high and self-efficacy was high, the self-set goal was greatest. When there was low trust between the two groups, the self-set goal declined

slightly when moving from a low self-efficacy condition to high self-efficacy. The third interaction that was examined was the relationship between self-set goals and knowledge shared on performance. In this scenario, performance increased with increased self-set goals, regardless of the level of knowledge shared. However, if there was a high degree of knowledge shared, not only was the initial self-set goal (and performance) higher than the low knowledge shared condition, but the performance gap between the low knowledge shared conditions and the high knowledge shared conditions broadened significantly, such that the performance output was almost double that of the low knowledge shared condition. The figure below is reproduced from this study (Quigley et al., 2007) and clearly shows the interaction effects described above.

**Figure 2-5: Relationships Between Incentive Types, Knowledge Sharing Norms, Trust, Self-Set Goals and Performance**



Source: Quigley et al. (2007)

### 2.3.10 Summary of Goal Setting Theory

In the years since Locke & Latham's seminal work in 1990, the research has largely validated their theories about goal setting. Namely that higher goals lead to higher performance; an individual's activity choices, effort, persistence and task strategy mediate the relationship between a goal and actual performance; and an individual's ability to accomplish the task(s) needed to achieve the goal, the individual's commitment to the goal itself, the provisioning of objective feedback to the individual about their performance relative to goal, and the individual's access to situational resources needed to complete the task are moderators of the goal-performance relationship (Locke & Latham, 2013). Self-efficacy has also been shown as a mediator in the goal-performance relationship (Pousa, & Mathieu, 2015). Research has also shown that it is less critical about who sets the goal for an individual (manager set vs self-set by the individual) as long as the manager clearly articulates the logic for the goal and the individual accepts the logic. The research has also shown that type of goal chosen is important, and needs to be considered in context. If the skills and knowledge required to complete a task are known, then a challenging performance goal yields superior results. However, if the skills and knowledge are not present in the individual to successfully complete the task, then a learning goal is more effective. An individual's goal orientation is also important, and the goals they select will match their goal orientation; individuals with a learning goal orientation tend to select learning goal, and those with a performance goal orientation tend to select performance goals. Goal orientation can also be subdivided into 'approach' or 'avoidance' mindsets, which in turn influences their affective reaction to feedback and subsequent goal setting choices.

For complex tasks, learning goals yield the highest performance, but the goal-performance relationship in this case is mediated by task strategies, and the choice of task strategy was

driven by an individual's goal orientation. For individuals with a mastery approach, the use of self-regulation strategies and SIP strategies yielded the highest performance. The use of learning goals has also been shown to be successful, regardless of cognitive ability. In fact, with the appropriate use of learning goals, individuals with low cognitive ability can reach performance levels approaching those of individuals with high cognitive ability.

Learning goals, and the associated self-regulatory processes that have been studied at the individual level, have also been shown to extend to teams. But learning goals alone are not enough for teams to perform at a high level. The team's motivation towards the goal, the trust they have with each other, and the type of incentives (individual, hybrid, team) also play a role in how a team performs. Teams where there was a high degree of knowledge sharing, a high degree of team norms and a high degree of task self-efficacy achieved the highest performance. In summary, the goal setting literature provides very clear evidence of the drivers of performance in individuals and teams and these insights must inform managerial coaching for performance.

## **2.4 The Role of Failure Attributions & Affect on Goal Striving and Goal Revision**

### **2.4.1 Goal Performance Discrepancies (GPD) and Feedback**

Inherent in any goal striving process is the execution of a set of activities to reduce a GPD, and feedback on the outcomes of those actions. Research has shown that the size of the GPD, and how an individual attributes the causes of the GPD, have a significant effect on

goal attainment, self-efficacy, persistence and goal revision (Carver & Scheier, 2000). To that end, Carver & Scheier, (2000) found that large negative GPDs may lead to a withdrawal of effort when individuals are discouraged and perceive low likelihood of future goal attainment. Cooper (2007) found that performance worsened for individuals who had difficult goals and received negative feedback, while those with a difficult goal who received positive feedback continued to persevere (Locke & Latham, 2013).

The sign of the feedback (negative or positive) can also affect behaviours. Richard & Diefendorff (2011) found that after receiving negative feedback, individuals work effort increased the next day, while those who received positive feedback, decreased work effort the next day. Venables and Fairclough (2009) also showed that individuals that received false negative feedback subsequently tried harder to overcome the GPD, however on continued receipt of negative feedback, effort decreased over time and goals were abandoned (Locke & Latham, 2013).

#### **2.4.2 The Impact of the Comparative vs Normative Feedback on Goal Striving**

Comparative feedback occurs when an individual's performance is compared against their peers. Normative feedback occurs when an individual's performance is compared against themselves. Studies have been conducted to examine the effectiveness of normative and comparative feedback for goal striving and goal revision. Bandura (1991) conducted an experiment to test the impact of various types of comparative feedback. In this study, they gave individual participants artificial feedback on their performance relative to the other participants. The artificial feedback given was either that the individual was worse than their

peers, gradually decreasing relative to their peers, the same as their peers, gradually getting better relative to their peers, or consistently superior to their peers. Those who received feedback that they were gradually getting better than their peers set higher goals, were able to increase performance, more so than those who got feedback that they were the same or worse than their peers, and they had higher goals and performance than even those who received feedback that they were consistently superior to their peers (Bandura & Jourden, 1991).

Ilies & Judge (2005) also examined the role of positive/negative feedback and normative/comparative feedback on goal revision. Their study comprised of two experiments. In the first experiment, participants self-selected a comparative performance goal (e.g., 'I want to perform better than 50% of the participants in the experiment'). The participants were then given a challenge to brainstorm as many uses of an object as they could. At the end of the challenge they were asked about their affective feelings at that point. The researchers then gave half of the respondents truthful feedback on their performance (relative to the other participants), the other half were given randomly assigned artificial feedback about their performance relative to their peers. The data from this part of the experiment showed that the goal revision mirrored the sign of the feedback; positive feedback generated a positive goal revision on the number of associations they could make on the next trial while negative feedback created a downward goal revision. This held true whether the feedback had been manipulated or if it reflected the individual's actual performance. The researchers found that positive affect mediated the feedback-goal revision relationship. In their second study, the researchers focused on normative goals, where the participant set personal performance goals. Relative and normative feedback was again provided. Results from the second experiment showed that positive feedback generated positive affect, however upward goal revision only occurred when the individual received

normative feedback. For negative feedback, both normative and comparative feedback predicted downward goal revision (Ilies & Judge, 2005).

### **2.4.3 In Process Feedback vs Outcome Based Feedback**

Research has also been conducted on the effectiveness of providing ongoing process feedback, as opposed to outcome feedback. Korsgaard & Diddams (1996) conducted an experiment to examine the impact on goal setting when only outcome feedback was provided and when in-process feedback was provided in addition to outcome feedback. They found that when in-process feedback was provided, individuals set more goals for themselves, which in turn improved their performance. This effect was moderated by task complexity, such that for simple tasks, the in-process feedback did not impact performance, however for complex tasks, the number of self-set goals increased and performance increased (Korsgaard & Diddams, 1996). Beck et al. (2009) highlighted support for the provision of in-process feedback, because it signals to the recipient that this goal is important, and research has shown that goals that are perceived as urgent receive more attention from the individual (Ashford & Northcraft, 2003; DeShon, Kozlowski, Schmidt, Milner, & Wiechmann, 2004; Schmidt et al., 2008).

### **2.4.4 Failure Attributions**

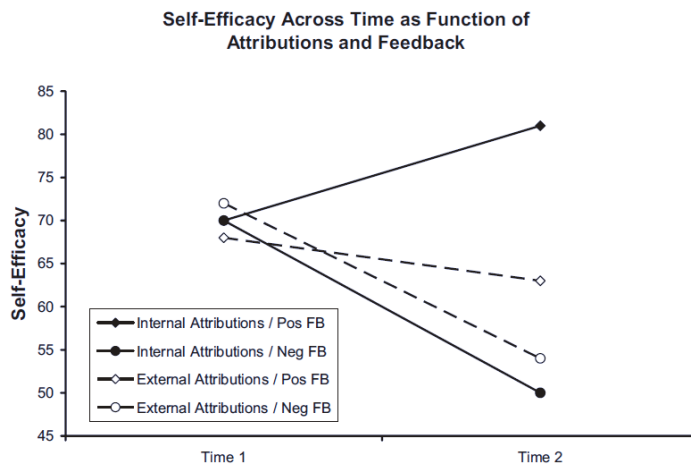
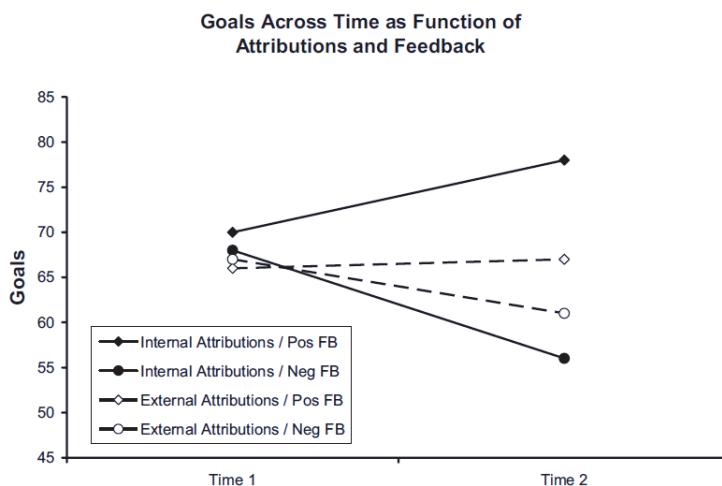
When individuals fail to reach their goals or discover negative GPDs, there is a desire to understand the causes of the GPD. According to attribution theory, when a GPD exists an individual considers why an event occurred, and attempts to discern: 1) Locus of Causality - whether the event was due to factors that were internal (self) or external (outside of self)



driven, 2) Stability - whether the causes of the event were stable or unstable over time and 3) Controllability - whether the reasons were controllable (i.e. Within the individual's control) or outside of their control (Locke & Latham, 2013). These failure attributions are moderators of goal-performance outcomes (Locke & Latham, 2013).

### **Locus of Causality**

Research on locus of causality has shown that the sign of an internal attribution (positive or negative) influences post task self-efficacy (Silver et al., 1995). Silver et al. (1995) identified that internal attributions for past successes were positively related to post-task self-efficacy, while internal attributions for past failures are negatively related to post-task self-efficacy. Tolli & Schmidt (2008) also showed that there was an interaction effect between internal attributions and feedback. In their study, individuals pursued a performance goal, and when positive feedback was given to the individuals (i.e. that their performance was improving and that the GPD was reducing) AND the individual placed the locus of causality as internal, self-efficacy increased. In addition, for those individuals with internal attributions + positive feedback, their subsequent goal was revised upwards. However, for individuals who had internal attributions + negative feedback, the opposite was true; self-efficacy decreased dramatically and subsequent goals were significantly revised downward, to the extent that this condition presented the lowest revised goals out of all the conditions examined. When the individuals perceived the locus of control to be external, and positive feedback was given, self-efficacy decreased slightly, and goals remained relatively constant. For the case where the locus of control was external and the feedback was negative, the lowest self-efficacy was recorded, and subsequent goals were lowered, but not lower than the case of internal+negative feedback. In short, locus of causality attributions moderated the relationship between feedback and goal revision, and the effect was mediated by self-efficacy (Locke & Latham, 2013). The figures below have been reproduced from the study by Tolli & Schmidt (2008) and clearly show the interactions described above.

**Figure 2-6: Self Efficacy Across Time as a Function of Attributions and Feedback****Figure 2-7: Goals Across Time as a Function of Attributions and Feedback**

Source: Tolli & Schmidt (2008)

### Stability

When individuals perceive the cause of the negative GPD to be stable over time, which is to say that it will continue into the future, they will expect similar results to occur with future attempts at reducing the GPD; in these cases, individuals tend to lower their subsequent goal (Locke & Latham, 2013). Corroborating the findings of Tolli & Schmidt (2008), a study on

varsity-level track athletes showed that goal revision was greatest when individuals perceived the cause of failure to be internal and stable over time (Donovan & Williams, 2003). Allen et al. (2009) also studied the stability of failure attributions over time with athletes. In their study, they monitored golfers failure attributions and affect over a 48 hour period after a competition, beginning immediately after the competition, within 5 hours of the competition and up to two days after the competition. The researchers found that the participant's failure attributions did not change within this time. Additionally, they found that anger and dejection were more likely after a poor performance, however, if the cause of poor performance was attributed to unstable causes, anger receded. But if the golfer attributed the failure to stable causes, they found that the anger feelings did not subside (Allen et al., 2009).

### **Controllability**

Controllability is another aspect of attribution theory. In this failure attribution, if individuals believe the causes of their GPD are controllable, they will likely continue, however if they see the reason for the GPD as uncontrollable, their goal commitment will reduce (Locke & Latham, 2013). Little research has been conducted on this aspect of attribution theory (Locke & Latham, 2013), however a study conducted by Jackson et al. (2009) did investigate this unique failure attribution. This study focused on 50 co-op students who did not receive a favourable result from recently completed employment interviews. These students were split into two groups; one group received training that helped them to perceive the causes of their interview performance as controllable. The other 25 students did not receive any training. For those students that received the training intervention, there was an increase in attributions that the causes of failure were related to their (lack of) effort, a variable that was under their control. This in turn led to reduced regret, increased persistence and higher goal commitment. While not a study of coaching, this study highlights one of the most important

elements of coaching, which is the reframing of the causes of GPDs into elements that can be actioned by the coachee.

### **2.4.5 Affect**

Affect is positive or negative feelings, and in many ways is the heart of emotion (Higgins & Kruglanski, 2012). Affective reactions have been shown to impact an individual's motivation and goal striving behaviour (Erez & Isen, 2002; Seo et al., 2010; Seo et al., 2004). Self-discrepancy theory (SDT) states that people have cognitive representations of the self, as well as standards against which they evaluate the self, and the difference between the two creates emotional reactions (Higgins, 1987). The intensity of the affective response (positive or negative emotional reactions) depends on the magnitude and the direction of performance feedback, as well as the personal stakes for attaining one's goal. As the magnitude of negative feedback increases, the feeling of intense negative emotional reactions increases (Cron et al., 2005). In the Cron et al. (2005) study, it was shown that ongoing negative responses to negative GPD resulted in a goal revision to a lower level. Petrocelli & Smith (2005) also found that the emotional response to an attribution depends on the magnitude of the GPD, and the causal attribution made of it. In that study, the researchers focused on examining emotions and failure attributions through the lens of SDT. They found that when there were differences between one's actual self and ought self, individuals felt anger. Whereas when there were differences between their ideal self and their actual self, people had feelings of dejection (Petrocelli & Smith 2005). Similarly, Campbell & Martinko (1998) found that where the attributions were either internal, stable, or uncontrollable, the individual experienced negative emotions (e.g., helplessness, anxiety), while feelings of anger were a reaction to a specific external situation. Peterson & Schreiber (2006) also noted feelings of anger as a result of an external failure attribution while internal failure attributions created

feelings of guilt. Mone & Baker (1992) noted that locus of causality moderates GPD and affect. In their study, Mone & Baker showed that students felt more positive about attaining a grade goal, and more negative about not attaining their grade goal, when they made internal attributions for their exam performance. Ilies & Judge (2005) showed that affect fully mediates the GPD-goal revision outcome, and noted in their findings that participants who received negative feedback and felt negative affect, revised their goals downward. Those who received positive feedback, felt positive affect, and revised their goal upwards. In a follow-on study, Ilies et al. (2010) replicated their finding that positive affect led to upward goal revision, and negative affect led to downward goal revision. However, they also discovered that this occurred as a result of lower self-efficacy and as a result, concluded that negative affect and goal reduction were mediated through self-efficacy (Ilies et al., 2010). A study by Richard & Diefendorff (2011) found similar findings (that negative affect led to downward goal revision), however in this study there was no formal feedback that led to the negative affect; the individuals inferred it via indirect feedback. A key conclusion from this study was that the source of the negative GPD information does not have to be explicitly stated for the individual to interpret cues, and arrive at their own conclusion (Richard & Diefendorff, 2011). This finding has important implications for performance management and managerial coaching, because it indicates that in the absence of formal feedback (and framing of the causes of the GPD), individuals will make their own judgement and act accordingly.

#### **2.4.6 Summary of Attributions and Affect on Goal Striving**

As a whole, the literature has clearly demonstrated that there is a relationship between failure attributions, affect, goal striving and goal revision (Carver & Scheier, 2000). The type of feedback provided (normative vs comparative) and the affective result of that feedback

have been shown to influence goal revision. Positive affect leads to upward goal revision, while negative affect leads to downward goal revision. For self-set learning goals, normative positive feedback yields an upward goal revision, while positive comparative feedback did not change goal revision. For self-set performance goals, affect mediated the feedback type-goal revision relationship, and the type of feedback (normative or comparative) did not yield a different result in performance.

Affect influences the failure attributions an individual makes, and it is the failure attributions that influence the individual's self-efficacy. Negative failure attributions that are perceived to be internal, stable over time and controllable lead to negative affect, which in turn reduces self-efficacy (Ilies et al., 2010). As self-efficacy is lowered, the subsequent goal that an individual commits to, is lower as well. Similarly, when positive feedback is present (i.e., there is positive progress towards goal), an individual experiences positive affect which leads to upwards goal revision. How a manager provides feedback, and (re-)frames the causality of the GPD is therefore critical. By showing an employee that the source of the GPD is in their control and can be changed, employees will recommit to existing goals. In the absence of coaching, or any other mechanism to shape the employee's failure attributions, an individual will infer their own causality, which puts employee effectiveness at risk. The implication of these findings in the context of managerial coaching for performance cannot be overstated. To get the most out of an employee, a manager must guide their thinking to see that a portion of the GPD is internal and controllable.

## **2.5 Managerial Coaching**

### **2.5.1 Self-Regulation and Its Impact on Coaching**

The various Structural, Content and Phase theories of self-regulation described in Section 2.2 provide the theoretical mechanisms by which individuals manage their goal directed activities. From a managerial coaching perspective, understanding these perspectives of self-regulation is important. No one theory is completely accurate; they describe different aspects of self-regulation, and in this way provide a means to triangulate the area that needs the most development with their employee. The taxonomy of Structure-Content-Phase helps the manager diagnose the problem areas and provide a starting point for the creation of an intervention to aid their employee's growth; these lenses allow the manager to ask more specific questions such as: What goals/sub-goals and related activities has the employee defined? In which phase of the self-regulatory process is the employee? What type of feedback loops have been established by the employee? By the manager? What feedback information has the employee received about their progress towards goal, how have they interpreted it and what actions have they planned or implemented to reduce a GPD?

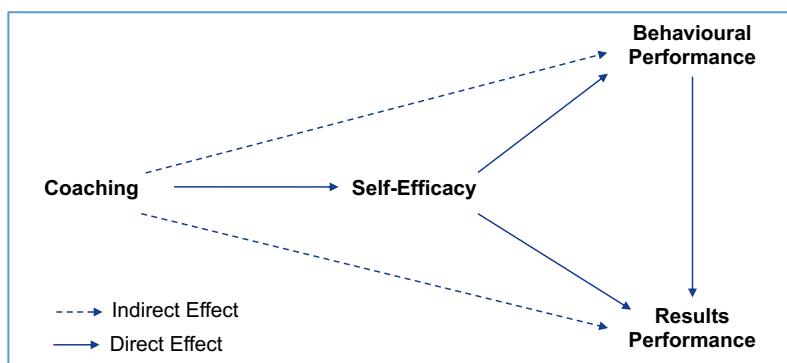
However, the coaching literature has only recently considered self-regulation as a possible organizing framework to orient the coaching literature (Gregory et al., 2011). In their 2011 paper, Gregory et al., proposed control theory as a framework for executive coaching, and highlighted that no published literature had connected the self-regulation literature with the coaching literature. In the time since that article, only one study (Pousa & Mathieu, 2015) has been conducted to investigate the role of self-regulation in managerial coaching for

performance, and it focused on self-efficacy, rather than the broader self-regulatory construct.

### 2.5.2 Self-Efficacy and It's Impact on Coaching

An employee achieves goals through their choice of activities, effort, persistence, and task strategy (Locke & Latham, 2002). Self-efficacy is a critical mediator between an individual's potential performance and their actual performance (Pousa & Mathieu, 2015; Locke & Latham 2002), and in a meta-analysis of over 100 research studies on workplace performance, Grover & Furnham (2016) identified that self-efficacy explained 28% of the variance in workplace performance. Pousa (2015) articulated that one of the most important aspects of managerial coaching is to increase self-efficacy, which in turn directly influences behavioural changes and performance outcomes. Pousa tested this with the model illustrated in Figure 2.8. In the quantitative study he conducted, 20% of the variance in self-efficacy was explained by coaching, 26% of the variance in behavioural performance could be explained by self-efficacy, however the combination of self-efficacy and behavioural performance variables explained 85% of the variance in results performance. (Pousa & Mathieu, 2015)

**Figure 2-8: Hypothesized Model of Coaching, Self-efficacy and Performance**



Source: Pousa & Mathieu, 2015



Moen & Federici (2012) also conducted an experiment that explored the effects of external executive coaching on goal setting, self-efficacy and causal attribution. In this quantitative study of 20 Norwegian executives from one large Fortune 500 business, the researchers found that for these senior individuals, coaching significantly improved their goal striving task strategies compared to the control group. The leaders in the treatment group also had more internal causal attributions related to their successful goal striving task strategies, however for unsuccessful goal striving strategies there was no difference in causal attributions between the control group and treatment group. The researchers also found that the leader's self-efficacy was improved compared to the control group (Moen & Federici, 2012).

These studies confirm what has been noted extensively in this literature review, that self-efficacy is affected by the magnitude of GPDs, and the causal attributions for the discrepancy. From a managerial coaching perspective, this highlights that one of the most important aspects of coaching is the (re-)framing of failure attributions such that the individual can find aspects that are internal and controllable and therefore self-efficacy can be improved through effort and persistence. How a manager coaches, and what a manager coaches on, are essential skills to maximize employee performance.

### **2.5.3 Coaching Paradigms**

Coaching in the workplace started to gain popularity in the 1970s when coaching concepts from the athletic arena were brought into the business arena (Ellinger and Kim, 2014). Since then, coaching has grown into a multi-billion dollar industry with over 47,000 professional self-identified coaches in 2012 (Ellinger and Kim, 2014). With such a diverse professional

community and such a relatively young discipline, the focus and theoretical tradition of the coaching community has evolved based on 'best practices' in this largely practitioner led domain. Cox et al. (2014) identified thirteen different coaching approaches which were categorized and associated with three possible coaching paradigms:

1. Learning paradigm
2. Performance paradigm
3. Meaning-in-Work paradigm

Bates and Chen (2004) described the Learning, Performance and Meaning-in-Works paradigms in the following manner. In the Learning paradigm, the creation of individual learning experiences is the main objective. By doing so, the coach can channel the efforts of the individual to allow personal growth to occur, which in turn may eventually lead to learning capabilities at the organizational level. Within the performance paradigm, the objective is to improve individual job performance and at an organizational level, to improve the performance of the business. In the meaning-in-work paradigm, the coaching focus is to enable meaningful work for the individual and building socially responsible organizations.

While all paradigms are available to a coach, in the context of managerial and sales coaching, this study will focus on a deeper examination of managerial coaching in the context of the Performance paradigm.

### **What is Coaching?**

While 'coaching' as a term is commonly used, there is a great deal of confusion and subjectivity in the use of the term (Bachikirova et al., 2010; D'abate, Eddy and Tannenbaum, 2003). Even within the coaching community, there are many interpretations of 'coaching'.

Hamlin, Ellinger, and Beattie (2008) conducted a comprehensive literature review and found 37 different coaching definitions. The use, or applications of coaching, also has variation in interpretation (Beattie et al., 2014). Fournies (1987) indicated that coaching has generally been perceived as a remedy for poor performance, as an approach that links individual effectiveness with organizational performance (Ellinger & Ellinger, 2014). Sue-Chan, Wood, and Latham (2012) see coaching as a developmental process that is a goal-oriented interaction between a coach and a coachee, and is typically what managers do to improve performance. Hamlin et al. (2008) continue with this goal/growth theme, and they describe coaching as a helping and facilitative process that “is designed to improve existing skills, competence and performance, and to enhance [individual’s] personal effectiveness or personal development or personal growth” (p 295). Longnecker (2007) defines a coach as “an individual who is in a position to provide feedback, counsel, and accountability to another individual with the purpose of helping them improve their performance and develop their talents” (Longenecker 2010, p. 33).

Others, such as Gilley, Gilley and Kouider (2010) describe coaching more generally, and state that coaching can be considered an activity, a function with specific outcomes, or a process. In general, current thinking sees coaching as a developmental process that is a goal-oriented interaction between a coach and a coachee, and often reflects what leaders and managers do when interacting with employees to improve their performance (Ellinger and Kim, 2014).

#### **2.5.4 Adults and Experiential Learning**

Learning goals have been clearly demonstrated as the most effective way to increase performance for complex tasks. But for an adult, learning is something that happens in the context of their experiences (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2011). Knowles was the first

researcher to hypothesize that the teaching style for an adult (Andragogy) is different from the style required to teach a child (Pedagogy). In his theory of Andragogy (1990), Knowles described six characteristics of an adult learner:

1. Adult learners need to know: what, how and why they are learning
2. Adult learners are self-directed and autonomous
3. Adult learners have prior experience in terms of resources and mental models
4. Adult learners have a readiness to learn, which is life related and developmental
5. Adult learners have an orientation to learn, which is rooted in context and centred on problems
6. Adult learners have a motivation to learn that includes personal benefits and creates intrinsic value

The characteristics of an adult learner have direct parallels with coaching and experiential learning in the workplace. Cox et al. (2014) noted that a successful coaching relationship begins with the intention and willingness of the coachee to know themselves better and that “the intention and readiness of the client for coaching are as crucial a contributor to success as the qualities of the coach” (Cox et al., 2014, p143). According to Whitmore (2009), coaching is a catalyst for accelerated learning, and for coaching to be successful, the coachee must work through a learning cycle, and in doing so, become accountable and responsible for their own role in creating change. Kolb (1984) articulated a model of experiential learning that describes the learning cycle that an individual goes through. In Kolb’s model, the individual has concrete experiences, which leads to reflective observation on those experience. This in turn leads the individual to an abstract conceptualization of the core issues, which then lead to active experimentation of the ideas generated in the abstract conceptualization stage. From the active experiment, new concrete experiences are generated, and the learning process begins anew. This model was expressed in Ellinger & Bostrom’s (2002) study which identified that top managers believed “their employee’s

learning was best integrated with work, feedback was necessary and that employees needed to assume responsibility for their own learning. Lastly, these managers believed that their employees were capable of learning, required a solid foundation to build upon, and needed to understand ‘the whys’ in order to learn” (Ellinger 2013, p. 312).

Cox extended Kolb’s model to include the role of coaching to support the learner through the learning cycle (Cox, 2013). In her Experiential Coaching Model, she identified that the *transition* between each of Kolb’s stages of learning was where a coach could create an impact. In her model, she painted a picture of Experiential Coaching as a ‘hub and spoke’ wheel. In the wheel metaphor she utilized, the spokes were the various experiential learning stages from Kolb, and the spaces between the spokes, were the transitions that experiential coaching navigates the coachee across (Cox, 2013).

Another relevant theory is transformative learning. Mezirow (1991) described transformative learning as a fundamental modification to beliefs, principles, and feelings, and that it requires significant shifts in our perceptions of ourselves and how we make sense of the world (Cox et al., 2014). To accomplish this shift, Mezirow proposed the individual become involved in *critical reflection* on “the content of the problem, the process or procedures followed in problem solving, or the presupposition on the basis of which the problem has been posed” (Cox et al., 2014, p 148). Mezirow’s ideas parallel the experiential learning cycle of Kolb, and echo the triple loop learning model articulated by Argyris and Schön’s (1976, 2002) (Cox et al., 2014). Measuring ‘critical reflection’ has occurred with qualitative tools such as diaries, critical incidents techniques and interviews. But it has also been measured quantitatively through measurement scales such as the Private Self-Consciousness Scale (Fenigstein, Scheier & Buss, 1975) and with the Self-Reflection and Insight Scale (Grant, Franklin & Langford, 2002). In their study, Grant et al. (2002) compared the reflection and insights of individuals who kept journals against those who did not, with the hypothesis that those who

maintained a journal would have higher scores on the Self-Reflection and Insight Scale (SRIS). With 260 participants in their study, it was found that those who did not keep diaries had lower 'self-reflection' scores than those who did keep diaries. However, these self-reflection scores did NOT correlate with insight; in other words, those who kept diaries did NOT have a greater frequency of insights. The authors argued that 'this finding may be explained by the notion that engagement in self-reflection does not necessarily mean that one has developed, or will develop, clarity of insight.' (p 830). In hypothesizing why insight did not correlate with diary keeping, the authors generated possible reasons such as "the extent to which the individual actually consciously engages in acts of self-reflection, the psychological mechanisms they use in the process of self-reflection, and the reason that they engage in self-reflection." (p 830). Harrington and Loffredo (2010), in their profound paper "Insight, Rumination, and Self Reflection as Predictors of Well-Being" had a similar conclusion to the disconnect between self-reflection and insight. What they identified was that a *catalyst* was needed to create insight, and that without insight, no action was taken. From a managerial perspective, this research highlights the need to bring awareness to both the coach/manager and the coachee, that reflection itself does not guarantee insights. Instead, it is during the coaching process the coach must act as a catalyst for insight, and help the coachee navigate the 'space between' the spokes in Cox's experiential coaching model.

### **2.5.5 Skills and Performance Coaching**

There are many different coaching approaches that managers can leverage, however from a managerial coaching perspective, the research indicates that "when it comes to improving skills and performance, adult learning theories and growth fostering psychologies suggest that appreciative, strengths based inquires are more effective and empowering than analytic,

deficit-based inquires” (Tschannen-Moran 2010, p. 205). Indeed, recent studies have shown a positive relationship between solution focused coaching and the perception of successful coaching outcomes by the coachee (Visser, 2011; Grant & O'Connor, 2010), and an increase in transformational leadership in an executive coaching study (MacKie, 2014).

In Skills and Performance Coaching (SPC), the goal of the manager-as-coach is to shift their coachee's focus from problems, deficiencies, and limitations to opportunities, strengths, and possibilities (Tschannen-Moran, 2010). SPC's primary orientation is solution-focused coaching, however it also incorporates perspectives and techniques from a number of traditions including those of person-centered, narrative, cognitive developmental, positive psychology and neuro-linguistic programming (Tschannen-Moran, 2010). As a result, the work of the managerial coach from an SPC perspective is to engage in dialog with the coachee to: 1) find positive motivation, 2) expand mindful awareness, 3) build self-efficacy, 4) recognize learning opportunities, 5) design learning experiments, 6) support perseverant efforts and 7) savour every success (Tschannen-Moran, 2010). While not explicitly referenced, the attributes of SPC emphasize key elements from the self-regulation literature and goal striving literature that have been shown to increase performance. For instance, the use of self-set learning goals has been clearly led to improved performance, as has both the role of positive affect and internal and controllable causal attributions in generating upward goal revisions through improved self-efficacy. In short SPC works because it accesses the fundamental mechanisms set out in self-regulation and goal setting theory.

### **2.5.6 Characteristics of an Effective Managerial Coach**

Ellinger and Bostrom (2002) have noted that top managers considered 'coaching' to be different from 'management' activities and focused their coaching sessions on empowering

their people, helping them, developing them, supporting them and removing obstacles for them. Ellinger and Bostrom's study (2002) also identified that these top managers were confident about their abilities to coach, had a high degree of self-efficacy, cared for their coachee, built trust, integrated their coachee's learning with work activities, and empowered the employee to be responsible for their own learning.

Coaching can occur in both formal structured sessions or more casually, 'in-the-moment'. These casual, hallway coaching sessions are the most frequently type of managerial coaching (Grant & Hartley, 2013). And while these coaching conversations are vital to the success of the coachee, most managers have never been trained as a coach (Longenecker, 2010) and vary in their desire to coach their employees (Heslin, Vandewalle & Latham, 2006). Researchers have studied the characteristics of managerial coaches, and in a recent review of managerial coaching scales, Hagen and Peterson (2010) identified ten different ways to measure the effectiveness of managerial coaching. Ellinger (2013) characterized managerial coaching as having two key behaviours - empowering and facilitating. In the empowering mode, behaviours such as question framing, being a resource/ removing obstacles, transferring ownership, holding back/not providing the answers are present. In the facilitating mode, the managerial coach provides feedback, solicits feedback, works issues out with the coachee, creates and promotes a learning environment, sets and communicates expectations, steps into other organizational roles to shift perspectives, broadens employees' perspectives, uses analogies, scenarios and examples, and engages others to facilitate learning.

Beattie (2002, 2006) highlighted nine behavioural categories for managerial coaching: 1) Thinking - reflective or prospective thinking; 2) Empowering - delegation, trust; 3) Informing - sharing knowledge; 4) Advising - instruction, coaching, guidance, counselling; 5) Caring - support, encouragement, approachable, reassurance, commitment/involvement, empathy; 6)



Assessing - feedback and recognition, identifying developmental needs; 7) Being Professional - role model, standard setting, planning and preparation; 8) Challenging employees to stretch themselves; and 9) Developing others (Ellinger, 2013). The key themes that emerge from both Ellinger's and Beattie's research are that the manager must create a learning environment, care and support their staff, provide feedback, communicate and provide resources (including other people) to aid their coachee in their learning journey (Beattie et al., 2014). Pousa & Mathieu (2014) have a more parsimonious model of the key components of the coaching construct which includes three dimensions: supervisory feedback, role modelling, and trust between the coach and the coachee.

From an SPC perspective, Tschannen-Moran (2010, p. 209) note that implicit with the goals of the coaching dialog is that an effective managerial coach believes the following:

- People are inherently creative and capable
- Learning takes place when people take active responsibility for constructing meaning from their experience (either confirming or changing what they already know)
- The meanings people construct determine the actions they take
- Every person is unique and yet all people have the same universal needs
- Empathy, mutuality, and connection make people more co-operative and open to change
- People don't resist change; they resist being changed
- The more people know about their values, strengths, resources, and abilities the stronger their motivation and the better their changes will be

While the literature has not coalesced around a definitive list of dimensions required for an effective managerial coaching environment, there is certainly alignment emerging on the core aspects of it.

### **Coaching as a Leadership Style**

Coaching has also been positioned as a leadership style. In situational leadership theory, Hersey and Blanchard (1969) postulated that a leader's effectiveness resulted from both the leader's traits and behaviours, and the situation that drove their choices regarding how they would lead their team (Rogelberg et al., 2017). Situational leadership has evolved since its inception, and in its current form, Situational Leadership Theory II (SLT II), is a set of principles that have been articulated to guide managerial leadership choices (Thompson and Glasø, 2014). SLT II proposes that the most effective leaders match their leadership style to the employee they are managing (Zigarmi and Taylor, 2017). SLT II evaluates an employee on two dimensions, competence and commitment, and generates four unique combinations of employee competence-commitment. Blanchard (2010) defines competence as the follower's task-relevant knowledge and skills, while commitment is defined as follower motivation and confidence; motivation considers a follower's interest in the task, while confidence is the follower's sense of self-assuredness and their belief in their ability to work independently and perform well on the task (Thompson and Glasø, 2018).

Once a leader has evaluated their follower's competence and commitment on a task, the SLTII model suggests a leadership style for each combination. A 'directive' leadership style would be appropriate for an employee that has low competence and high commitment; a 'delegating' leadership style would be appropriate when the employee has high commitment and high competence; a 'supportive' leadership style would be appropriate when an employee has moderate to high competence, but low commitment; and a 'coaching'

leadership style would be used when the individual has low-moderate competence and low commitment. In the context of SLT II, the authors envision a coaching leadership style as one that is highly directive and highly supportive (Thompson and Glasø, 2015).

While situational leadership theory has been popular in the management training programs and academic management textbooks, little research has been conducted on either its effectiveness in organizations, or the validity of its constructs (Thompson and Glasø, 2018). The results of the research that has been conducted, have been mixed on these issues, and Thompson and Glasø (2018) suggest that an imprecise characterization of leader-follower dynamics, and a lack of clarity on the conceptual definition of competence and commitment, have led to these results. However, in a recent study, Thompson and Glasø (2018) found that when there was congruence between a follower and leader on their assessment of the employee's competence and commitment, the leadership styles prescribed by SLT II were effective in elevating performance of the employee. Thus, if both the employee and leader assessed the employee as having a low competence and low commitment level, then adopting a coaching leadership style (highly directive and highly supportive) would yield positive outcomes.

Goleman (2000) has also identified coaching as a situational leadership style. It was one of six leadership styles that executives were found to use in different circumstances, or to obtain different outcomes. In their study, six possible leadership styles were applied in various situations. A 'coercive' leadership style, was one where the manager utilized a 'do as I say' approach. They found this style useful in highly time sensitive scenarios, such as business turnarounds. This directive approach was also useful when working with problem employees, however, it inhibited the flexibility of the individuals/teams, and could dampen the employee's motivation if used excessively. A leader adopting an 'authoritative' style, would state the overall goal, and provide individuals with the freedom to choose how to achieve it.

This style was useful when a group needed direction and vision, but could be less effective if working with a group of experts who were more knowledgeable and may not agree with the goal chosen. An 'affirmative' leadership style placed a heavy emphasis on praising people and their progress towards goals, and as a result was effective in improving team harmony and morale. However, a downside of this style was that affirmative leaders often don't correct poor performance or offer advice to the employee on how to achieve their goals, which in turn leaves the employee unclear of how to improve. The fourth leadership style was a 'democratic' style. This style emphasized the voice of the employee in developing ideas and decision making. This approach created buy-in from the employee, and organizational flexibility, but could also generate excessive meetings and potentially even a set of employees who feel leaderless. The 'pace-setting' leadership style was one where the leader sets high performance standards and holds themselves accountable to those standards. This style works well with employees who are self-motivated and highly competent, but other employees can feel overwhelmed by expectation of perfection. A leader can also adopt a 'coaching' leadership style. In this style, the focus is on the employee's personal development, rather than immediate performance results. This style was effective when an employee wants to change, but was not as useful when an employee was resistant to change. According to Goleman (2000), leaders who mastered four or more styles, and could flexibly move between them, achieved superior results from their teams.

In summary, both Goleman (2000) and Blanchard (2010) view leadership styles as situational, and that an effective leader must be mindful of their preferred styles and be able to discern when an employee or a situation would benefit from a different leadership style, and they view a coaching leadership style as one best suited for personal development.

### **Risks and Challenges with Managerial Coaching**

If coaching is a critical skill for managers to develop, a logical area of inquiry is to investigate instances where coaching has not been used, even though the managers have been trained in coaching practices. One such area of investigation is the use and frequency of informal coaching. Turner & McCarthy (2015) noted that informal coaching is the most frequently used form of coaching, yet a recent study of informal coaching by managers identified that while time, skills, and relationships were key factors for the manager to decide to conduct an informal coaching session, the primary decision criteria for that coaching conversation was whether the manager perceived a potential risk in having that conversation in the first place. If the manager perceived that the employee would not take the coaching well, they would not move forward with the coaching conversation, even if the situation was ripe for coaching (Turner & McCarthy, 2015). In a study with related findings, Baker - Finch (2011) identified that managers were comfortable conducting formal coaching sessions in which they were prepared, but did not have the confidence in their coaching skills to conduct coaching in 'every day conversations' with their employees (McCarthy & Milner, 2013). Turner and McCarthy (2015) also highlighted that there is little evidence of the factors that influence the day-to-day decisions by managers to take advantage of coachable moments. However, in their research they found six broad themes that influenced this choice: 1) the awareness of the coach of a coachable moment, 2) the employee's openness to coaching, 3) the relationship and level of trust between the manager and coachee, 4) the available time the manager had to coach, 5) the location for the coaching moment, and 6) the coach's skills themselves.

Another important factor in whether coaching is introduced to a team, is the manager's previous experience with coaching. Those managers that had a positive experience with coaching are more likely to introduce coaching to their team than those who had a negative experience (Ladyshevsky, 2010; Longenecker, 2010). Another issue in sustaining coaching

and growth mindsets, is how managers handle stress events. Ellinger et al. (2008) found that even managers who are comfortable coaching can revert back to more directive and less communicative postures when under pressure or stress (Beattie et al., 2014).

Another potential reason for regression to a more directive managerial approach is rooted in the personality differences of personalities of the manager and the coachee. Beattie et al. (2014) found that the chemistry between the coach and coachee was critical to a successful coaching relationship, and they identified four key variables that drive the efficacy of the coaching relationship: 1) that coach and coachee had complementary personality traits; 2) complementary learning style profiles; 3) they shared values; and 4) that there was a demonstration of appropriate coaching and learning behaviours.

### **2.5.7 Impact of Managerial Preconceptions and Stereotypes on Coaching**

A manager's pre-conceived ideas about an individual's coachability can greatly influence the coaching experience for the individual, and the coaching outcomes achieved (Heslin, Vandewalle & Latham, 2006). Dweck (1999) described these preconceptions as Implicit Person Theories (IPT). IPT identifies 'entity theorists' as those who believe that a person's attributes are 'fixed' and cannot be changed, while 'incremental theorists' believe that one's personal attributes can be shaped and developed. Heslin et al. (2006) also point out that an individual can hold different implicit theories about a person's ability, personality, and morality (Dweck, 1999). Dweck, Chiu and Hong (1995) also suggested that a person's IPT influences how they react to others, and by extension, their likelihood to coach an employee (Heslin, Vandewalle & Latham, 2006). In 2006, Heslin, Vandewalle & Latham undertook a study to

evaluate IPT in the context of employee coaching. They studied 45 managers in an MBA program and surveyed the manager's coaching dimensions and IPT. They found that a manager's IPT predicted the employee's evaluation of their coaching frequency; a manager who believed that a person's attributes were 'fixed' (entity theorist) coached less frequently (as assessed by the employee), and conversely those managers who believed that a person's attributes were malleable, coached more frequently. Their study also demonstrated that with coaching, a manager who initially believed that a person's attributes cannot be changed (entity theorist), could increase their willingness to coach a poor performing employee through interventions. Heslin, Vandewalle & Latham (2006) also highlight how these findings have been corroborated in four other studies, and that there is a growing body of evidence to support the IPT theory's application to managers. They also noted that IPT has been linked to self-regulation and its core components through a number of studies (VandeWalle, 1997; Martocchio, 1994; Wood & Bandura, 1989; Tabernero & Wood, 1999). These studies found that individuals with an incremental mindset were more likely to adopt learning goals, develop high self-efficacy, maintain their self-efficacy inspite of setbacks and demonstrate high performance on complex decision-making tasks (Heslin et al., 2006).

In addition to IPT, the regulatory mindset of the manager is an important dimension of how a manager sets their coach's context for coaching, and not to be forgotten, the coachee's regulatory mindset also sets the parameters of the coaching session. Regulatory Focus Theory states that an individual will either pursue development in order to succeed (have a 'promotion focus') or will pursue development in order to avoid failure (have a 'prevention focus') (Sue-Chan, Wood and Latham, 2012). In their paper, a lab experiment and a field trial were conducted to investigate these phenomena, and they found that a coach with a promotion focus (having a desire to learn and succeed) was able to grow any individual, regardless of their IPT mindset. They also found that a manager with a prevention focus could effectively coach an employee with an entity mindset; however, a prevention focused

mindset coach could not as effectively coach an employee with an incremental mindset. (Sue-Chan et al., 2012).

Dweck, Levy, and Stroessner (1998) have also made an important contribution in the social psychology field that has impact on the coaching discipline. In their famous experiments studying the formation of stereotypes and endorsement, the researchers focused on the use of praise, and its impact on children's motivation and performance. In the study, children with equal intelligence were given tasks to perform. Some were praised for their intelligence, while others were praised for the work effort they exerted while working on the task. Their findings indicated that as task complexity increased, those praised for their intelligence showed less task persistence, less task enjoyment, more low ability attributions and worse task performance than those children praised for effort. Moreover, those children who were praised for their intelligence, tended to only want to work on problems they could solve (and therefore receive praise), rather than take on problems that would have a higher likelihood of failure (and not receive praise). Conversely, those students who were praised for their work effort and willingness to learn, tended to choose problems that would allow them to continue to learn, as the praise they received from their learning effort was their positive outcome. (Dweck, Levy and Stroessner, 1998). The only difference between the two groups of students was the nature of the praise they received from the authority figure. In other words, the focus of the praise from the authority figure shaped the child's choices and actions; the child's choices were made to receive positive feedback.

Clearly as a coach, and especially in the context of managerial coaching where the employee cannot choose their coach, the findings from Dweck's IPT work, the Stereotype formation study and the RFT study have profound implications. They collectively bring to light the vital role of both the coach, and the coachee, in the coaching dyad, how the antecedents to the coaching sessions themselves directly influence the potential outcome of



it, and highlight the critical dimension of how 'praise' is delivered and its impact on subsequent goal setting.

### **Feedback, Reactions to Feedback and IPT**

Feedback is at the heart of learning. Ashford (1986) asserted that feedback must be accepted and internalized before any behaviour changes. Braddy et al. (2013) assert that before any feedback is accepted, the recipient must first react to it. For consuming feedback, Liden & Mitchel (1985) demonstrated that an individual receiving positive or favorable feedback, was more likely to accept that feedback, while Brett & Atwater (2001) highlighted that negative feedback was perceived to be less useful to the receiver (Braddy et al. 2013). Atwater and Brett (2005) also found that study participants reacted more favourably to feedback about their strengths than to feedback on their deficiencies (Braddy et al., 2013). Linderbaum & Levy (2010) developed measures of feedback orientation, and a recent study by Braddy et al. (2013) demonstrated a correlation between IPT and achievement motivation (Locke & Latham 2013). In Braddy's study, those respondents with a higher feedback orientation score had a statistically significant positive correlation with achievement motivation and an incremental IPT. In a similar vein, they also found that participant's feedback orientation was also statistically significant and positively correlated with their reactions to their 360 feedback (Braddy et al. 2013). This corroborates the finding that participants with a high feedback orientation score would have an incremental IPT, as an individual with a growth mindset would see the feedback from a 360 review as a means to learn. In the literature, four studies have been conducted to explore and test the convergent validity of the Feedback Orientation Scale (FOS) developed by Linderbaum. The studies have shown validity with achievement motivation, IPT, emotional intelligence, positive effect, learning goal orientation and self-monitoring. From a work perspective, these studies have also shown positive correlations with feedback environment, feedback seeking or inquiry, reactions to 360 degree feedback, intentions to use feedback, participation in development,

received benefits of development satisfaction with performance appraisal, and role clarity. An unexpected finding from their study was that individuals with incremental IPT would react more defensively to feedback than participants with fixed IPT perspectives, the exact opposite of their hypothesis. To date, the FOS has not yet shown a direct relationship with supervisor ratings of the individual's task performance or leader member exchange, supervisor-rated participation in development, direct report ratings of leadership effectiveness, or coach ratings of the individual's openness to feedback, defensiveness, and likelihood of change (Braddy et al. 2013, p. 709).

### **2.5.8 Managerial Coaching in Sales**

Few studies have been done on coaching in a sales context, and have mainly focused on characterizing the attributes of sales leaders. Graham, Wedman & Garvin-Kester (1994) conducted a study of sales associates and sales managers to better understand the impact of introducing a sales coaching program on managerial coaching effectiveness. The goal of their study was to evaluate eight coaching skills and behaviours. While these coaching skills and behaviours were identified *a priori*, one of the key findings was that "the more insightful, genuine, and specific managers could be, the more effective they were perceived to be on the eight coaching skills." (P. 91). In contrast, Deeter-Schmelz et al. (2002) conducted a grounded theory study, using a value ladder approach, to identify key attributes of effective sales managers. Using this technique, ten attributes of an effective sales manager were identified, from which three themes emerged: 1) sales manager as communicator, 2) sales manager as motivator, and 3) sales manager as coach. Busch (2013) conducted a qualitative study to determine competencies of frontline sales managers in for-profit organizations. Using the DELPHI method, eight attributes were identified and clustered into three themes (Team Effectiveness, Personal Effectiveness, and Execution & Results), within

which, coaching was designated a competency to achieve team effectiveness. This hierarchy of attributes was not tested in the field with research subjects and could be a source of the variation between her study and that of Deeter-Schmelz et al. (2002).

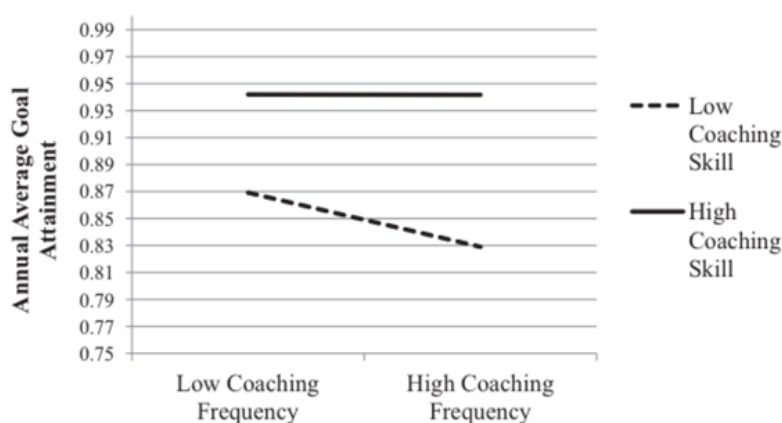
Other studies, such as Mosca, Fazzari, & Buzza (2010), have been more conceptual in nature, and have articulated the need for sales coaching. In their study, Mosca, Fazzari, & Buzza contend that the traditional approach of top down strategic management to achieve strategic sales objectives, is increasingly less relevant in a faster, decentralized sales environment. The authors argue that management coaching applied to sales is increasingly relevant, and is a critical enabler of achieving the strategic sales objectives and increasing sales employee empowerment.

There have been few empirical studies focused on sales performance and coaching. In 2011, Shannahan, Bush & Shannahan introduced new empirical research into the sales performance literature. In their study, they used an adapted measure of athletic coachability to evaluate sales coachability, in the language of sales behaviours and attributes. Their research identified that reps who are highly coachable, highly competitive and working under transformational leadership will outperform their peers. Their data also indicated that sales person coachability fully mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and sales performance, and partially mediates the relationship between competitiveness and sales performance. Their use of a new coachability scale is novel and warrants further attention.

Pousa and Mathieu (2014) conducted a study with a Canadian bank on the role, and ability, of coaching to increase customer orientation in sales reps. They found a direct link between coaching and performance, and that sales orientation and customer orientation have a

mediating effect on sales performance. In a separate but related study, Pousa & Mathieu (2015) investigated the role of managerial coaching on employee self-efficacy, and found that coaching can increase self-efficacy, which in turn creates higher performance. Dahling et al. (2015) studied the impact of managerial coaching skill and coaching frequency on sales goal attainment. In this study, the researchers found that coaching skill was positively correlated with annual sales goal attainment. However, this effect was partially mediated by team-level goal clarity. They also found an interaction between coaching skill and coaching frequency. For those managers with high coaching skill, whether they coached with a high frequency or low frequency, their sales teams performed the same, and it was significantly better than those managers with low coaching skills. But for managers with low coaching skills, the researchers discovered that there was a negative relationship between coaching frequency and sales performance. In other words, for these managers, as coaching frequency increased their team's sales performance decreased. The figure below is from Dahling et al. (2015).

**Figure 2-9: Interaction Between Coaching Frequency and Coaching Skill on Goal Attainment**



**Figure 2: Cross-Level Interaction of Managerial Coaching Skill (Level 2) With Coaching Frequency (Level 1) on Annual Sales Goal Attainment.**

Source: Dahling et al. (2015)

### **2.5.9 Summary of Managerial Coaching for Performance**

Managerial coaching is a means to an end. It is tool for managers to improve their employee's performance through the process of learning. Sales coachability (i.e. the willingness of a sales rep to learn new skills) has been shown to be a predictor of performance, and this mirrors the superior performance of a learning goal orientation that has been demonstrated in this literature review. Strengths based interventions are also an effective coaching method because they focus the employee's attention on activities that strengthen self-efficacy and self-regulation. However managerial coaching is not a tool to be used lightly. A manager that is not an effective coach can actually decrease the performance of their team by adopting more frequent coaching activities. On the other hand, if a manager is an effective coach, they don't need to coach as frequently to maintain high performance levels from their team.

## **2.6 Summary of the Literature Review**

This literature review covered three broad literatures that relate to the mediating and moderating factors of individual goal striving in sales teams and their role in managerial coaching for performance. By connecting the self-regulation literature with the goal setting literature and managerial coaching for performance literature, the theoretical landscape of this thesis has been sketched. The analysis of the case study will be grounded in the theories described here. And in so doing, a field study of self-regulatory constructs will be analysed, and propositions for a new integrated coaching model will be provided.

## **3 Research Methodology**

### **3.1 Chapter Overview**

This chapter sets the stage for the research and analysis conducted in this study. It begins by summarizing the gaps in the literature, describing the original research questions, and from there, an explanation of how the research questions evolved will be given. With the research questions set, the focus will shift to the choices made regarding the research design itself. This discussion will articulate the choices made regarding ontology, epistemology, research design, methodology, time horizon, units of analysis, data collection, and data analysis approaches for the study. The chapter will close with an overview of the participant characteristics and demographics. The goal for this chapter is to ensure that the reader understands the focus of the study, how the phenomena will be studied, and the characteristics of the research participants themselves.

### **3.2 Research Questions**

#### **3.2.1 Gaps in the Literature**

Pousa & Mathieu (2014) highlighted the fact that a number of leading researchers (Grant & Cavanaugh, 2004; Hagen, 2012; Hamlin, Ellinger, & Beattie, 2006; Mclean, Yang, Kuo, Tolbert, & Larkin, 2005, Cassidy & Medsker, 2009; Pousa, 2012; Pousa & Mathieu, 2014) have identified that the domain of employee coaching is in need of scientific rigour both for construct clarity and theory development (Pousa & Mathieu, 2014). Other researchers have also recognized the lack of construct clarity, and Gregory et al. (2011) called for control theory, a central principle of self-regulation, to be considered as a possible organizing framework for coaching. In addition, Turner and McCarthy (2015) highlight that there is little

evidence of the factors that influence the day-to-day decisions by managers to take advantage of coachable moments. This study examined all of these gaps.

### **3.2.2 The Penultimate Research Questions**

The initial focus of the study was to explore key factors that the literature had identified as influential in coaching and performance - goal setting, self-regulation and self-efficacy. To study these, action research methodology was chosen, with a plan to design and implement coaching interventions with the manager. The interventions were to focus on improving the manager's coaching effectiveness by introducing concepts and tools to improve the managerial coaching around these factors. To determine whether the coaching was having the desired effect, employee interviews would focus on their goals, their journey towards their goals, as well as the nature and quality of the coaching sessions. The original research questions were:

- 1) What influence does goal setting have in coaching for performance?
- 2) What influence does self-regulation have in coaching for performance?
- 3) What influence does self-efficacy have in coaching for performance?

The study began with an introductory workshop with the participants, in which they were given an assignment to set a business goal that they would work on in the first quarter of the study, and to meet with their manager to align around the goal. One month later, the first interview occurred with the participants at the Recruiting Company, and after these interviews it became clear that the manager did not regularly coach their team (see Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion of the interventions and evolution of the Action Research cycles). A major consideration at this point was whether it was realistic to assume that the manager would alter their coaching behaviour during this study. Ultimately, the conclusion was that

the manager would not likely change their behaviour, because the business pressures that were forcing them to not coach were unlikely to change over the course of the study. Thus, the central assumption that drove the intervention strategy was proven faulty and an alternative strategy needed to be created. The genesis of the new strategy came from the reaction of the participants during the initial workshop and first round of interviews. In these sessions, the individuals appeared to be truly interested in participating in the study; they were very open with what they shared during the interviews, and asked many questions during the workshop. This generated the impression that shifting the unit of analysis from the manager to the employees would yield a greater degree of 'action' in this action research study. It also increased the number of data points being gathered, because, instead of studying how two managers coached (and what affect it had on their team's pursuit of goals), the study could encompass how twelve individuals pursued goals, and what their experiences were. At the time that this decision about the focus of the research questions was being made, the study had not commenced at the Financial Services Company (FSC). In fact, there was a three-month lag in start times, so it was uncertain what the coaching situation would be at the FSC. Therefore, shifting the focus to study the individual ensured that the unit of analysis would be the same in both organizations, and allowed the set of AR cycles that had been initiated at RC to continue to unfold and directly informed the intervention strategy for the FSC.

### **3.2.3 The Ultimate Research Questions**

With the individual (employee) now at the centre of the study, the research questions shifted to focus on how they pursued goals. The interventions remained focused on improving goal setting, self-regulation and self-efficacy, however the target audience was now the employee (not the manager). The research questions also broadened somewhat, and they now investigated how an individual strove for goals, their experiences pursuing goals, the



characteristics of high performers, and what influenced a manager's choice to coach. As a result, the research questions evolved into:

- 1) How do individuals strive for goals in complex, uncertain environments?
- 2) What are the goal striving characteristics of high performing individuals in complex, uncertain environments?
- 3) What influences a manager's choice to coach for performance?

In summary, the shifting of the study focus to that of an individual's pursuit of goals, was an opportunistic choice. It acknowledged that one of the fundamental assumptions of the study was flawed (that the Recruiting Company manager regularly coached the team involved in the study), and therefore a change in focus was necessary. It was also 'classic action research', because new research questions were generated based on the emergent data. A fruitful, if unanticipated outcome of this choice to follow a new line of inquiry, was that by studying how individuals strove for goals, insights into factors that influence coaching and performance arose. These insights will be discussed in Chapter 5. A summary of the key gaps in the literature and the associated research questions to explore those gaps is presented in Table 3.1.

**Table 3-1: Summary of the Key Gaps in the Literature and the Research Questions**

Gap In Literature	Source	Research Question 1 How do individuals strive for goals in complex, uncertain environments?	Research Question 2 What are the goal striving characteristics of high performing individuals in complex, uncertain environments?	Research Question 3 What influences a manager's choice to coach for performance?
There is little evidence of the factors that influence the day-to-day decisions by managers to take advantage of coachable moments	Turner and McCarthy (2015)	N/A	N/A	✓
The domain of employee coaching is in need of scientific rigour both for construct clarity and theory development	Grant & Cavanaugh, 2004; Hagen, 2012; Hamlin, Ellinger, & Beattie, 2006; Mclean, Yang, Kuo, Tolbert, & Larkin, 2005, Cassidy & Medsker, 2009; Pousa, 2012; Pousa & Mattieu, 2014	✓	✓	N/A
The coaching for performance literature has recently called for control theory, a central principle of self-regulation, to be considered as a possible organizing framework for coaching	Gregory et al., 2011	✓	✓	N/A

### 3.3 Research Design

This section outlines the elements of the research design needed to study the experiences of individuals striving for goals, the characteristics of high performers, and what influences a manager's choice to coach for performance. As will be shown, the study was anchored by a subjectivist ontology and constructivist epistemology. A multiple case study was used to explore the research questions in two organizations, and was executed using an action research methodology. Semi-structured interviews were conducted over the course of a year in order to understand the experiences of the participants, while the data analysis was conducted using a *grounded approach* informed by both classic grounded theory and constructivist grounded theory methodologies. Table 3.5 provides a summary of the research design.

#### 3.3.1 Philosophical Discussion and Stance

Crotty (1998) offers a process by which the researcher may link their research methods with the research question(s). He suggests that the researcher begin their research design by focusing on a real-life issue, or important question that needs answered. With the practical issue clearly in mind, the development of the research objectives occurs through a process of re-examining the issue/question for any implicit assumptions. It is at this point that the researcher selects the methodology and methods to collect the relevant information. Crotty (1998) highlights that epistemological perspectives are embedded in the methods and methodological choices that are made to answer the research questions. In some cases, the goal may be objective, generalizable findings and as a result, data and statistical methods will be utilized. While for other research questions, the goal may be qualitative interpretation of a series of events, with the outcome being suggestive, rather than conclusive, and as a result a different set of methods are used. Implicit in this process is the fact that the researchers makes a series of choices in the creation of their research design. However,

Crotty (1998) is careful to separate ontology from his framework of choices. In his view, it sits alongside epistemology, and informs one's theoretical perspective, as ontology describes our understanding of *what is*, while epistemology explains *what it means to know* (Crotty, 1998). Others, such as Daly (2007), suggest that instead of focusing first on methods, the starting point should begin with the epistemological stance. Daly advocates for this position, because it allows a sense of integrity in the choices being made regarding one's values, beliefs and methodological choices. She suggests that from a practical perspective, being clear about the connection between epistemology, methodology, and methods also makes it more defensible. Lastly, Daly (2007) suggests that by bringing one's values to the fore, it reflects the postmodern perspective that science is influenced by specific values, political agendas, and competition for resources. What is clear from both Crotty (1998) and Daly (2007) is that whether one takes a top-down (epistemology – methodology – methods), or a bottoms-up approach (methods – methodology – epistemology), the goal is to describe the connections between the various choices, such that a reader can clearly see the arrows drawn between the various elements and that there is an integrity to the choices made throughout.

### **Ontological and Epistemological Choices**

The study was anchored by a subjectivist ontology and constructivist epistemology.

Ontology is the branch of philosophy that deals with the essence of a phenomena and the nature of its existence (Smon & Cassell, 2012). Crotty (1998) defines ontology as the study of being; in particular, it is concerned with 'what is' and the structure of reality. Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2013) outline four different ontological stances on the nature of existence: realism, internal realism, relativism, and nominalism. Realists, take the stance that there is a single truth and therefore facts can be examined, and are real. Internal realists, also adopt a view that reality can be measured, however those adopting this view recognize that these truths may be difficult to measure or assess directly and are pragmatic

about how to access the 'truth'. Relativists on the other hand, acknowledge that there are many truths, and that 'truth' depends on the viewpoint of the observer. The fourth ontology, nominalism, posits that there is no truth, and that the facts that are used to create 'truth' are the output of human creativity. Johnson and Duberley (2000) adopt a more parsimonious view of ontology, and articulate two broad viewpoints. The first being a realist ontology, which assumes a reality that exists *independent* of our cognitive structures, while the second is a subjectivist ontology, which presumes that the external reality is a *projection* of our cognitive structures, and therefore does not exist independently of the sense-maker. Within qualitative research, subjectivism dominates the ontological world view (Given, 2008). As noted by Given (2008), subjectivism embraces the subjective accounts of the research subject's experiences, psychology, and events, and seeks to understand these meanings and interpretations. However, it does not seek to compare their subjective accounts to other sources of information (such as other people's accounts of the same information), as this would challenge the active role the subject has in creating their own meaning. Within this ontology, the researcher builds a view of the world they see - regardless of whether this world corresponds to any reality beyond. The search for Truth, a universal principle or pattern, is not the goal of a subjectivist ontology. Rather it is to create 'little truths', which are culturally useful theories and findings (Given, 2008).

Subjectivism evolved as a reaction to objectivism. An objectivist paradigm, is rooted in the belief that a concrete, knowable reality exists. The role of (social) science here is to identify the patterns that already exist in the world through sustained, replicated, and accumulated effort, such that a set of generalizable laws or predictions can be made (Daly, 2007). With an objectivist worldview, the role of the scientist is to minimize any bias that might influence the data and the models that are subsequently derived. An opposing worldview is that of subjectivism. Within this paradigm, knowledge is constructed through a process of meaning-making, which occurs in the mind of the researcher(s). And because meaning is *created*,

different people, with different values, beliefs and experiences could develop different meanings from the same evidence. Because of this, a case study that is sensitive to subjectivities, can reveal meanings which may not be visible to objectivists and quantitative research methods (Mills et al., 2010). In direct contrast with an objectivist paradigm, a subjectivist's goal is not to reduce or eliminate 'bias', as this would be impossible given the inherent influence of a researcher's life history in their process of sense-making. Rather, it is understood that knowledge can have different interpretations, that the meaning generated is temporary, and the meaning ascribed can change based on different circumstances or conditions (Daly, 2007). These two positions (objectivism and subjectivism) can be thought of as either poles that are mutually exclusive, or on a continuum where gradients of subjectivity and objectivity coexist (Daly, 2007).

Epistemology is one's knowledge about knowledge, and one's perspective about how to best inquire into the specific research question at hand (Symon & Cassell, 2013). A discussion of epistemology however, exposes the fundamental *circularity* problem, which is that any theory of knowledge, presupposes knowledge of the conditions in which the knowledge takes place (Johnson and Duberley, 2000). These paradigms, or presupposed knowledge, can be beliefs, practices, and tools, however, Kuhn (1962) highlighted that the most important of these is the set of beliefs that frame the generation and interpretation of knowledge (Daly, 2007). In the context of (social) science, a paradigm describes the shared beliefs amongst its scientists about what *is*, and what *is not*; it also constitutes an appropriate set of procedures governing how to investigate the research questions, and perceive the answers to the research questions (Daly, 2007). In this way, paradigms directly inform perception, by informing the questions that the researcher investigates, and by what their previous experience within the paradigm has taught them. In this study, a subjectivist ontology was adopted.

## Constructivism

Constructivism was developed as a reaction to the use of positivism in the social sciences, and was firmly rooted in the notion that 'reality' is not objective. The central tenet of constructivism is the idea that meaning is socially constructed, and that meaning is given by people (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2013). It has been defined as a theory of learning, a theory of knowing, and as a paradigm guiding contemporary social science research (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). There are a number of variations and interpretations of constructionism that influence qualitative researchers, however in the social science literature that is relevant for action research, the constructivist paradigm views individuals as agents who actively construct knowledge, in contextually specific ways, that are based on their own subjective and intersubjective realities (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). Guba and Lincoln (2005) also highlight the constructivist's position that reality can only be known through multiple mental constructions which are local and specific in nature, and based on their experience and socialization. Because constructivism focuses on how people make sense of the world, especially through sharing their experiences with others via the medium of language, the goal of a constructivist researcher is to appreciate the different constructions and meaning that people place on their experiences, and to be aware that these interpretations can change over time. Guba and Lincoln (2005) caution that what researchers can know about reality, and the topics they study, is created through *their* interactions with the phenomena under study, the participants in the study, and/or other aspects of the research context (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). Charmaz (2006) similarly cautions that when taking a constructivist approach to research, social scientists must adopt a reflexive stance throughout the research process, to be aware of their own experiences, and how these may be affecting their actions (and interpretations). Action research and constructivist researchers have witnessed an interplay in recent years due to a resonance between their paradigms (Gergen & Gergen, 2008). These commonalities include: the collaborative nature, and intersubjectivity, of knowledge production; the re-envisioning of the

world through the subject's own language and rhetoric; a desire to increase the emphasis on usefulness and practical impact of the knowledge production; and a critical stance over assumed objectivity, in particular by reducing the distance between the researcher and the researched (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). Mills et al., (2010) have also highlighted that action research, conversation analysis, ethnography, clinical studies and group-based methodologies, reflexive interviewing, as well as visual and auditory elicitation techniques are all appropriate methods for constructivist epistemologies and case study methodologies.

In summary, this study adopted a subjectivist ontology and a constructivist epistemology, and as shown above, there is support for these philosophical stances in both case study methodology and action research methodology.

### **3.3.2 Overall Research Design – Case Study Comparison of Two Cases**

#### **Types of Case Studies**

Case study designs are used when the intensive and detailed study of a complex issue is required; case methods can also be single cases or multiple cases, depending on the goal of the study (Bryman, 2007). There are different types of case studies, which the investigator selects based on the research question they are interested in (Bryman, 2007). These are:

- The critical case, where the researcher has a hypothesis and a case is selected to illustrate the hypothesis;
- The unique case, where an extreme situation or 'outlier' is used to highlight a special case;
- The revelatory case, is used to illustrate a new or unique discovery that has not previously been studied;

- The representative or typical case, is used to represent and analyze common scenario occurring in an organization;
- The longitudinal case, which is used to examine how a situation changes over time.

Bryman (2007) also notes that cases may be quantitative, qualitative or both, can be cross-sectional or longitudinal in perspective. Cross sectional case studies are common, but for this study, cross-sectional designs were not considered. This was because a major limitation of cross-sectional studies is that they are not well positioned to describe processes over time, and why observed patterns are present in the data (Easterby-Smith et al., 2013). This limitation was particularly salient since this was an action research design, with the expressed intent of studying goal pursuit in individuals through a series of interventions over time. Therefore, a longitudinal case design was utilized.

### **Epistemology and Case Study Design**

Epistemology and case study design are related. Positivist case study researchers, such as Yin (2002), typically advocate for many cases, as it positions the researcher to demonstrate research quality using positivist constructs of reliability, external validity, internal validity and construct validity (Yazan, 2015). Yin (2002) also suggests that the design and implementation of the case study should be actioned with these positivist criteria of 'quality research' in mind (Yazan, 2015). Constructivist case study researchers, such as Stake (1995) and Eisenhardt (1989), focus on a few cases, or even a single case, and are less concerned with the challenge of positivists around validity. Instead their focus is on either instrumental or expressive studies. Instrumental case studies look at specific cases to develop general principles, while expressive studies look for unique dimensions, which may (or may not) be generalizable (Easterby-Smith et al., 2013). When adopting this approach to case study research, Stake (1995, 2000) highlights that one of the most important skills that



a case study researcher must have is the ability to define appropriate research questions (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Case studies can also be *intensive* or *extensive* in design. Stoecker (1991) suggests that intensive research designs focus on developing deep understanding of one or a few cases, while extensive designs seek to identify common patterns and properties across cases, with the aim of generating theoretical constructs that are generalizable (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Intensive case study research draws on the qualitative and ethnographic research traditions, with an emphasis on interpretation and elaboration of cultural meanings, and sense-making that is rooted in the context of the case. It is noted by its use of thick, holistic, and contextualized description, which Dyer and Wilkins (1991) argue should be 'a good story worth hearing' (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Stake (1995) argues that well researched and documented case studies create *naturalistic generalization*, whereby the evidence presented through intensive case studies resonate with the readers' tacit knowledge, and allows people to extend the insights from the case to other instances (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Extensive research on the other hand, is rooted in a positivist paradigm, with the goal of testing or extending prior theory, or generating new theoretical propositions (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Eisenhardt (1989, 1991) argues against extensive cases, due to the fact that *a priori* formal propositions can inhibit the exploration of the cases and the development of new propositions. Instead, she argues that the focus should be on developing tentative theoretical constructs to inform the study, and engaging in an iterative process to connect the data to the emergent theory. As new propositions are conceived, the existing cases should be reviewed through the new lens, and if these comparisons corroborate the emergent findings, then confidence in the propositions grows. Eisenhardt was inspired by grounded theory and its goals of creating middle range theory (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). As a result, Eisenhardt advocates the use of theoretical sampling in case selection, because it contributes to the theory building process (Ravenswood, 2011). Stake (1995) also supports a constructivist approach to case studies, an inductive approach to theory building, and has a preference for more direct interpretation

of the research materials (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Stake (1995) notes that the course of the study cannot be charted in advance (Yazan, 2015), and that the initial research questions may be modified, or even replaced during the middle of the study (Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012). As a result, Stake (1995) advocates for a flexible research design, and a 'progressive focusing' approach, which adopts a systematic narrowing and refining of the research focus, during fieldwork (Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012). Table 3.2 is drawn from Easterby-Smith et al. (2013), and summarizes the key differences between different epistemologies in the context of case study research.

**Table 3-2: Key features of case method informed by different epistemologies**

	<b>Positivist (Yin)</b>	<b>Positivist and Constructivist (Eisenhardt)</b>	<b>Constructivist (Stake)</b>
Design	Prior	Flexible	Emergent
Sample	Up to 30	4-10	1 or more
Analysis	Cross-case	Both	Within Case
Theory	Testing	Generation	Action

### **Positioning this Study in the Context of Case Method**

This study was an instrumental case that followed a constructivist epistemology. It was an instrumental case, because of the focus on working deeply with two organizations, with the objective of generating middle range theory. Important aspects of this study, such as the shifting of the unit of analysis from the manager to the employee, and adjusting the research questions based on the new evidence generated by the study, strongly align with Stake's interpretations of case method. This study has elements of both Stake and Eisenhardt's

constructivist approach to research. On balance however, the study had a somewhat greater alignment with Stake, due to the central role that iteration and evolution had in the implementation of the research design.

### **Quality in Case Study Research**

Determining quality in a case study is a result of the epistemological choices one has made in designing the study. For positivist case studies, quality is evaluated on construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability (Yin, 2009; Farquhar, 2012). However, for interpretivist case studies, a different set of criteria has been developed that more closely reflects the qualitative nature of the research. Guba and Lincoln (1982, 1994) developed four criteria (credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability) that allows the researcher to demonstrate the trustworthiness of their qualitative case research (Farquhar, 2012). *Credibility* is demonstrated through the use of appropriate and recognized research methods, as well as through the transparent sharing of background information about the participating firms or groups, and including evidence of how trustworthy data was obtained from the participants. *Transferability*, or generalizability/external validity as positivists would refer to it, focuses on the degree to which the findings from the case study can be transferred to other contexts or situations. Transferability can be demonstrated through 'thick description' of the study (the organizational setting, business problem and key actors) which allows the reader to make their own extrapolation of the findings to other settings. Transferability can also be demonstrated by placing the research in the context of a specific theory, and presenting strong arguments regarding how the research advances said theory. *Dependability* refers to the need of the researcher to modify their research design based on factors that emerged from new insights or challenges that emerged through the study. To demonstrate dependability, Shenton (2004) suggests: 1) at a strategic level, discussing the research design, what was planned and what was executed; 2) at a tactical level, discussing the operational details of data gathering, and exposing the details of what was done in the

field; and 3) conducting a reflexive analysis of the project, including a consideration of how the study was implemented. *Confirmability* is the fourth criteria. It requires the researcher to demonstrate that their findings were not overly influenced by personal values or theoretical positions. This can be done by highlighting alternative explanations that were considered, as well as through procedures such as triangulation, discussing the researcher's assumptions and beliefs, highlighting any study shortcomings and through the detailed description of research methods.

Golden-Beddle and Locke (1993) propose a somewhat different approach to demonstrating quality in qualitative research. They propose three criteria that are necessary to demonstrate validity - authenticity, plausibility, and criticality (Easterby-Smith et al., 2013). *Authenticity* focuses on convincing the reader that the researcher has a deep understanding of what was taking place in the organization, and that the researcher is being genuine to that experience. This parallels the positivist construct of internal validity (Farquhar, 2012). *Plausibility* necessitates that the research that is being conducted is linked to a relevant topic in the literature, and that it is presented in a way that generates a positive response in the reader to the question 'does this make sense to me?' (Farquhar, 2012). *Criticality* requires the author to present a new or novel insight from the research; one that forces the reader to question their assumptions. This is done both through the findings and discussion, but also through the form and style of the document (Easterby-Smith et al., 2013).

**Table 3-3: Summary of Quality Criteria for Interpretivist Qualitative Case Study Research**

Golden-Beddle and Locke (1993)	Guba and Lincoln (1992)	Criteria adapted from Positivism
Authenticity	Dependability	Reliability

Golden-Biddle and Locke (1993)	Guba and Lincoln (1992)	Criteria adapted from Positivism
Plausibility	Credibility	Internal Validity
Criticality	Confirmability	Objectivity
	Transferability	Generalizability

Source: Farquhar (2012)

### 3.3.3 Action Research Methodology

#### Defining Action Research

Action research's roots lie in the activist work of the American social scientist, Kurt Lewin, and the early pioneers at the Tavistock Clinic, in the UK. At the Tavistock Clinic, researchers focused their work on exploring important post-World War II societal issues, such as personal selection, treatment, and rehabilitation of wartime neurosis, and casualties and returning prisoners of war (Kagan, Burton, Siddiquee, 2017). In 1946 Lewin wrote a paper in which he advocated that research needs to aid society. He stated "*research that produces nothing but books will not suffice*" (Kagan, Burton, Siddiquee, 2017). This desire to conduct research that would lead to social action led Lewin to develop processes to understand a social problem by changing it and studying the effect (Kagan, Burton, Siddiquee, 2017). To do this, he proposed a cyclical, iterative approach to research involving planning what was to be done, taking action, and fact-finding about the results (Rose, Spinks & Canhoto, 2015). AR's activist roots continued to evolve, and Rapoport (1970) built on the spirit of Lewin and the Tavistock Clinic by characterizing AR's goal as "*to contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals of social science*"

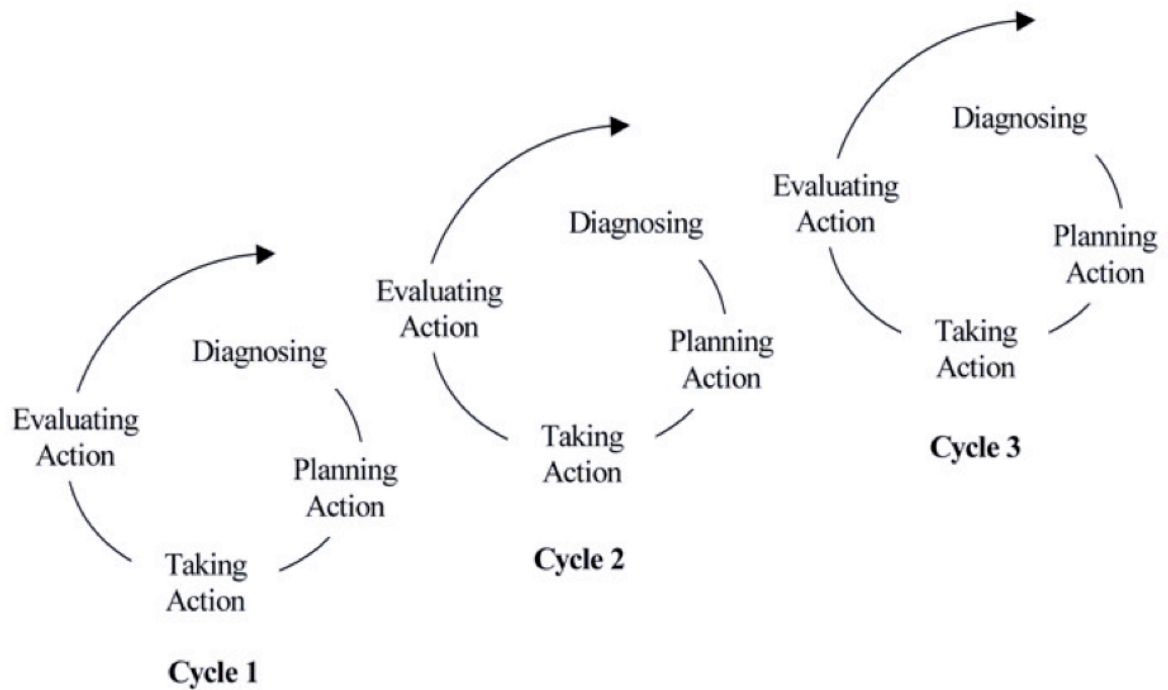
*by joint collaboration within a mutually acceptable framework” (Symon & Cassell, 2013).*

Reason and Bradbury (2001) provided their perspective on AR when they described it as “*a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes ... and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities*” (Symon & Cassell, 2013). AR has also been conducted in organizations, and Shane & Pasmore (1985) defined it in that context as “*... an emergent inquiry process in which applied behavioural science knowledge is integrated with existing organizational knowledge and applied to solve real organizational problems. It is simultaneously concerned with bringing about change in organizations, in developing self-help competencies in organizational members and adding to scientific knowledge. Finally, it is an evolving process that is undertaken in a spirit of collaboration and co-inquiry*” (Coghlan and Brannick, 2005, pg 3). It is this last definition that was utilized in this study.

### **The Action Research Cycle**

Action research is an iterative process of discovery which requires the active collaboration of both the researcher and the research participants. Coghlan and Brannick (2014) described the characteristics of the AR Cycle as: 1) research *in* action, rather than research *about* action; 2) a collaborative democratic partnership; and 3) a sequence of events and an approach to problem solving. Different authors have utilized different terminology to describe the action research cycle. Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon (2014) described it as a spiral of self-reflective cycles. These cycles contained the steps of: 1) planning a change; 2) acting and observing the process and consequences of the change; 3) reflecting on these processes and consequences; and then 4) re-planning; 5) acting and observing; and 6) reflecting. Coghlan and Brannick (2014) described a similar process of diagnosing the issue or need, planning the work needed to affect the issue, implementing the choice and finally, evaluating the results of the actions. This cycle would repeat throughout the study and is visualized in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3-1: The Spiral of Action Research Cycles (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014)



### Meta Learning Cycles in Action Research

Coghlan and Brannick (2014) state that in any action research project, there are two concurrent action research projects in play. The first is the core action research project (as shown in Figure 3.1), while the second is focused on meta-learning. This second AR project, is an action research project about the action research project itself, whereby the researcher is constantly evaluating the four steps in each cycle, and is evaluating how they have been executed and what can be learned about how to better implement the AR cycle. To aid in this process, Coghlan and Brannick (2014) suggest following Mezirow's (1991) approach to reflection which focuses on: 1) content, 2) process, and 3) premise. In Mezirow's model, content reflection is focused on the issues and what is happening in the project; process reflection is about strategies, procedures and how things are done; and

premise reflection focuses on a self-critique of the underlying assumptions and perspectives. This meta-cycle of inquiry is an essential element of the action research process.

For this study, Coghlan and Brannick's (2014) strategy was followed, and the AR cycles were analysed at both the level of the interventions and the level of the study itself. As noted by Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon (2014), the action research process was a spiral of learning and sense-making, and a detailed discussion of the AR cycles is provided in Chapter 4.

### **Quality in Action Research**

Coghlan and Brannick (2014) argue that action research requires its own quality criteria, rather than a set of positivist criteria. They highlighted a set of questions that were developed by Reason (2006) to identify high quality action research. These were:

- 1) How well does the action research reflect the cooperation between the action researcher and the members of the organization?
- 2) How well is the action research guided by a reflexive concern for practical outcomes towards organizational change or improvement?
- 3) Does the action research include a range of knowledge sources such as practical knowledge, propositional knowledge, presentational knowledge, and/or experiential knowledge. And does it do so with an appropriate methodology in order to ensure conceptual-theoretical integrity and extend our ways of knowing ?
- 4) Does the action research engage in significant work?
- 5) Does the action research result in sustainable change from the project?

Bradbury-Huang (2010) articulated similar views, that quality in Action Research proceeds from a praxis of participation, is guided by practitioner's concerns for practicality, is inclusive



of stakeholder's ways of knowing, helps to build capacity for ongoing change efforts, and is focused on those issues that the actors deem significant.

More recently, Scaratti et al. (2018) indicated four distinct and universal elements of good action research - situativity, relationality, transformativity and reflexivity. *Situativity* reflects the need for AR to engage directly with real, complex problems in their natural setting. It requires the creation of a deep relationship with the actors themselves, as their aid is essential in the identification, scoping and development of solutions. In addition, another critical reason to build a deep relationship with the actors is that meaning, and sense-making, is constructed with them, which in turn means that the knowledge generated is situated in their local context. *Relationality* deals with the establishment of good relationships with the actors; it is an important quality of good AR because knowledge is generated through relationships with the various actors, and the engagement with their differing points of view. *Transformativity* reflects the bias for action in action research. Good action research therefore engages with the actors in a way that promotes an evolutionary shift from the existing conditions. *Reflexivity* is another hallmark of good AR, as it triggers a learning process for one's practices, and the meanings one attributes to them, which in turn informs the next learning cycle.

**Table 3-4: Definitions of Quality in Action Research**

<b>Coghlan &amp; Brannick (2014)</b>	<b>Bradbury-Huang (2010)</b>	<b>Scaratti et al. (2018)</b>
How well does the AR reflect cooperation between the action researcher and the members of the organization?	Proceeds from a praxis of participation	Relationality

<b>Coghlan &amp; Brannick (2014)</b>	<b>Bradbury-Huang (2010)</b>	<b>Scaratti et al. (2018)</b>
Is AR guided by reflexive concern for practical outcomes? Is the AR governed by constant and iterative reflection as part of the process of organizational change or improvement?	Is guided by practitioner's concerns for practicality	Situativity, Reflexivity
Does AR include a plurality of knowing which ensures conceptual-theoretical integrity, extends our ways of knowing and has a methodological appropriateness? AR is inclusive of practical, propositional, presentational and experiential knowing, and so as a methodology is appropriate to furthering knowledge on different levels.	Is inclusive of stakeholder's ways of knowing	Reflexivity
Does AR engage in significant work? The significance of the project is an important quality in AR	Helps to build capacity for ongoing change efforts	Transformativity
Does the AR result in new and enduring infrastructures? In other words, does sustainable change come out of the project?	Is focused on those issues that the actors deem significant	Transformativity

### 3.3.4 Methods Used

The unit of analysis in this case study was the individual. However, the focus of ‘the individual’ shifted depending on the research question. For those questions focused on goal pursuit, the individual employee was the unit of the analysis, while for the research question on the factors that influence a manager’s choice to coach, the individual manager was the unit of analysis.

Data for this study was collected via participant interviews, intervention workshops, through reflective thinking exercises, from the notes that were written after interviews, and the memoing that occurred during the coding process. Over the course of the year-long study, 41 interviews were conducted across the two organizations. These interviews occurred approximately once per quarter, subject to participant’s availability. At the Recruiting Company, each individual was interviewed four times over the course of the year; at the Financial Services Company, the number of interviews ranged from one to three, depending on the person (see Table 3.5). In all cases, the interviews were semi-structured, with the interview questions being sent to the individuals in advance. The interviews lasted between 30-60 minutes, and all interviews were recorded and transcribed for data analysis.

**Table 3-5: Interview Participation by Individual**

Participant	Company	Number of Interviews
ID 1	Recruiting Company (RC)	4
ID 2	Recruiting Company (RC)	4
ID 3	Recruiting Company (RC)	4
ID 4	Recruiting Company (RC)	4
ID 5	Recruiting Company (RC)	4
ID 6	Recruiting Company (RC)	4
ID 7	Financial Services Company (FSC)	3
ID 8	Financial Services Company (FSC)	2
ID 9	Financial Services Company (FSC)	3
ID 10	Financial Services Company (FSC)	2
ID 11	Financial Services Company (FSC)	3
ID 12	Financial Services Company (FSC)	2
ID 13	Financial Services Company (FSC)	1
ID 14	Financial Services Company (FSC)	1

As this study followed an action research methodology, seven interventions were introduced in order to better understand the coaching and goal striving process. The first intervention was designed prior to engaging the research participants, however the remaining interventions emerged as a result of direct and indirect feedback from the participants, participant observations, and personal reflection on the feedback that had been received. A number of interventions were structured in an action learning format, where the intervention concepts were introduced, and the participants had an opportunity to practice these concepts during the workshop itself. The workshop also included a group debrief exercise to allow the team to learn from each other and to create buy-in for each person to apply this intervention after the workshop. The nature and focus of each intervention are described in detail in Chapter 4.

An important part of this study were the reflective thinking exercises that were conducted. They were done at the conclusion of each intervention cycle, and combined observations from the intervention workshop with any insights that emerged from the interviews regarding how the individuals applied (or didn't) the intervention. By following Mezirow's content-process-premise structure, clarity was developed as to what the next intervention should focus on, and how to best introduce it.

The final element of data collection was the process of note taking and memoing throughout the study. After the interviews, any interesting events or notable insights were recorded. These notes were unstructured and written simply as a stream of consciousness to capture anything that seemed noteworthy. Often these notes were focused on unexpected reactions or comments that had been made during the interviews. A similar process occurred while engaged in the coding process. As each interview was read, and re-read, new ideas and flashes of insight would emerge, and these were noted. The memoing approach sought to capture ideas and to use these as a starting point for the creative process of model/theory

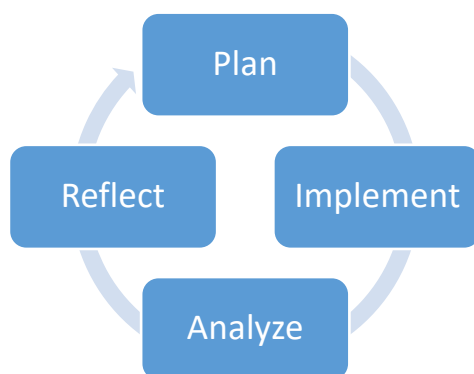
building. For a detailed explanation of GTM and its application in this project, please see Chapter 5.

### **3.3.5 Field Work Plan**

Because action research methodology was used to implement the research design, each intervention operated as a data collection cycle. The interventions themselves comprised a combination of interviews, action learning workshops, researcher directed interventions, and/or participant directed interventions. Each action research cycle followed the 'spiral of action research cycles' model (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014), and were operationalized through the following steps: planning, implementing, analysing, and reflecting. The planning step focused on establishing the goal of the intervention, conceiving the content of the intervention, the type of intervention, and the process by which the intervention would be implemented. This step also included managing the logistics of coordinating schedules, arranging meetings, developing interview guides, creating workshop content, and coordinating with the project champion at each organization. With these elements in place, the Implementation step began. This focused on executing the plan and gathering qualitative data (interview transcripts, workshop feedback, and researcher's memos). The third step, involved analysing the effectiveness of the intervention itself, and conducting a preliminary, high level, thematic analysis of the interviews. From an action research point of view, the intervention analysis was essential, as it informed the evolution of the subsequent interventions. While conducting the cursory analysis of the interviews allowed the exploration of whether any new lines of inquiry needed to be pursued, and/or whether any of the current lines of inquiry should be ceased. To identify new lines of inquiry, unusual responses to interview questions were highlighted and unexpected behaviours were noted. These prompted new thinking on why those responses were provided, and what changes

could be made to the next intervention. Lines of inquiry could also be stopped, if the feedback from the group was that the intervention was not useful, or if the feedback (or lack of feedback) from individuals about certain topics indicated that the topic was not important for them. The fourth step, which was reflecting on the intervention itself, allowed for a meta-analysis of the action research cycle. This step was conducted using Mezirow's (1991) content-process-premise framework, and the results from this step directly informed the planning for the next intervention. The steps in the action research cycle executed in this study are shown in Figure 3.2.

**Figure 3-2: Action Research Intervention Cycle**



### **3.3.6 Analysis Protocol – A Constructivist Grounded Approach**

#### **Thematic Analysis**

Thematic analysis should be seen as a foundational method for qualitative analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and is used to identify, organize and interpret themes in textual data (King & Brooks, 2018). It is an approach to data analysis that is part of a sense-making process used in many methods, including case study research (Mills et al., 2010). Boyatzis (1998) indicates that thematic analysis is a means of: 1) seeing, 2) finding relationships, 3)

analysing, 4) systematically observing a case, and 5) quantifying qualitative data. Thematic analysis is versatile, and can be applied across a variety of data sources such as: interview transcripts, field notes, research memos, participant diaries and journals, historical documents, drawings, maps, audio files and video files (Mills et al., 2010). Thematic analysis utilizes a process of coding to identify recurring themes, topics or relationships. These themes can be identified deductively, but more often are developed inductively (Mills et al., 2010). Determining whether a theme is present is highly subjective, and based on the researcher's judgement (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A positivist approach to thematic analysis can be undertaken by counting the frequencies of occurrence, while a constructivist approach would focus on interpreting the latent meaning of text (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A theme that occurs more frequently does not mean that it is more important, rather a theme is deemed important if it contributes something important relative to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis can be generic, such as the approach offered by Braun & Clarke (2006), or methodology specific, such as grounded theory methodology (King & Brooks, 2018).

### **Generic Thematic Analysis**

According to King & Brooks (2018), there are four generic types of thematic analysis: template analysis, framework analysis, matrix analysis, and Braun and Clarke's (2006) style of thematic analysis. All of these methods identify themes, code data to them, organize the codes into a hierarchical structure, and generate an interpretation of the data. King & Brooks (2018) indicate that template analysis is one form of thematic analysis and requires the development of a coding template, based on a subset of data, which is then applied to other data. The coding template, and coding hierarchy, evolves based on new codes that are identified, and as a result, a detailed set of codes are created. Template analysis does not prescribe a 'top-down' or 'bottoms-up' approach to coding. It allows the researcher to be flexible in their coding, mixing *a priori* codes with emergent codes, and therefore adopts a

pragmatic approach to coding. The process of coding continues until the final template hierarchy reflects their interpretation of the data. King & Brooks (2018) highlight that framework analysis was initially developed to strengthen the application of thematic analysis when working with teams (but can equally be used by individual researchers). In this method, the team of researchers develop an initial framework of themes and sub-themes to code the data set. With the full data set coded, or 'indexed', and the framework updated with any emergent codes, the researcher builds cross-tabulated tables to analyse the results. Matrix analysis is similar to framework analysis in that a series of matrices are generated from the coding to examine different aspects of the case study. This technique is used often in multiple case studies to ensure consistency of analysis across cases (King & Books, 2018). Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach to thematic analysis places more emphasis on inductive coding to identify latent meanings, but it is also possible to adopt a deductive approach to coding with this approach too. In their method, the researcher familiarizes themselves with the data, generates an initial set of codes, collates codes into themes, then reviews the themes and creates an initial thematic map. With the initial map complete, the researcher clarifies their thinking, finalizes their thematic map, and generates the final report which contains a selection of compelling examples that relate to their research question.

One of the benefits of generic thematic analysis is that it can be used with a number of theoretical positions, and therefore can be applied to a variety of research questions (King & Brooks, 2018). It is also a method that has both flexibility (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and structure, so that researchers can demonstrate a procedure by which their data was analysed. By developing themes and codes, this method also allows researchers to see both the common themes within the data, and hear the various voices of the data by examining the codes. However, the main critique of generic thematic analysis is that is a descriptive method of analysis, that does not lead to theory generation (King & Brooks, 2018).



With template analysis, framework analysis and matrix analysis, the emphasis is placed on the development of a code book through a combination of inductive and deductive processes (King & Brooks, 2018). But, with Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach to thematic analysis, there is a stronger emphasis on inductive code generation, and the development of a theme map to illustrate the relationships between the identified themes. Of all the generic types of thematic analysis, the method proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) most aligned with the subjectivist ontology and constructivist epistemology that this researcher brought into the study. However, before finalizing the data analysis method, methodological thematic analysis needed to be considered.

### **Methodological Thematic Analysis - Grounded Theory**

Grounded Theory (GT) was first articulated by Glaser and Strauss (1967) in their seminal book, 'The Discovery of Grounded Theory'. They described new methods of inductive theory generation (Mills et al., 2010), and described GT as 'the discovery of theory from data' (Thornberg, 2012). Their methods were a reaction to the logico-deductive approach to theory generation, analysis, and methods that dominated the social sciences in the 1960s (Grounded theory (Urquhart, 2013)). Glaser and Strauss rejected the logico-deductive approach because in their view, it exaggerated the importance of theory testing in science, and denied the role of inductive reasoning in theory development (Urquhart, 2013). Instead, they advocated an alternative approach to theory generation; one that occurred during the actual research itself. They believed that theory generation was a process, which was continuous, iterative and an interplay between the data collection process itself and the researcher's analysis of the data (Urquhart, 2013). In the time since The Discovery of Grounded Theory, researchers have continued to evolve these methods and the current view of GT is that it is an umbrella term to describe the many forms of GT that exist today, the four

main ones being Glaserian, Straussian, Charmazian and Clarkeian (Apramian et al., 2017; Urquhart, 2013).

Grounded theory has been embraced as a qualitative technique to analyze data by the broader qualitative research community (Urquhart, 2013). To aid researchers in their application of GT, Cresswell (1998) and Day (1999) summarized the key aspects and responsibilities in applying grounded theory methodology to their data analysis (Urquhart, 2013). They stated,

- The purpose of grounded theory methodology is to generate or discover a theory.
- The researcher must set aside theoretical ideas so that the substantive theory may emerge from the data.
- The theory examines how individuals (or 'entities', or 'unit of analysis') interacts with the phenomena under study.
- The theory asserts a plausible relationship between concepts and sets of concepts.
- The theory is derived from data acquired from fieldwork (interviews, observations, and documents).
- Data analysis is systematic and begins as soon as data is available.
- Data analysis proceeds through identifying categories and connecting them.
- Further data collection (or sampling) is based on emerging concepts.
- These concepts are developed through constant comparison with additional data.
- Data collection can stop when no new conceptualizations emerge.
- Data analysis proceeds from open coding (identifying categories, properties, and dimensions) through selective coding (clustering around categories) to theoretical coding.

- The resulting theory can be reported in a narrative framework or a set of propositions.

### Overview of the Four Strands of GT

While the principles of GT have been widely recognized, how they are applied, and the philosophical underpinnings of those choices, have generated the four different strands of GTM seen in the literature today (Apramian et al., 2017). The division began in 1990, when a schism occurred between Glaser and Strauss over how coding should be done (Urquhart, 2013). Glaser objected to Strauss and Corbin's (1990) prescriptive steps to coding (open coding, axial coding, selective coding and 'coding for process'). So insistent were Strauss and Corbin (1990) about their method that they stated, "*Unless you make use of this model, your grounded theory analysis will lack density and precision*" (Urquhart, 2013). This methodological requirement to code data in the manner set out by Strauss and Corbin (1990) was anathema to Glaser because it artificially forced a structure on the data, which he believed would lead the researcher towards the creation of theory that would be different had a more intuitive and inductive coding process been followed (Urquhart, 2013). The intuitive and inductive approach to coding (using open, selective, and theoretical codes) was central to Glaserian grounded theory methodology, as its core premise was the emergence of theory from the data, and this fundamental disagreement with Strauss and Corbin (1990) precipitated the split. Over time, Strauss and Corbin (1998) softened their stance on the necessity to code data using their four-step method, when they stated "*In actuality, the paradigm [the four coding steps] is nothing more than a perspective taken toward data, another analytic stance that helps to systematically gather and order data in such a way that structure and process are integrated*" (Urquhart, 2013). However, in defence of Strauss and Corbin's stance, Urquhart (2013) found that those who did use Strauss and Corbin's methods, were more likely to identify causal relationships between categories and build a substantive theory.

Glaser's stance has also evolved over time. When first articulated, Glaser's version of GT focused on an iterative, tentative and emergent coding and memoing process in search of one single category that unifies the themes identified through the coding (Apramian et al., 2017). However, in *The Grounded Theory Perspective* (2001), Glaser recanted on his earlier practice of searching for a single category to unify his coding as he believed it artificially constrained the understanding of the phenomena and forced it into a preconceived framework (Morse et al., 2016). He also ceased the practice of line-by-line coding, in favor of incident-by-incident coding, because he believed line-by-line coding generated a jumble of unconnected codes (Morse et al., 2016).

Other researchers have also deviated from Glaser's 'classic' grounded theory. Charmazian GT adopted a constructivist approach to coding data. This approach loosely follows Glaser's methodology, but differs from Glaser in that Constructivists see their analysis as interpretations of the data, or constructions, rather than 'discovered' from the data (Morse et al., 2016). Constructivist GT methodology researchers acknowledge that the theories they make are limited by their knowledge of the participants and the situations they are involved in, and therefore that their research should be positioned relative to the environment it was undertaken (Morse et al., 2016). Charmaz writes "Which observations we make, how we make them, and the views that we form of them reflect these conditions as do our subsequent grounded theories. Constructivists realize that conducting and writing research are not neutral acts." (Morse et al., 2016, p130). As a result of this highly interpretive approach, Constructivist GT embraces the abductive logic that Strauss emphasized in his early teachings and noted in *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists* (1987) (Morse et al., 2016). Abductive logic is an essential element of constructivist GT as it allows the experiences of the researcher, and their creativity, to be part of the iterative process of theory generation, which includes further investigation of their tentative hypothesis in order to arrive at plausible explanations of the phenomena under study (Morse et al., 2016). Charmaz

notes that because their theories are constructed from the data they gathered, and are influenced by their own experiences, Constructivists understand their generalizations to be partial, conditional and situated in the context that they were generated from and that they do this in order to build theory that has “*credibility, originality, resonance and usefulness, relative to it’s historical moment*” (Morse et al., 2016, p 139). In application, Charmazian coding focuses on line-by-line coding, and the use of gerunds (nouns that refer to an active state). This coding focuses on what is happening, and naturally leads constructivist GT to have a process orientation in its analysis, which in turn creates models that are created are rich with a sense of social, behavioural and psychosocial action (Apramian et al., 2017).

The fourth strand, Clarkian GT, focuses on situational analysis (SA) and is a post-modern approach to grounded theory and combines grounded theory with Strauss’ social worlds/arenas theory (Morse et al., 2016). In SA, the lens to develop grounded theory shifts from processes and actions (Classic GT) to the arenas, or social situations in which the phenomena itself exists. Arenas are conceptual frames in situational analysis through which analysis occurs of the collective actors and the larger context they operate in; arenas are both sites of action and discourse (Morse et al., 2016). It is the interaction between the arenas and the actors that is the strength of SA. Through the lens of symbolic interactionism, SA also places emphasis on studying non-human objects in the arena.

### **Utilizing a Constructivist Grounded Approach to Data Analysis**

Constructivist grounded theory methodology has a set of procedures, underpinned by it’s epistemology, that requires the researcher to follow. However, because action research methodology was utilized to generate the data, a significant portion of the data analysis did not begin until the study data collection window had closed. As a result, the data analysis followed a constructivist grounded approach, which focused broadly on inductive coding,

iterative re-coding and generating category and theoretical saturation. The seven stages of a grounded approach to data analysis were described by Easterby-Smith et al. (2013). The first stage was familiarization. In this stage, the researcher would review their notes, re-read the interview transcripts, examine notes from interviews, and review the outputs from the meta-analysis of the action research cycles. The second stage was reflection. This stage requires the researcher to compare their initial impressions of the data to other research, academic texts and their own experience. The goal in this stage is to become aware about whether the data that has been collected confirms existing knowledge, contradicts existing knowledge or addresses previously unanswered questions. The third stage is conceptualization. In this stage concepts that appeared to be important are given simple and precise codes, and these become possible explanatory variables. Cataloguing concepts was the fourth stage of grounded approach. In this step, focused codes are generated, which are more analytical and conceptual in nature. The focused codes may be organized in categories and sub-categories to show relationships. The fifth stage was re-coding, where an iterative process ensues to align the emerging understanding of the codes with the original text. This process of aligning text and codes would continue until the codes are saturated; that is to say when no new codes need to be created to reflect the meanings distilled from the various data sources. Stage six is the linking stage. In this stage, a new set of theoretical codes are generated through the use of abductive thinking, and these codes are related to each other as hypotheses or new theory. The final stage is re-evaluation, where the models and hypotheses are evolved based on feedback from others.

These steps reflected the process of sense-making undertaken during the grounded approach to data analysis. In practice, this process was highly iterative, at times overwhelming and the time spent in each stage was highly variable. Chapter 5 contains a detailed discussion of the coding process.

### **The Rationale for Utilizing Constructivist Grounded Theory For Data Analysis**

Braun & Clarke (2006) highlight the importance of the researcher matching their theoretical framework and methods with the questions that they seek answers for. For Braun and Clarke, it was important that the researcher acknowledge these decisions, and recognizes them as decisions. In this study, both generic thematic analysis as demonstrated by Braun & Clarke (2006), and constructivist grounded theory, were considered as possible data analysis methods. However, in determining which analytic method to adopt, four important factors were considered. The first was a desire to leverage analytical techniques that would mitigate any potential risk that through the action research process, the researcher had inadvertently influenced the responses the participants gave, and thereby potentially affected the models that were generated. The second factor was the degree to which the analysis method selected linked with constructivist epistemology. The third was the desire to have the voice of the participants clearly heard in research outputs. Finally, the fourth was a strong desire to create useful theoretical models that would contribute to both the literature and practice. Against this backdrop, both thematic analysis as described by Braun & Clarke (2006), and constructivist grounded theory, aligned with constructivist epistemology and provided the researcher with a technique. In terms of the second criteria, both methods allowed the voice of the participants to be heard, albeit in different ways. If Braun & Clarke's (2006) approach to thematic analysis was adopted, the coding would result in a set of descriptive codes that were organized hierarchically into themes, and the themes themselves would be constructed from the data. In this manner, the voice of the participant would be heard. However, a hallmark of coding in Charmazian grounded theory is the use of *gerunds*, and the coding of *processes*. This focus on coding for processes as opposed to descriptive coding was critical; utilizing Braun & Clarke's techniques might generate a code such as *awareness*, while using Charmazian grounded theory, one might instead generate a code such as *becoming aware*. From the perspective of this researcher, there is a remarkable difference between these two

codes. The explanatory power when coding with gerunds is greater than one without it; the gerunds create movement, they suggest direction, and they create new questions in the mind of the researcher to be explored. For instance, if the participants are *becoming aware*, what was the starting point of their awareness journey? Where is their journey taking them? What has happened on their journey? The realization of the power of gerunds was an important factor in choosing to use Charmazian grounded theory as the data analysis method. The power of gerunds also extended to the third personal objective of this study, which was the creation of useful propositions and models. From this perspective, grounded theory, and in particular constructivist grounded theory, was clearly stronger. Braun & Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis procedure allows researchers to describe the phenomena, develop codes/themes, and create a thematic map; so it in this way it meets the minimum standard for the second objective. But Charmaz's social constructivist approach to coding, and in particular, the use of gerunds in the coding, allows the models to become *dynamic*. The use of gerunds also extends to the visual linking of related constructed themes. In this case, related themes are connected with arrows, and a gerund is placed beside the arrow to describe the purpose of the arrow. This allows the meaning of the relationships between themes to be clearly stated, in the language of the participant. The use of gerunds could create models that were richer, thicker and deeply connected to the situation from which they were derived. In contrast, thematic maps developed from Braun & Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis procedure appeared sterile, and clinical. As a result, constructivist grounded theory was selected as the data analysis method, the application of which is highlighted in Chapter 5.



Table 3-6: Summary of The Research Philosophy, Strategy, Design, and Approach to Analysis

<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Research Question 1</b>	<b>Research Question 2</b>	<b>Research Question 3</b>
	How do individuals strive for goals in complex, uncertain environments?	What are the goal striving characteristics of high performing individuals in complex, uncertain environments?	What influences a manager's choice to coach for performance?
<b>Ontology</b>	Subjectivism	Subjectivism	Subjectivism
<b>Epistemology</b>	Constructivism	Constructivism	Constructivism
<b>Research Design</b>	Multiple Case Study	Multiple Case Study	Multiple Case Study
<b>Methodology</b>	Action Research	Action Research	Action Research
<b>Time Horizon</b>	Longitudinal	Longitudinal	Longitudinal
<b>Unit of Analysis</b>	Individual (The Employee)	Individual (The Employee)	Individual (The Manager)
<b>Data Collection</b>	Interviews, Reflective Thinking Exercises, Field Notes, Memoing and Observations	Interviews, Reflective Thinking Exercises, Field Notes, Memoing and Observations	Interviews, Reflective Thinking Exercises, Field Notes, Memoing and Observations
<b>Data Analysis</b>	Grounded Approach using 'Classic' Grounded Theory, Constructivist Grounded Theory	Grounded Approach using 'Classic' Grounded Theory, Constructivist Grounded Theory	Grounded Approach using 'Classic' Grounded Theory, Constructivist Grounded Theory

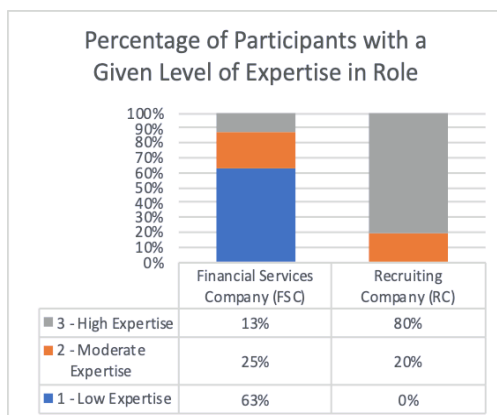
### 3.4 Overview of Participant's Characteristics

This study was conducted over a year-long period in two organizations. A total of two managers and twenty participants began the study; sixteen participants from FSC (1 manager and 15 participants) and six participants from RC (1 manager and 5 participants). Over the course of the study, eight participants from FSC left the study, while no participants from RC left the study. In both companies, the managers remained engaged throughout the study. 11% of participants from FSC were female, while 50% of the participants were female at RC.

**Table 3.6: Study Participation, by Research Site**

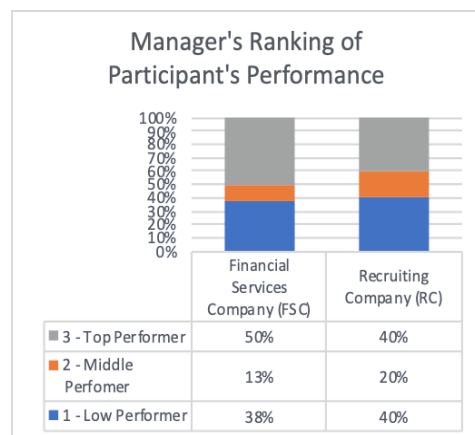
Research Site	Number of Participants			
	Start of Study	End of Study	Completion Rate	Attrition Rate
FSC	16	8	50%	50%
RC	6	6	100%	0%

Participants were also classified based on their level of expertise in the role. Time in role was used as a proxy for 'expertise level', because 'expertise level' was not directly assessed in this study. Participants with less than two years of experience were coded as having 'low' levels of expertise, those with 2-5 years of experience were considered having 'moderate' levels of expertise, while those with 5 or more years had a 'high' degree of expertise in the role. As shown in Figure 3.3 the participants at RC were very experienced, with 20% of the participants having at least two years of experience in the given role, and 80% having greater than 5 years of experience in their role. In contrast, at FSC, 63% of study participants had less than 2 years of experience in their roles, 25% had 2-5 years of experience and only 13% had greater than 5 years of experience in this or similar roles.

**Figure 3-3: Percentage of Participants with a Given Level of Expertise in Role**

Lastly, at the conclusion of the study, the managers of these teams were asked to qualitatively assess their employee's sales performance or recruiting performance, and invited to rank their team from best to worst. Based on the forced rankings and comments provided by the manager, the participants were categorized as either 'Top Performer', 'Middle Performer' or 'Low Performer'. At FSC, the manager classified 38% of their team as low performers, and 50% of the team as Top Performers. At RC, the manager assessed 40% of the team as Low Performers and 40% of the team as Top Performers. Both managers assessed a relatively small percentage of individuals as 'Middle Performers'. Figure 3.4 visually depicts these assessments.

**Figure 3-4: Manager's Relative Ranking of Employee Performance**



### 3.5 Potential Impact of the Researcher on the Data Collected

The primary sources of data used to build the models in this study came from participant interviews, where the researcher provided individual coaching, and from the workshop-based interventions, where group coaching was provided. While these were useful tools as an action researcher, it is possible that through these interventions, the participants could have perceived the researcher as a proxy for management. It is also possible that because of this, they could have made a choice to modify their behaviours and/or responses to questions, in

order to provide what 'management would want to hear'. If truthful responses were not provided, then the analysis that was completed, and the models that were developed, would reflect this bias also. It was important for the action researcher to be aware of their role, and possible influence in the study. An essential way to become more aware of this risk, was to incorporate reflective thinking practices into the study. Reflective thinking is an integral part of action research methodology, and by using Mezirow's (1991) Content-Process-Premise framework, each intervention underwent critical self-reflection. A meta-reflection on the project itself was also carried out, as prescribed by Coghlan and Brannick (2014). A more detailed discussion of this risk is provided in the Limitations section of Chapter 6.

### **3.6 Chapter Summary**

This chapter provided a description of the evolution of the research questions, the research methodology utilized to investigate the study of individual goal striving, and its implications for managerial coaching for performance. As shown in this chapter, this study coalesced around three research questions:

- 1) How do individuals strive for goals in complex, uncertain environments?
- 2) What are the goal striving characteristics of high performing individuals in complex, uncertain environments?
- 3) What influences a manager's choice to coach for performance?

From an ontological perspective, the study adopted a subjectivist point of view, while the epistemology used in this study was constructivist. Data collection occurred through interviews, reflective thinking exercises, field notes, memoing and observations. Data analysis utilized a grounded approach infused with Glaserian and Charmazian grounded

theory technique. With the research design now articulated, the next chapter will focus on the key mechanism used to study how individuals strive for goals - the Action Research cycles themselves

## **4 Action Research Cycles**

### **4.1 Chapter Overview**

This chapter discusses the evolution of the Action Research (AR) cycles that occurred during the research project. It begins with an overview of the two participating firms and with the larger context set, a summary of the interventions used in this study will be provided. The discussion then shifts to the details of the four AR Cycles that were enacted. Each AR Cycle is discussed in detail and analysed using Mezirow's 'Content, Process, Premise' technique.

### **4.2 Overview of the Organizations Participating in the Study**

Two organizations participated in this year-long case study. The Recruiting Company focused on Business-to-Business (B2B) selling of recruiting services, while the Financial Services Company focused on Business-to-Consumer (B2C) selling of financial services. The following sections describe the two organizations in more detail, provide an overview of the scope of the study, the roles of the participants, and their reporting structure within the organization.

### 4.2.1 Organization 1: The Recruiting Company (B2B Sales)

#### Overview

This organization provides recruiting services for client organizations that require engineering, technical and IT professionals for full time or contract positions. They engage in B2B selling and compete with other recruiting companies to present the most qualified candidates to their clients. This organization tends to have long established relationships with clients, and harvests these relationships to fill its opportunity pipeline. While there is some hunting for new clients, the majority of business comes from existing clients.

The sales organization at this company is comprised of two types of roles, Account Managers and Recruiters. The Account Managers focus on key corporate accounts and identifying roles in the client organization that require specialized subject matter experts, or projects that need medium to long term contract staffing. They are responsible for providing relevant information about the roles and responsibilities of the positions, as well as other information about the company that would help the Recruiters find the best candidates for the client. The Recruiters focus on creating and maintaining a network of qualified candidates across a wide range of 'in-demand' skills and capabilities. Once a job posting comes through, the Recruiters are responsible to identify the best possible candidates, conduct screening interviews and reference checks to generate a short list of preferred candidates for a given role. Recruiters are also responsible to help prepare the candidates for their interviews and keep the candidate interested in the role throughout the journey from interview to offer. The Recruiting Company only gets paid if the client hires their candidate.

The majority of the pay for a Recruiter is from a fixed salary, however each recruiter has the opportunity to achieve a bonus based on placing a target number of the candidates at a

client. This bonus was developed to incentivize aggressive recruiting, and a high degree of cooperation between the Recruiter and the Account Manager (who is ultimately in charge of the client account). As a result, a highly effective Account Management and Recruiting team is essential to win in this competitive B2B sales landscape. This team-based dimension is a significant difference between the Recruiting Company and the Financial Services Company.

**Figure 4-1: Key Roles at The Recruiting Company Required to Successfully Win a Deal**



### Participants in Study with The Recruiting Company

The participants in this study, were limited to the Recruiting team at the Toronto office, who specialized in IT professionals, and the manager of the team. In total, there were five recruiters and one manager who participated in this study. All participants completed the study; there was no attrition. The Account Managers were not in scope for the study, based on the choice of the Client.

## 4.2.2 Organization 2: The Financial Services Company (B2C Sales)

### Overview

This organization provides financial services such as investments, retirement planning, tax planning, insurance and many other services for individuals. They engage in B2C selling,



and they compete with other financial services organizations to protect and growth their customer's wealth.

The sales organization at this company is comprised of one type of role, Financial Advisor. The Financial Advisor focuses on direct selling to consumers and as a result, prospecting for new business is a key aspect of their lead generation activities. A great deal of time is spent identifying, cultivating and developing new client opportunities because once a consumer chooses a product with a Financial Advisor, the likelihood of the client leaving for the competition is low. However, it is common for a client to purchase financial products/services from a variety of other Financial Services firms, thus the Financial Advisor must service their existing clients regularly, so they can protect their existing book of business and further develop the client relationship to potentially win other parts of the client's financial portfolio. The Financial Advisor spends most of their time in the field visiting clients, and tends to minimize their time in the office.

The Financial Advisor receives a minimum salary, with the majority of compensation being paid on commission from sales. In this study, the Financial Advisor's sales performance was solely dependent on themselves; they did not rely on the support of others to sell a financial service, and they owned the opportunity from lead generation to signed contract. This was a significant difference compared to the Recruiting Company, where sales performance required a team to work together to win. An additional difference was that most of the time of the Financial Advisor was spent outside of the office, or in their home office, whereas the Recruiters spent all of their time in the office.

### **Participants of Study with The Financial Services Company**

The scope of this study was limited to the Financial Advisors and manager of the Sales Division at the Toronto office. The Sales Division manager reported to a Regional Vice President, but studying this relationship (between the Sales Division Manager and the Regional Vice President) was not in scope for this study. A total of seven financial advisors and one manager completed the study. **Note, in October 2016 the Sales Division Manager resigned, and at the request of the Regional Vice President, this study was cancelled.**

## **4.3 Overview of the Interventions**

The goal of this section is to provide an overview of the interventions that were used in this study. It begins with the intervention concepts that were part of the penultimate research design. Then the interventions that were utilized in the ultimate research design will be discussed.

### **4.3.1 The Penultimate Research Design**

This study was originally configured to explore managerial coaching, and in the initial design of this study, it was envisioned that there would be three interventions focused at the manager. The interventions were conceived as a series of working sessions that would be designed to help the manager modify their coaching behaviours with their team. The topics of the working sessions were chosen to explore potentially influenced the relationship between assigned goals and performance. It was envisioned that the first AR Cycle would focus on managerial coaching to improve Goal Setting, the second AR Cycle would be on managerial coaching to improve Self-Regulation, and the third AR Cycle would be directed at

managerial coaching to improve Self-Efficacy. These topics were chosen based on models developed by Locke & Latham (2002) and Pousa & Mathieu (2015).

To implement the AR Cycles, it was planned that both the Recruiting Company manager and the Financial Services Company manager would receive the same interventions. At the conclusion of the study, it was envisioned that for each organization, a 'before and after' analysis would be conducted to assess the benefits of the interventions on business performance and the individual itself. It was also envisioned that by a comparison of the results would be conducted across the two companies, in order to generate initial interpretations on the transferability of findings from the study.

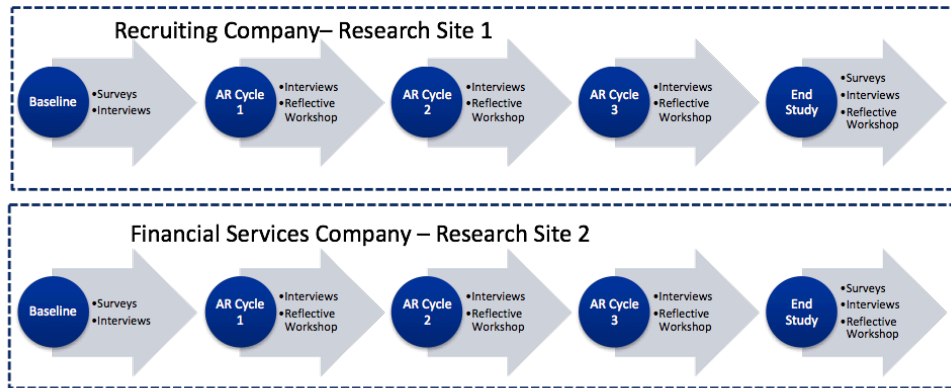
### **The Plan to Execute the Penultimate Research Design**

Prior to each working session, this researcher would prepare specific exercises to strengthen and develop the manager's coaching effectiveness based on the focus of the AR Cycle. In the working session, the manager would be exposed to any new concepts, and then have the opportunity to practice the skills being taught. After the working session, the manager would try to improve their coaching by utilizing the skills learned.

Based on the models of Locke & Latham (2002) and Pousa & Mathieu (2015), it was expected that these manager-directed interventions would lead to behavioural and/or performance changes in their employees. To assess this, at the conclusion of each AR Cycle, a reflective workshop would be conducted with the Manager and the employees that were participating in the study. In addition, each participant was to be interviewed using a semi-structured approach to gather data about the impact of the intervention on themselves. Based on the emergent findings from each cycle, the researcher would either continue with

the existing intervention or move onto the next intervention. The figure below depicts the conceptual plan that drove the research timeline and activities.

**Figure 4-2: Conceptual Plan for the Penultimate Research Design**

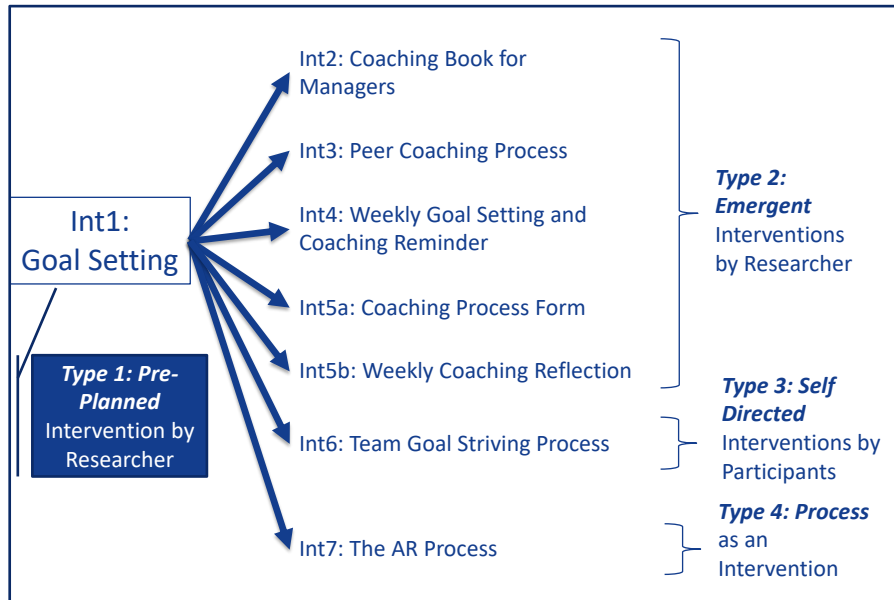


### 4.3.2 The Ultimate Design – Emergent Interventions and AR Cycles

This ultimate design comprised of seven interventions nested within four action research cycles. Four different types of interventions were utilized (see Figure 4.3): 1) pre-planned interventions; 2) emergent interventions; 3) self-directed Interventions, and; 4) process-as-intervention. Pre-planned interventions were those that were conceived of prior to the start of the study. They were planned in advance and in accordance with the original research design. Emergent interventions occurred as a result of interacting with the organizations and the participants. They were a reaction to the data and evidence that emerged from these interactions, and evolved with each action research cycle. Self-directed interventions were those that the participants themselves created and implemented on their own, without any involvement or direction from the researcher. Process-as-intervention was the fourth type. This happened through the structured process of reflection that occurred via interviews, exercises and group workshops. A synopsis of each interventions will be discussed below,

with a detailed analysis given later in this chapter. Figures 4.4 and 4.5 present the intervention timelines from this study.

**Figure 4-3: Interventions Utilized in Study**



### **Intervention 1 (Int1) - Goal Setting**

This intervention focused on Goal Setting. It was designed prior to the start of the study and was intended to: 1) set a common starting point for all participants on the role of goals; 2) have each participant select a goal to work on; and 3) provide an initial coaching focus for the manager. This intervention occurred as a workshop with the manager and the research participants at each company. The intervention occurred in Action Research Cycle 1.

### **Intervention 2 (Int2) - Coaching Book for Managers**

Because the manager of The Recruiting Company did not regularly coach the participants in this study, this intervention involved presenting a coaching book to each manager. The desired outcome of this intervention was to test how committed the managers were to

learning new coaching practices, applying new thinking to their coaching approach, and to determine if this would trigger a shift in coaching behaviour of the manager. This intervention occurred in Action Research Cycle 2.

### **Intervention 3 (Int3) - Peer Coaching Process**

Intervention 3 focused on introducing the peer coaching process explained in the book 'Time to Think' (Kline, 1999). Its creation was based on the feedback from participants at the Recruiting Company that the manager was not regularly coaching them. The goal of this intervention was to promote in-the-moment coaching from one peer to another. This intervention was introduced via group workshops at both organizations. This intervention occurred in Action Research Cycle 3.

### **Intervention 4 (Int4) - Weekly Goal Setting Reminder**

This intervention was designed based on feedback from the participant interviews that took place with The Recruiting Company. They had indicated that they needed reminding about their goals and tracking progress. This validated observations during the interviews that participants often appeared to be thinking about their goals and choices for the first time. As a result, a weekly email was conceived to maintain focus on their goals. This weekly email was focused on a specific theme or topic and included an inspirational quote related to the theme of the week. It also included a reminder about setting goals and reflecting on progress. This intervention occurred in Action Research Cycle 3.

### **Intervention 5a (Int5a) - Reflective Thinking on the Coaching Process - Coaching Process Form**

This intervention also emerged from participant comments during the interviews, that the interview questions themselves were prompting them to reflect on issues in a new way. As a result, an intervention was designed to formalize the self-reflection process through a structured template. This document was emailed weekly for one month in the subsequent group workshop, direct feedback from the participants indicated that Int5a was too much work and that they were not using it. This intervention was stopped, and a modified version was introduced in Int5b. This intervention occurred in Action Research Cycle 3.

### **Intervention 5b (Int5b) - Reflective Thinking on the Coaching Process - Weekly Coaching Reflection Email**

Int5b leveraged the insights that had been gathered from the positive feedback associated with the Weekly Goal Setting Reminder (Int4). As a result, the coaching reflection from Int5a was simplified and presented to the participants in a weekly email format. This intervention ran for one month. In the September 2016 interviews, participants shared that they were undertaking a reflective process when reading and reacting to the Weekly Goal Setting Reminder email. As a result, this intervention was stopped. This intervention occurred in Action Research Cycle 3.

### **Intervention 6 (Int6) - Team Goal Striving - Management Process**

This intervention was designed by the manager of the Recruiting Company. It was a self-conceived and self-directed intervention, and exemplified participative action research. In this case the manager assimilated all of his experiences from the interviews, group workshops and interventions, and combined it with his business acumen to launch his own intervention with a new team that he was asked to lead in Bangalore, India. This intervention

comprised of: 1) establishing a 'North Star' for the team; 2) developing a market centred strategy to win in targeted Canadian segments; 3) establishing specific goals focused on enabling the strategy; 4) having the local (Bangalore) team leaders running daily team meetings to review tactical progress towards goals, provide feedback on the outcomes of actions taken the previous day, and to make tactical choices on how to prioritize daily activities; 5) having the local (Bangalore) team leaders running weekly meetings to review progress against weekly targets, reflect on progress made during the week, and adjust goals and related plans for the upcoming week; 6) having local (Bangalore) team leaders visibly track goals in the workplace, and make achievement of incremental goals a point of celebration, and; 7) having the Toronto team coach the Bangalore team on any skill/capability gaps that emerged in executing the business strategy. This intervention occurred in Action Research Cycle 4.

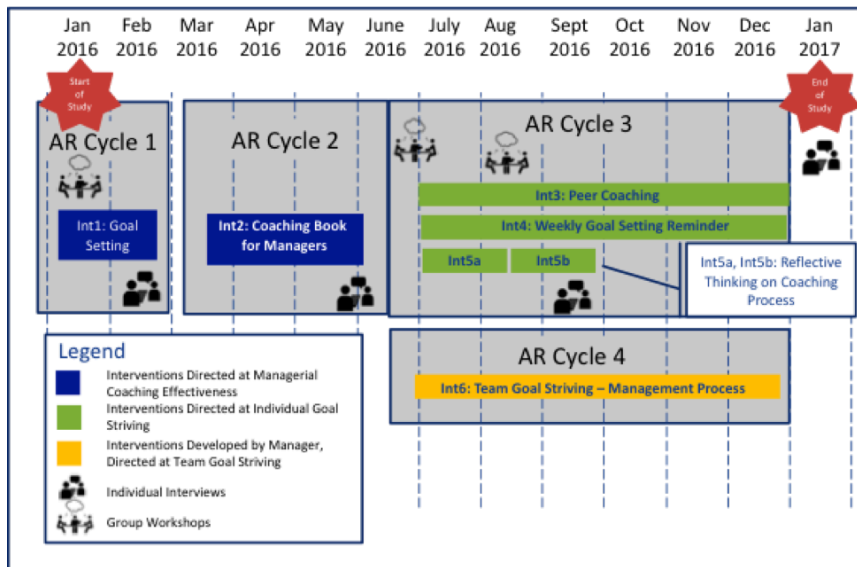
### **Intervention 7 - The AR Process Itself**

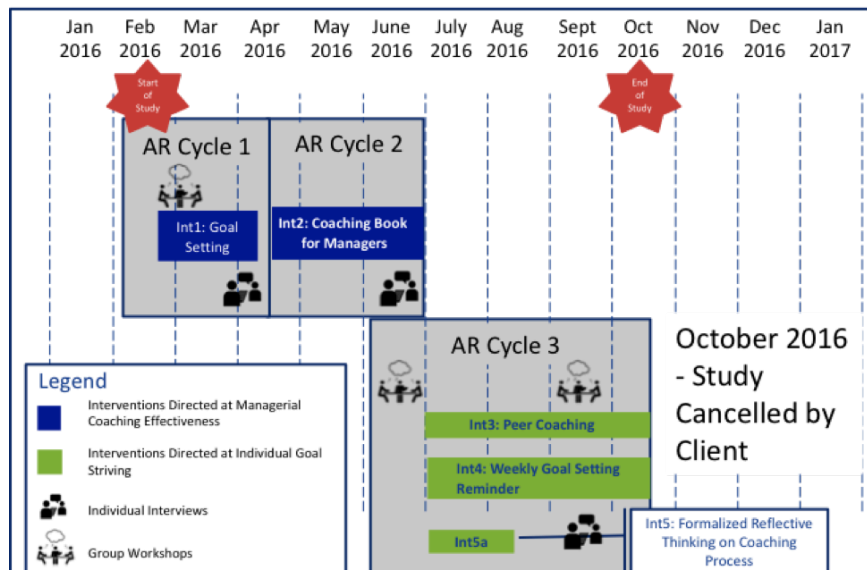
Aside from their use as a data collection tool, the group workshops and the interviews were essential interventions to maintain engagement with the participants and to provide just-in-time support on issues that the participants were facing in their goal striving. The workshops were the primary vehicle to introduce higher risk interventions. They were designed to create buy-in for the intervention by using adult learning principles to maximize group learning and provide hands-on experiences with the tools or ideas that were the focus of the intervention. From a change management perspective, the goal of the workshop was to generate belief that the intervention could work and therefore that the group would be willing to try it in their regular working environment. The interviews, and interview questions, played a different role; they acted as a custom intervention focused on whatever obstacles the participant faced and wished to work on during the interview. The interview questions prompted self-reflection, and created a shift of thinking in the individual by forcing them to examine themselves from a new perspective. The interviews were also a safe place to explore



deeper questions, and examine the world of the individual as they strove towards goals. The interviews became very personal as the individuals opened up about their challenges, and the coaching that occurred in these sessions often appeared to shift the awareness of the participants towards a path forward. Participants often commented that they appreciated being heard and that the time to think about these questions had been very rewarding for them. This intervention occurred throughout the study.

**Figure 4-4: Overview of the Intervention Timeline and Evolution at The Recruiting Company**



**Figure 4-5: Overview of the Intervention Timeline and Evolution at The Financial Services****Company**

## 4.4 Action Research Cycle 1 (AR Cycle 1)

This section describes in detail the elements of AR Cycle 1 (group workshop and interviews). It is followed by an analysis of the AR Cycle itself using Mezirow's reflective thinking technique (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). This section concludes with a summary of the key decisions that were taken based on the analysis and how they drove the design of the interventions in the next AR Cycle.

### 4.4.1 Purpose of AR Cycle 1

The purpose of the first action research cycle was to establish a baseline for the manager's coaching process, and to focus on the practice of goal setting. AR Cycle 1 also had another critical aspect - to build trust with the research participants and to create buy-in for the year-

long journey they would take. A pragmatic desired outcome of the workshop, was to enrol the participants in the study, because at this point, they had not signed up for the study; they were there at this session at their manager's request. To ensure that each participant enrolled of their own choice, informed consent forms were given out and the participants were told that if they wanted to participate in the study, they should accept a meeting request for the interviews that would be scheduled in one month and to bring the completed form with them at that time.

#### **4.4.2 Intervention 1 (Int1) - Goal Setting and Goal Striving Principles**

The focus of the first workshop was to teach core goal setting principles, and provide the participants an opportunity to set their goals for this research project. To do this, the workshop began with a description of what action research is, the roles and responsibilities of the researcher and the participant, and how the action research cycles work. Then, an overview of goal theory was provided, based on the work of Locke and Latham (2002). This included discussion on the purpose of goals, as well as the need to break big goals down into proximal goals. The participants were also exposed to the concept of self-efficacy, and its role in goal attainment. Lastly, two goal striving pathways were introduced to the group; the first pathway focused on the scenario where the route to the solution was known and the second pathway discussed how to approach the route to a goal when the steps forward were unknown.

#### **Moving from Theory to Practice**

With these key concepts articulated, the workshop shifted into an exercise to select a goal for the project, and break it down into proximal goals. The participants were given an example

and asked to use it as a starting point for their own exercises. The questions that were used to focus their thinking were:

- What is my overall goal?
- What strategies are needed to achieve my goal?
- What leading behaviours are required to enable my strategies?
- What tasks/activities do I need to get better at in order to achieve my goal?
- What are my core strengths?
- How can I leverage my core strengths to achieve my goal?
- What experiments can I run to help me learn faster?

At the conclusion of the exercise, a facilitated group discussion was conducted. To conclude the workshop, participants were asked to discuss their goal with their manager.

#### **4.4.3 AR Cycle 1 - Interviews**

One month after the workshop, the participants were interviewed. The questions in this interview were formulated to probe themes that the literature had indicated as relevant to goal setting, self-efficacy and skills and performance coaching. They were also designed to cast a wide net, so that the participant could elaborate their own point of view on the topics. The interview began with informal conversation and pleasantries. The first set of questions focused on getting to know the individual's strengths. This was done to put the interviewee at ease by allowing the individual to tell personal stories, but also because the literature has been clear on the need to tap into the strengths of an individual while engaging in skills and performance coaching (Tschannen-Moran, 2010). The next set of questions focused on understanding the goal they chose and how they would know if they were successful at

achieving the goal. This was followed by a series of questions that probed on their self-efficacy towards the goal, whereby individuals were asked about their motivation to achieve the goal, the clarity they have on the specific actions they need to take to achieve their goal, and their ability to complete those specific steps. The third set of questions focused on managerial coaching. Individuals were asked about how often they received coaching from their manager, whether they believed the coaching was effective, and what a successful coaching session looked like. Participants were also asked about their progress towards their goal and what, if anything, was preventing them from achieving it. The final set of questions revolved around the action research process itself, and the participants were invited to share what they wanted to gain from this study, as well as any insights this study had created for them. See Appendix B for a sample of Interview Questions.

#### **4.4.4 Analysis of AR Cycle 1**

Both the group workshop and interview from AR Cycle 1 were analyzed using Mezirow's 'Content, Process, Premise' technique for critical reflection.

##### **Content**

The first organization to proceed through the group workshop was the Recruiting Company. The content of the workshop was well received by the participants, and there were many questions about the theory that was presented. In retrospect, while the topics presented in the workshop were appropriate, the depth was too much. This resulted in the first hour of the two-hour workshop becoming more of a classroom session, rather than a brief parlay of key concepts that would launch the workshop exercises. Valuable workshop time was also consumed answering questions about the models presented, which indicated that the participants were interested in the content, but ultimately took time away from the exercises. The workshop exercises were well received and provided the participants with the

opportunity to practice the skills presented, however they would have benefited from spending more time on the exercises during the session itself. In preparing to conduct the workshop with the Financial Services Company, the main content change was to show less theory and in so doing, create more time in the workshop for the participants to engage in the exercises. These changes were applied for the workshop at the Financial Services Company, and the workshop went extremely well.

When considering the content covered in the Interviews, the question set covered the necessary range of topics suggested by the literature, and were open enough in their wording to allow the participant to have flexibility in their responses. Participants were not confused or resistant to the questions, therefore no changes were made, and the Financial Services Company received the same questions.

### **Process**

The workshop was designed based on adult learning principles, and had elements for kinaesthetic learners, auditory learners and visual learners. For the kinaesthetic learners, individual exercises were developed to explore the concepts; for auditory learners, stories and narratives were used to explain the theory provided; and for the visual learners, slides were presented with combinations of images and text on the topics covered. The choice to take the group through a workshop was the correct one. It was an efficient way to have the participants learn and apply new ideas, and provided the researcher the control needed to safely introduce the intervention, gauge response and deal with any concerns in the moment they were forming.

The improvement opportunity lay in the content design and the time management of the session. Too much time was spent discussing theory, and not enough time spent on the

application of the theory on the business goals that each participant selected. When considering the process of conducting the interviews, nothing needed to be changed after completing the interviews at The Recruiting Company. The interview questions were provided in advance and the hour-long interview was sufficient to both build rapport and allow a natural conversation to ensue while engaging in the discussion.

The use of recording technology during the interviews also proceeded without incident. A computer with an external microphone was used to record the interview, and the practice setups on how to operate the equipment ensured that there were no material issues operating the equipment on the day of the interview. From a process perspective, the interviews went very well, and no changes were implemented.

### **Premise**

In considering the content and process of the workshops and interviews, it became clear that the while not perfect, they were sufficient to build trust with the study participants, to explore the goal setting process, and to discover key issues that would affect the research design. Through AR Cycle 1 however, there were a number of 'Premises' that turned out to be false and these assumptions needed to be addressed in order to create a meaningful outcome from this Action Research study.

### **Assumption 1: Both Managers Will Coach Their People - Partially True, Partially False**

In the Recruiting Company, this turned out to be false. It was revealed in the interviews that the manager did not coach his team, as he was overstretched with his current responsibilities. The manager himself felt they were senior enough to not need individual coaching, and he felt that because he had a great rapport with his team, and an 'open door policy', that they would come if they needed help. However, the team recognized the

workload that their manager was carrying and also made individual choices NOT to go to the manager for coaching.

For the Financial Services Company, this assumption was true. The manager coached most of the individuals on his team, although participation in the coaching was optional and at the discretion of each person whether to take advantage of his 'coaching office hours'. The less experienced members of his team (i.e. Financial Advisors typically with less than five years of sales experience in the Financial Services industry) regularly took advantage of the coaching time, those with five to ten years of selling experience were less regular in the use of the coaching office hours, and when they did it tended to be on tactical coaching for very specific situations. The one Financial Advisor in the study with more than ten years of sales experience did not partake in coaching sessions with their manager.

**Assumption 2: The Manager Will Drive The Implementation Of The Intervention With Their People - False**

Both managers supported the research project, however there was no evidence that either manager visibly drove their people to action the activities from the workshop. During the interviews, there were no comments from either the participants, or the managers, about them driving the utilization of the intervention topics with their team. In essence, the managers at both the Recruiting Company and the Financial Services Company were passive participants in this action research cycle. This could have been due improper expectation setting on their role in the study, it could have been because both managers were busy running their business and as a result prioritized their time differently, or it could have been something else. But regardless, at this stage of the research project, the managers were not driving change.



**Assumption 3: The Study Participants Will Engage In The Action Research Process And Will Be Motivated To Apply The Content From The Workshops On Their Own - Partially True, Partially False**

Participants entered the first workshop curious about the study (most had never participated in a research study). The workshop was designed to build trust with the participants and created a vehicle for them to make sense of the purpose and scope of the study, clarify what was needed from them, as well as helping them to see the possible benefits they might obtain from participating in the study. As an experienced facilitator of workshops, the level of engagement in the exercises compared favourably to the level of engagement that is typically observed in other organizations implementing change programs. This led to the conclusion that interventions, done in a workshop manner, were an effective vehicle for introducing change.

It was expected that individuals would execute their post-workshop action plans. However, it was found that the implementation varied by individual. This variability was useful, and natural; it provided insight into how each person approached problem solving, dealt with uncertainty, and in the absence of a manager driving them to complete these items, began to illuminate how they strove towards goals of their own choosing.

**Assumption 4: Meeting The Participants Once A Quarter For A Group Session Will Be Enough To Catalyse Behaviour Change - False**

The research design called for interventions to be implemented every quarter using a two-hour group workshop to introduce the change, and provide the participants an opportunity to experientially learn how to use the new tools. What became clear through AR Cycle 1 was that without ongoing managerial action to implement the tools from the intervention, there was not enough researcher-participant contact time to create any meaningful behaviour

change; being present with the participants for three hours every quarter, was too infrequent and too diluted, for a dose of new thinking to have a sustainable effect on the participants.

#### **4.4.5 Decisions from AR Cycle 1**

By the end of AR Cycle 1, it was clear that something needed to change with the intervention strategy in order to explore the research questions. The following logic led to the redesigned interventions: 1) there was desire to have a consistent intervention strategy at both organizations, yet the RC Manager did not coach this team; 2) in the absence of the manager actively engaging in the goal setting process with their team (which was the deliverable from workshop 1), participants did whatever they thought was appropriate or required; 3) the research participants were willing to engage in the study; 4) the current frequency of contact between the researcher and the participants was insufficient to create any behavioural change, and; 5) to achieve the research objectives, a change was needed. These considerations led to the critical decision to shift the target of the intervention from the manager to the participant, and that the researcher needed to take a more prominent role in implementing the interventions.

Another choice made at the conclusion of AR Cycle 1 was to attempt one final intervention for the managers. The purpose of AR Cycle 2 was to determine if the managers would be willing to learn new coaching techniques and change their coaching patterns. Implementing this intervention would provide evidence whether the decision to shift the unit of analysis to the individual was correct.

The last key decision was to treat the interventions targeting the individuals as a portfolio, and to implement a set of related interventions that would be launched simultaneously (AR Cycle 3). This choice was made largely based on the time it was taking to design, implement and reflect on each intervention.

#### **4.4.6 AR Cycle 1 - Summary**

AR Cycle 1 was an intervention that exposed numerous assumptions and highlighted the need to be responsive to the feedback from the participants. It surfaced that the penultimate strategy was not going to yield the expected results, and that an alternative plan would be required. It highlighted the effectiveness of workshops to create buy-in and engagement from the participants, and forced a set of pragmatic choices to re-orient the unit of analysis to the individual. AR Cycle 1 began as a study of managerial coaching effectiveness and ended with a decision to shift the focus of the study to examining how an individual pursues goals.

### **4.5 Action Research Cycle 2 (AR Cycle 2)**

This section describes the elements of AR Cycle 2. It is followed by an analysis of the AR Cycle itself using Mezirow's reflective thinking technique (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). This section concludes with a summary of the key decisions that were taken based on the analysis and how they drove the design of the interventions in the next AR Cycle.

### **4.5.1 Purpose of AR Cycle 2**

AR Cycle 2 was designed as a final attempt to see if the managers involved in the study would be open to new ideas about their coaching behaviours.

### **4.5.2 Intervention 2 (Int2) - Coaching Book for Managers**

Each manager was given a coaching book – ‘Time to Think’ (Kline, 1999). They were not directed to use the concepts from the book with the team, but they were told that this book would help inform their coaching practice; it was a passive intervention. The desired outcome of this intervention was to test the degree to which the managers wanted to learn new approaches to strengthen their coaching, and whether that would trigger a shift in coaching behaviour. This intervention was not successful. The manager from the Financial Services Company did not read the book, and the manager from the Recruiting Company only read the first twenty pages.

### **4.5.3 Analysis of AR Cycle 2**

This AR Cycle was analyzed using Mezirow’s ‘Content, Process, Premise’ technique for critical reflection.

#### **Content**

While the content of the coaching book was powerful, presenting a 251-page book could have been overwhelming for the managers given their other responsibilities at the time. In addition, the managers might not have felt they needed this information and therefore did not

consume it. The content issue, along with the process of how it was introduced almost certainly guaranteed the failure of this intervention.

### **Process**

In hindsight, too many short cuts were taken in introducing this intervention. The managers were not explicitly told to read the book, nor to action it in any way. Neither was the book situated in the context of a clear problem that was relevant for the managers, and with a tangible benefit if they were to engage with the content of the book. This intervention was also not put into a structured action learning process for the manager to be exposed to new knowledge, engage in activities to apply this knowledge, gather feedback on their experience in using the knowledge in practice, and reflect on what they could change to create better outcomes. The group workshop from Int 1 was effective because it followed this pattern. Had the process for introducing the intervention been more rigorous, there could have been a different outcome for this intervention.

### **Premise**

A number of assumptions were made about this intervention.

#### **Assumption 1: Managers Will Read This Book Because The Researcher Told Them It Was Influential In Enhancing His Coaching**

In presenting the book to the managers, this researcher shared with them how it had helped evolve the coaching conversations that he had with his clients. It was assumed that the managers would be looking for ways to improve their coaching and that they would see this book as a 'gift' to improve their teams, and therefore that the managers would prioritize reading it. According to the Recruiting Company manager, he read the first pages but never

got back to the book, and the manager of The Financial Services Company never read the book at all.

**Assumption 2: The Managers Aren't Going To Change Their Behaviour, So Why Spend Time Trying To Convince Them That They Need To Change Their Coaching Behaviours For This Study**

This intervention was conceived as a 'last chance' for the managers to engage in the study. In a way, this became a self-fulfilling prophecy based on how this intervention was introduced. In hindsight, this intervention could have been a mechanism to engage the managers in honest conversations about how they coach. However, a desire to avoid confrontation (rooted in a fear that if the managers were pushed too hard, they would shut down the study) prevented an honest conversation with the RC Manager about his lack of coaching.

#### **4.5.4 Decisions from AR Cycle 2**

By the end of AR Cycle 2, the decision to direct the focus of the interventions on the individuals and how they strove towards goals was final. It was also decided that the interviews would be the mechanism to influence the manager's coaching behaviours.

#### **4.5.5 Summary of AR Cycle 2**

AR Cycle 2 focused on testing the degree to which the managers wanted to learn new approaches to strengthen their coaching, and potentially trigger a shift in coaching behaviour. It was not a successful intervention because of the content of the intervention and the process by which it was introduced. After this intervention the only attempts to influence a

manager's coaching effectiveness directly would occur in the interviews during when discussing the challenges that they faced.

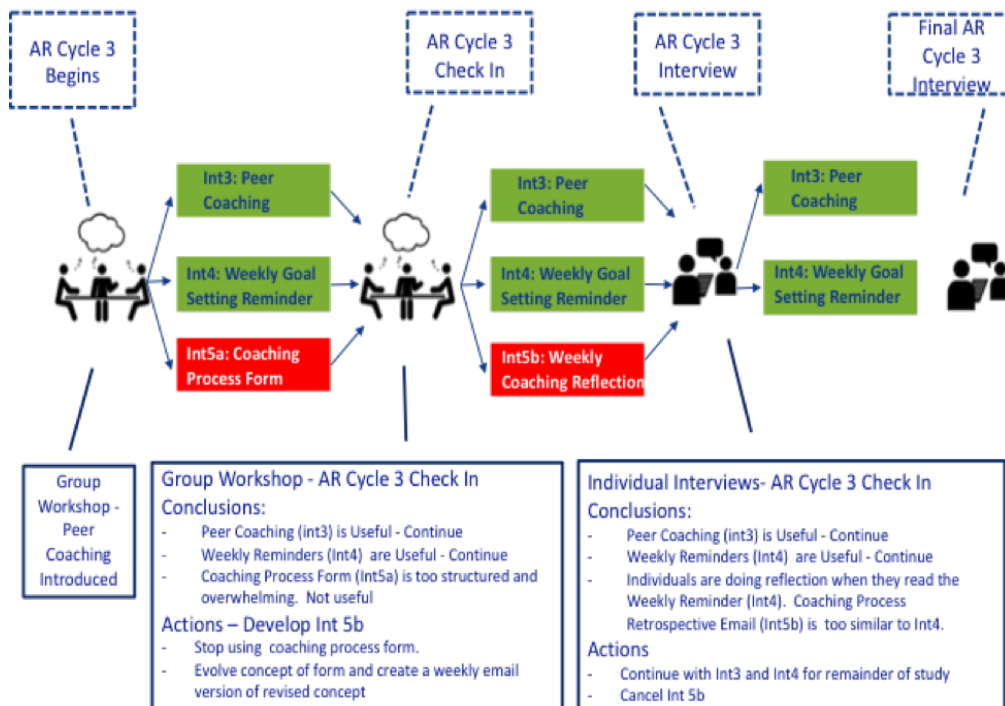
## **4.6 Action Research Cycle 3 (AR Cycle 3)**

This section describes in detail the elements of AR Cycle 3. It is followed by an analysis of the AR Cycle itself using Mezirow's reflective thinking technique (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). This section concludes with a summary of the key decisions that were taken based on the analysis and how they drove the design of the interventions in the next AR Cycle.

### **4.6.1 Purpose of AR Cycle 3**

In this AR Cycle, the focus of the study shifted from managerial coaching for performance to individual goal striving. To understand how individuals strove for goals, three related interventions were launched at both the Recruiting Company, and the Financial Services Company. The first intervention was Peer Coaching; this was introduced as a way to overcome the minimal coaching occurring at the Recruiting Company. The second was a weekly goal setting reminder to reinforce the creation of proximal goals, to increase self-regulation, and to create a reflective learning cycle with the individual. The third intervention focused on reflective thinking on the coaching process itself, and was introduced to have the individual become more purposeful about what they wanted to achieve with the coaching process. To support the implementation of this suite of interventions, were a series of workshops and interviews. Each of these interventions will be discussed in detail and Figure 4.6 shows the evolution of the interventions over this action research cycle.

Figure 4-6: Evolution of AR Cycle 3



#### 4.6.2 Intervention 3 (Int3) - Peer Coaching

Peer coaching was selected as an intervention due to the lack of coaching at the Recruiting Company. The benefit of this intervention was that those who needed coaching could get it (they could simply ask their peers for help), and it placed the control of the intervention directly in the hands of the participants. This intervention also played to a strength of the team - namely their tenure. Four of the five on the team had been recruiters for at least a decade, with a number of them having close to twenty years in the business. Even the most junior recruiter had been in the role for four years. They knew how to recruit, they respected each other as professionals, and peer coaching acknowledged this while allowing the individuals to tap into the knowledge of their peers. The third reason why this approach was chosen was that the corporate culture at the Recruiting Company was very open, innovative



and trusting. And lastly, this intervention was selected because the individuals on the recruiting team interacted with each other daily. Given that the Recruiting Company manager was overstretched and not spending time coaching the team to begin with, it was believed that the manager would welcome an empowered team who supported each other through a peer coaching mechanism.

### **Peer Coaching Intervention - The Use of 'Dialogue'**

The peer coaching process used in this intervention came from the book 'Time to Think' (Kline, 1999). According to Kline, successful peer coaching required a thinking partner who was a great listener and could create a 'Thinking Environment'. 'Dialogue' is the method that Kline developed to improve the listening between two people, and was the method of peer coaching introduced in AR Cycle 3.

### **What is 'Dialogue'?**

Dialogue is a process by which two people focus on listening to each other, and give each other time to think out loud about any issue they want. There are two roles - thinker and listener - and for the process to work, each person must perform both roles. The process begins with one person acting as the thinker, while the other takes on the role of listener. Often the process of Dialogue is used to help the thinker become clear about the key issue that is holding them back from their desired goal. Dialogue typically begins with the listener asking the thinker 'What would you like to think about, and what are your thoughts?'. This prompts the thinker into an active thinking mode, and the thinking process begins. The thinker can say whatever they want, but the listener cannot say anything (even if they believe they have an answer to the issue that the thinker is seeking peer coaching on). The listener is simply there to provide a supportive thinking environment for the thinker. When the allotted time is over, the thinker and the listener switch roles, and the process begins again. During the thinking time, the thinker can choose to write down their ideas as they are

generated, or can make notes at the end of their thinking time. The rounds of Dialogue can continue for as long as both individuals like. There is no expectation that the thinker will ask the listener for their opinions, but if the thinker wishes, the thinker may ask their peer 'And what are your thoughts?'. This question is the invitation for the listener to now share any ideas they might have on the topic.

The power of this form of 'peer coaching' is that it does not require the 'coach' to be the expert on the question. It only requires that the listener create a 'space' for the thinker to think. This 'space' takes the form of a physical space that respects the conversation, and making sure to have the Dialogue occur in an area where the thinking pair won't be disturbed. It is also a mental 'space', where the listener is free from mental distractions and thus is able to focus their energy on the thinker's thinking. The goal of the listener - the peer coach - is to allow the Dialogue process to help their peer answer their own question.

### **The Peer Coaching Workshop**

In designing the workshop, the exercises were built to take the participants through Kolb's model of experiential learning and to use the peer coaching process as a way to move through the reflective thinking and abstract generalization steps of that model.

The Peer Coaching workshop began with an overview of the process of Dialogue, and then shifted into two exercises with the group. The first exercise was a Dialogue on the goal they set. As a prompt for their thinking, the participants were invited to consider obstacles that presented themselves while trying to achieve their goal, what they learned about trying to overcome the obstacles, what assumptions they made about the journey towards their goal, and what they could learn from those assumptions. The last question they were asked to consider was how they could leverage any insights from this discussion in the future. The group then broke into pairs and engaged in a Dialogue with their thinking partner. When the

time for the Dialogue was over, a group discussion was facilitated on their experiences with the process of Dialogue, and then the group prepared for the next Dialogue topic.

The second Dialogue was focused on the coaching sessions they had toward their goal. To structure the thinking of the pairs, Mezirow's 'Content, Process, Premise' framework was utilized to guide their reflective thinking. From a Content point of view, participants were asked about the focus of a typical coaching session with their manager, whether it was successful and if they would do anything differently in the coaching session. From a Process point of view, participants were asked to reflect on how they prepared for a coaching session, how the coaching session was actually run and what they did after the coaching session. From a Premise perspective, the participants were asked if they had made any assumptions about the coaching process. After the participants engaged in the Dialogue process with these prompts, a group debrief was facilitated, and the participants created a list of actions to help them achieve their goal. They were encouraged to use their coaching sessions with the manager as a way to get support on these activities.

### **Summary**

This workshop was very well received, and the participants were highly engaged. They had the opportunity to experience the Peer Coaching process, and found it to be a worthwhile experience. At the Recruiting Company all participants in the study were present (including the manager), while at The Financial Services Company, only three participants were in the workshop and the manager was not present.

### **4.6.3 Intervention 4 (Int4) - Weekly Goal Setting Reminder Email**

One of the needs expressed by the participants during the interviews was the desire to be reminded more often about what they were supposed to do; a number of the participants

shared that they only started to think about the goals when prompted by the interview questions that were sent a few days in advance of the interview. Additionally, for some individuals, it appeared that the first time they were thinking about their goals was during the interview as they improvised answers to the questions.

A weekly email was conceived as a way to re-connect with the participants and to reinforce key messages about the pursuit of goals. The Weekly Goal Setting Reminder email was sent out every week starting early in AR Cycle 3. The email had four elements: 1) an inspirational quote to support goal setting, perseverance and motivation; 2) a set of suggested activities based on the topic of the week; 3) a series of questions to prompt reflection on what was accomplished in the previous week, and; 4) a call to action for the upcoming week. In addition, for two months, a peer coaching reminder was included with the weekly Goal Setting reminder as a way to reinforce the required activities of the peer coaching process. Examples of the Weekly Goal Setting Reminder email are included in the Appendix C.

#### **4.6.4 Intervention 5a (Int5a) - Coaching Process Review Template**

This intervention was developed to connect with Int4. While Int4 focused on the goal setting process, this intervention was designed to focus on gathering insights on the coaching process, and to prompt reflective thinking about the coaching session itself. To enable this, a template was created in MS Word and sent to the participants. Participants were asked to complete the form each week or after any coaching session they had. The form contained sections prompting thinking on the following topics:

- The goal they were working towards
- The desired outcome of the coaching session
- How long the coaching session was and who initiated the session

- The obstacles the individual is facing in the pursuit of their goal and any assumptions they are making about the obstacles
- Listing the next steps from the coaching session
- Reflecting on what worked well in the coaching session and what could have been made better

The Coaching Process Review Template was sent to both the participants from both organizations.

### **Group Workshop - AR Cycle 3 Check-In**

In the middle of AR Cycle 3, a group workshop at the Recruiting Company was organized to gather feedback on the Peer Coaching Process, the Weekly Goal Setting Reminder Email, and the Coaching Process Review Template. The workshop lasted one hour and was facilitated by the researcher. All the participants from the Recruiting Company were present.

The feedback from the workshop was the Peer Coaching process was useful. The group also found the weekly reminders to be useful. They liked the use of quotes, and the suggestive text in the Weekly Goal Setting Reminder email; they did not have any suggestions for improvement. On the Coaching Process Review Template, the feedback was that it was overwhelming, and they felt it would be too time consuming. As a result, not one person submitted a completed form during this research study.

The feedback confirmed that peer coaching should continue, as well as the Weekly Goal Setting Reminder email. The Coaching Process Review Template in its current form was cancelled, and in its place a simplified email version focused on reflective thinking after each coaching session was created. The desire was to test the modified version of the

intervention and gather feedback on its usefulness during the next round of individual interviews.

#### **Intervention 5b (Int5b) - Weekly Coaching Reflection**

Whereas the previous intervention (Int5a) had been a two-page MS Word template, this version of the intervention leveraged off the positive feedback that the participants gave on the use of email format. The text of the questions was rewritten in a more concise manner and presented to the participants in a weekly email. In total, four weekly-reminder emails were sent prior to the next round of participant interviews. During the interviews, the participants shared that this intervention was not helping them through the process to achieve their goal, and that they found the Weekly Goal Setting Reminder email (Int4) to be more useful. They also mentioned that the Weekly Goal Setting Reminder was already causing them to reflect on their previous week's performance, and they didn't need another reminder, especially when they had not achieved their weekly goal. As a result of this feedback, this intervention (Int5b) was stopped.

### **4.6.5 Analysis of AR Cycle 3**

This AR Cycle was analyzed using Mezirow's 'Content, Process, Premise' technique for critical reflection.

#### **Content**

This AR Cycle had three interventions - Peer Coaching (Int3), Weekly Goal Setting Email (Int4), Weekly Coaching Reflection (Int5a, Int5b). These interventions emerged as a response to the data that was collected during the previous two AR cycles.

### **Content & Process- Peer Coaching (Int3)**

From a content perspective, the peer coaching process was appropriate and well received by the participants of the Recruiting Company. It was a useful and appropriate for a number of reasons: 1) the manager was not coaching the group, 2) the group worked in the same office together every day, 3) the group trusted each other, and 4) the office had a highly collaborative culture. Conversely, this intervention was not as useful for The Financial Services Company, because the manager was coaching the sales reps, the sales reps operated more independently of each other, and many of the Financial Advisors were not in the office regularly. Unfortunately, there was not an opportunity to implement a revised coaching intervention in the last months of this study at the Financial Services Company because they indicated they no longer wished to participate in the study. At the same time, the feedback from the peer coaching intervention at the Recruiting Company was positive, and a decision was taken to allow it to continue through the final months of the study.

In terms of Process, the process of introducing this intervention was correct. Because it was a significant behaviour change, a group workshop was used to introduce and practice the techniques. It also provided the opportunity for peers to share their ideas and create buy-in for the adoption of the techniques. The negative with this approach was that only those who participated in the workshop had the knowledge to apply the technique.

### **Content & Process - Weekly Goal Setting Email (Int4)**

The Weekly Goal Setting Email was deemed useful by the participants. They shared during interviews that it prompted their thinking, and kept bringing them back to their goals and what they were trying to achieve. Sometimes this produced frustration when they hadn't achieved their goal due to reasons outside of their control, however the intention of the email was to 'hold a mirror' and allow the individuals to self-examine what they had accomplished and what they needed to strive towards in the coming week. From this perspective the content

was appropriate and achieved its purpose. The email contained the following elements: 1) an inspirational quote to support goal setting, perseverance, and motivation; 2) a set of suggested activities based on the topic of the week; 3) a series of questions to prompt reflection on what was accomplished in the previous week, and; 4) a call to action for the upcoming week. When asked which elements were found to be useful, the answers varied across the participants. For some participants, they loved the quotes because it fuelled their motivation, while for others the quotes didn't motivate them at all. In some situations, the prompts to reflect helped energize individuals to re-commit to their goals, whereas some individuals found the prompts de-motivated them. For some individuals, the suggested activities were actioned, while others simply read them, but did not action them. The key insight was that an email reminder going to a group audience needed to be relevant, yet general enough to touch on topics that would resonate with most, but not all, each week. The email served as a mechanism to prime the individual for action, yet not everyone shifted into action.

From a process perspective, this intervention was introduced shortly after the group workshop at the start of AR Cycle 3. It was sent to the group via an email that simply shared the rationale for its introduction. This was sufficient because the intervention itself was not onerous on the individual, was easy for the participants to do and as a result was readily accepted.

#### **Content & Process - Coaching Process Review Template (Int5a)**

This intervention came from the feedback of the participants after the Group Workshop introducing Peer Coaching, yet it was not successful. There were three reasons for failure; the first being that the content and format of this intervention were overwhelming; the second was that the form was not user friendly; and the third was the flawed process for introducing the intervention. The template was supposed to prompt a five-minute activity to reflect on the



coaching, yet navigating through the instructions, and the structure of the template itself, took almost five minutes. It turned people off. To make matters worse, this complex form was sent via email to the participants with the request to start using it. At the time, it was not recognized that the form itself could be a major part of the problem with this intervention.

### **Content & Process - Weekly Coaching Reflection (Int5b)**

After the group workshop, the Coaching Process Review Template (Int5a) was cancelled. In its place a much simpler email was created based on the structure and format of the Weekly Goal Setting Reminder email (Int3).

This intervention solved the 'process' issue of how the intervention was introduced, and it partially solved the issue of participants feeling overwhelmed by the content, but it didn't completely solve the 'content' issue. The remaining content problem came to light during the subsequent interviews, when many individuals shared that the Goal Setting Reminder (Int3) email was already triggering a reflection on their part. In effect, while Int3's intention was to focus on Goal Setting, it had an unintended impact of triggering their self-reflective processes. Thus, it was determined that Int5b was not needed, as the desired action (reflecting on the past activities in order to learn and adjust weekly plans) was already occurring and it was not generating a unique benefit for the participants.

### **Premise**

#### **Assumption 1 - If The Participants Ask For An Intervention, They Will Do It When Presented With It; How The Intervention Is Introduced Is Of Secondary Importance**

After the group workshop in June 2016, the participants at The Recruiting Company asked for interventions to help them with, 1) keeping on top of their goal setting, and 2) reflecting on the coaching process. They did not want to wait until the interviews to be reminded about

these activities. As a result, Int4, Int5a and Int5b were created. However, what was not fully appreciated at the time, was that *how* an intervention is introduced is critical to its adoption - even if the participants asked for the specific intervention in the first place. What was not realized was that the intervention rigor needs to match the degree of behaviour change that is being introduced. For minor behaviour changes, that are perceived as low effort by the individual (for example the Weekly Goal Setting reminder), a simple email can be sufficient. But for any other intervention that requires behaviour changes, a structured engagement process is essential to gain the buy-in for adoption. Having the right people in the workshop, and enough of the target population going through the intervention, was also key. At the Financial Services Company only three of the study participants came to the Peer Coaching workshop, and the manager was not one of them. As a result, at the Financial Services Company there simply weren't enough people exposed to the idea and how to apply the process of Dialogue.

### **Assumption 2 - Peer Coaching Would Be Useful At Both Organizations**

When envisioning the peer coaching intervention (Int3), it was believed that it would work at both organizations; perhaps not to the same extent, but that it nonetheless would generate a benefit that would make it worthwhile for individuals in each organization to use it to help achieve their goals. What was clear after the intervention was that the environments at each organization were very different, and that because many of the individuals did not work in the office regularly, the conditions were not right at the Financial Services Company for peer coaching to be effective.

### **4.6.6 Key Decisions from AR Cycle 3**

The broad conclusion from AR Cycle 3 was that the interventions were working for the Recruiting Company, but only partially working at the Financial Services Company. From an

action research point of view, the major decision that needed to be made at the halfway point of AR Cycle 3 was whether to introduce another round of interventions before the study ended. It was decided to maintain the peer coaching and weekly email reminders at the Recruiting Company for the balance of the study, and to shift the focus of the next set of interventions to improve the goal striving behaviours at the Financial Services Company. Unfortunately, this decision became moot, because the study was cancelled at the Financial Services Company.

#### **4.6.7 Summary of AR Cycle 3**

AR Cycle 3 focused on deploying a suite of inter-related interventions focused on individual goal striving. The interventions met with a range of results. Peer coaching was a very successful intervention at the Recruiting Company, yet was ineffective at the Financial Services Company. Weekly Goal Setting Reminders was useful at both companies and primed reflective thinking and weekly goal setting, but the degree to which an individual acted on that prime was highly variable. Formalizing the reflective thinking process through a template was deemed to be too burdensome; individuals wanted a quick and relevant way to think about what they had done and to plan their next steps. Feedback from the participants on the interventions showed that the translation to action was being held back by something. It was in AR Cycle 4 that visibility into elements that influenced individual goal striving would become clear.

### **4.7 AR Cycle 4 - Bangalore, India - Team Goal Striving Process**

This section describes the elements of AR Cycle 4. It highlights how this intervention was developed, and is followed by an analysis of the AR Cycle itself using Mezirow's reflective

thinking technique (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). This section concludes with a summary of the key decisions that were taken based on the analysis and how they drove the design of the interventions in the next AR Cycle.

#### **4.7.1 Purpose of the Intervention**

This intervention was designed by the manager of the Recruiting Company and exemplified participative action research. The manager implemented this intervention for the second half of this study. It was not applied at the Financial Services Company.

For the manager of the Recruiting Company, the interviews during this study, and the informal meetings that took place, became a way to talk through the issues he was facing. Through these, he obtained a third-party perspective to help him examine the challenges he faced, and generate options on how to overcome these. There were common themes that were discussed over the course of the various interviews. These included the need for activity based goals, the role and purpose of meetings, how to frame feedback in the context of winning in the marketplace, how to create an autonomous and accountable workforce, and recognize the difference between a problem to be solved and a dynamic tension to be managed. The conversations went deep, and examined the manager's role in creating the very problems he was complaining about. The dialogue in the interviews laid the foundation for the meta intervention that the manager designed and implemented in Bangalore.

AR Cycle 4 was an unintended action research cycle that came to light at the end of research study. During the last interview with the RC Manager, it was revealed that six months prior, he was asked to lead a new recruiting and account management team in Bangalore, India. From the manager's point of view, there was a 'green field' opportunity to

design and implement a new team based operating mechanism and coaching cadence. By reflecting on the learnings from the interventions in Toronto, as well as the insights from the informal coaching sessions that occurred during his interviews, the manager devised a meta-intervention with his new team in Bangalore. In the final interview of the study, he said,

“it was only about halfway through the study when I realized the scope of your study, and the importance. I've got to be honest, Paul, I feel like I wasn't on top of this for the entire study ... which is why I was like, 'Bangalore, you should see what we're doing in Bangalore' because I actually did listen, I just didn't get it [at] first...”

In reflecting on his role in the Bangalore and Toronto changes, the manager of the Recruiting Company said,

“the reason I was talking about Bangalore is, all of the mistakes I've made here [in Toronto], we fully implemented in Bangalore.... it's really working...The reason I'm a little sheepish about it is [that] I didn't implement it with this team [the Toronto team]... I didn't go full steam ahead with it the way I should have [with the Toronto team], and the way I did with Bangalore.”

#### **4.7.2 Intervention 6 (Int6) - Team Goal Striving - Management Process**

In designing this intervention, the manager reacted to the issues he observed with his Toronto team. There were issues of coordination, cooperation, and quality of feedback between the Recruiters and the Account Managers. There were issues around inconsistent flows of client related information that the recruiters needed to know to source the right candidate. There was a lack of alignment around the goals that the Recruiters and Account Managers were pursuing. Also missing was a coordinated strategy to win in the targeted

accounts and how to leverage the team's skills and know-how to beat the competition in the marketplace. Consequently, the manager implemented a management process in Bangalore to continually align his team around winning in the marketplace. He introduced the concept of a 'pursuit team' to break down functional silos and create a common purpose, namely the pursuit of opportunities in the marketplace. He articulated a clear strategy to win in the marketplace that clarified the expectations of each member of the pursuit team. He established a structured cadence of review to ensure that the necessary information was flowing across the pursuit team, and to enable timely tactical adjustments to their plans. He also introduced the concept of setting weekly goals, and made these goals visible in the workplace. At the end of the week, he instituted a 'retrospective' meeting, the purpose of which was to reflect on what was accomplished and what should be done differently in the following week. He implemented monthly and quarterly reviews to ensure that there was a formal checkpoint of 'planned vs actual' progress against budget. And lastly, if there were any skill or capability gaps identified in the management reviews, he had his Toronto based team provide training and coaching to the Bangalore team.

### **4.7.3 Analysis of AR Cycle 4**

This AR Cycle was analyzed using Mezirow's 'Content, Process, Premise' technique for critical reflection. Ideally this analysis would have been done with the RC Manager, however since access was not available, this analysis was conducted without his input.

#### **Content**

The content of this intervention was determined by the manager, and he focused it on resolving the issues he observed with the Toronto team. All of the content was selected to establish a goal pursuit process that would work effectively and eliminate the issues of

coordination, cooperation, and feedback quality that were present in the Toronto team. In this regard, the content of the intervention was appropriate.

### **Process**

The manager implemented the portfolio of changes as a system. He explained what he wanted to implement to the Bangalore based managers, and conducted regular conference calls with the managers in Bangalore to support them in the application of the goal pursuit system. This mechanism also enabled the oversight of the pursuit teams, and when specific issues arose, the RC Manager brought in the appropriate resources to support the Bangalore team in dealing with them. In this way, both the deployment of the system and the sustaining of the system were successful.

### **Premise**

As an outsider considering why this intervention was successful, one key insight emerged

### **Insight 1: A Management System Requires Manager Commitment And Direct Involvement To Be Effective**

This intervention demonstrated what was possible when a manager had a clear vision of a future state process, and a strong commitment to implement it. In this intervention, the RC Manager knew exactly what he wanted to accomplish and was driven to execute it. He was hands-on with the implementation and setup the various feedback mechanisms. This direct involvement was missing with the Toronto based interventions.

## **4.8 Quality and Rigor in Action Research**

The criteria for good action research were described in Chapter 3, and in particular, the criteria of Coghlan & Brannick (2014) served as a guide for this study. The first principle was

that the AR should reflect cooperation between the action researcher and the members of the organization. In this study, there was a very high level of cooperation. The information sharing in the interviews and workshops was very high, and this information directly influenced the design of subsequent AR Cycles. The second principle was that AR needed to be guided by reflexive concern for practical outcomes. The study was particularly attuned to this maxim; each intervention was derived from both the feedback of the participants, and the observations and professional experience of this researcher. The use of Mezirow's transformational learning process was also instrumental in bringing forward opportunities to improve. The interventions themselves were skewed towards practical tools, and when the interventions were impractical or difficult to use, the participants rejected them. In a sense, the interventions followed a Darwinian process, where only the practical and useful interventions survived. The third principle was the degree to which AR includes a plurality of knowing to ensure conceptual-theoretical integrity, extends our ways of knowing and has a methodological appropriateness. This criteria acknowledged that knowing takes on different forms, and that they all add value and are necessary to establish conceptual-theoretical integrity of the results. In this study, the models were developed through three forms of knowing - practical, experiential, and propositional. The primary source of insight was experiential, as the evolution of the interventions were based on the experiences, and feedback, of the participants (e.g., Peer Coaching and Team Based Goal Pursuit in Bangalore, India). Propositional knowledge (theory) was also present in the strategic decisions regarding the design and focus of the interventions. While the interventions became the vehicle to move from propositional knowledge to experiential knowledge. Practical knowledge was also present when the manager developed his intervention based on his experiences in the study, and his lived experiences as a practicing manager. The fourth criteria required the AR to engage in significant work. This study fulfilled this requirement by focusing on critical aspects of a business, namely, how to improve the achievement of individual goals, and the role of coaching in that endeavour. It was also



important by focusing the research on sales teams. Gaining insights into how to improve the effectiveness of individuals and managers working in this function is essential to business growth. The final aspect of quality and rigor in action research was that it led to new and enduring infrastructures. In the case of the Recruiting Company, transformative change did occur. This was best demonstrated by the changes that the manager implemented with the team in Bangalore. For the team in Toronto, team cohesion was improved, but during the study, no new infrastructures were implemented there. For the Financial Services Company, the declaration of direct benefits from the study was more difficult, because the study was cancelled before an intervention that was uniquely designed for their context could be implemented.

In summary, this action research project met the criteria for good and rigorous action research.

**Table 4-1: Criteria for Quality in Action Research, And The Practices Engaged In This Study**

<b>Coghlan &amp; Brannick (2014)</b>	<b>Demonstrated in Study?</b>	<b>Comments</b>
How well does the AR reflect cooperation between the action researcher and the members of the organization?	Yes	<p>There was a great deal of cooperation and participation between the participants and the researcher.</p> <p>This primary interactions occurred during the 41 interviews and in the six intervention workshops, where direct coaching between the researcher and the participants occurred.</p> <p>These events also allowed feedback to be given on the nature and effectiveness of the interventions. Which in turn directly</p>

Coghlan & Brannick (2014)	Demonstrated in Study?	Comments
		<p>influenced the design of future AR Cycles.</p> <p>However, the cooperation between participants and researcher could have been even greater had they participated in an explicit process of co-designing the interventions.</p>
<p>Is AR guided by reflexive concern for practical outcomes?</p> <p>Is the AR governed by constant and iterative reflection as part of the process of organizational change or improvement?</p>	Yes	<p>The interventions were designed to be practical. Each intervention was analyzed using Mezirow's (1991) transformational learning technique. Successful interventions were built upon and unsuccessful interventions were stopped based on feedback from the participants.</p>
<p>Does AR include a plurality of knowing which ensures conceptual-theoretical integrity, extends our ways of knowing and has a methodological appropriateness? AR is inclusive of practical, propositional, presentational and experiential knowing, and so as a methodology is appropriate to furthering knowledge on different levels.</p>	Partially	<p>Different forms of knowledge were used to develop the models in this study. These were largely experiential based, as the evolution of the interventions were based on the experiences, and feedback, of the participants (e.g., Peer Coaching and Team Based Goal Pursuit in Bangalore, India). Propositional knowledge (theory) was also present in the strategic decisions regarding the design and focus of the interventions. In this way, the interventions also became the mechanism to move from propositional knowledge, to experiential</p>

Coghlan & Brannick (2014)	Demonstrated in Study?	Comments
		knowledge. Practical knowledge was also present when the manager developed his intervention based on his experiences in the study and his lived experiences as a practicing manager.
Does AR engage in significant work? The significance of the project is an important quality in AR	Yes	This study focused on developing insights into a critical aspect of business, namely, how to improve the achievement of individual goals, and the role of coaching in that endeavour. It was also important because the research was focussed on sales teams, and any insights that can help grow the top line are incredibly useful for business.
Does the AR result in new and enduring infrastructures? In other words, does sustainable change come out of the project?	Yes	<p>This was a transformative project at the Recruiting Company. It improved team cohesion at the Toronto offices and by applying the lessons learned in Bangalore, the Toronto manager was able to implement an new management process to improve team performance.</p> <p>For the Financial Services Company, the direct benefits of the study were more tentative, because the study was cancelled before an intervention that was uniquely designed for their context could be implemented.</p>

## **5 Data Analysis & Model Development**

### **5.1 Chapter Overview**

This chapter begins with a description of the three phases of coding and outlines the abductive thinking process that was used to develop five theoretical models. The focus then shifts to the models themselves and elaborates how each was developed. The first model discussed is the 'Goal Pursuit Cycle', which provides a framework to understand the five elements present in goal pursuit. The second model, 'How an Individual Experiences the GPC' describes a more complex set of interactions around how an individual works towards a goal, and introduces Identity and Emotions as mediating variables in the Goal Pursuit Cycle. The third model, 'Positive and Negative Pathways through the GPC' focuses on the impact of positive or negative results on an individual's journey through the GPC, while the fourth model, 'The Top Performer Model', examines the traits of Top Performers in the GPC and synthesizes these down to four core attributes. The final model, 'A Manager's Pathway to the Coaching Moment' describes the enablers and barriers to coaching. The chapter closes with a case study analysis of how a high performer, and a low performer, moved through the GPC.

## **5.2 The Process of Applying Grounded Theory - Emergent Thinking, Coding and Model Building**

### **5.2.1 Phase 1 Coding - Open Coding**

At the onset of the analysis, both Glaserian and Straussian GT methodologies were considered because of their focus on inductive coding. Straussian GT was initially preferred because of its prescriptive methodology, but as critics of this approach have stated, it felt too constrained (Apramian et al., 2017). Having to code for Causes, Contexts, Contingencies, Consequences, Covariances and Conditions, seemed to superimpose a structure on the data that was artificial. As a result, the principles of classic Glaserian GT were applied to the coding of the data.

The coding began with incident-by-incident coding, rather than line-by-line. This allowed greater context to be associated with each code and allowed for a more interpretive code to be generated. For instance, by coding at the incident/event level, a code that focused on 'self-identity and choice making' emerged. In this example, ID 10 discussed his strategy to target High Net Worth clients. He stated,

"Sometimes persons who are younger may not be comfortable talking to a top CEO, and so they may plan their business differently as a result. But for me, working with the high net worth people is really where I am and what I've been doing from before I came [to Canada]. So, for me it's more of a natural fit."

Process codes were also generated. These codes focused on describing the various dimensions of how individuals pursued goals, and their lived experiences while doing so. One such process code was called 'Performance Goal', which was defined as a goal that focused on the achievement of an outcome. For example, the following text was coded as a 'Performance Goal':

"I would like to increase my contractor number by 4 contractors"

Overall, at this stage of the coding process, the goal was to simply develop a sense of the possible themes and meanings that were sitting in the data set. A mix of process codes, descriptive codes and interpretive codes were generated. And by following this process, 99 codes were generated from 41 interviews.

**Table 5-1: Example of Open Coding**

Open Code - Level 1	Open Code - Level 2	Description
Coaching	Coaching Initiated By Employee	The employee initiates the coaching conversation
	Coaching Initiated By Manager	The manager initiates the coaching conversation
	Formal	The coaching conversation occurs formally and is planned; is scheduled
	Informal	The coaching conversation occurs ad hoc; is not planned
	Highly Frequent Coaching	Coaching at least four times per month (once per week)
	Medium Frequency Coaching	At least once a month
	Low Frequency Coaching	Once or twice every 3-4 months (or less)
	None or Very Little	Once or twice a year
	Delegated Coaching	Coaching is delegated to an untrained subordinate
Barriers to Coaching	Coaching Impediments	Those barriers present for a manager to provide coaching
	Barriers to Seeking Coaching	Those barriers present that prevent an employee from seeking coaching
	Employee's Conscious Choice Not to Seek Coaching	Individual Doesn't Believe they Need Coaching
	Lack of Manager's Availability	Manager does not have time to coach
	Unconscious Decision to Not Seek Coaching	Individual doesn't realize they need coaching; they think they are ok
	Belief that People don't need it	Manager believes that the individual does not need coaching

### 5.2.2 Phase 2 Coding - Selective Coding, Generating Core Categories

The second phase of coding focused on sense-making and synthesis. It was an iterative process to rationalize the codes and create a logical structure that made sense based on the open coding that had occurred. The process involved moving, organizing, and synthesizing codes as the structure of the codes emerged. Since the study had evolved from managerial coaching to an individual's pursuit of goals, the core categories that were generated reflected

this fact; the selective codes that focused on goal pursuit were: Outcomes, Goals, Individual Pursuit of Goals, Team Pursuit of Goals. While the codes that focused on managerial coaching were: Coaching for Performance and Barriers to Coaching. Within each selective code were categories and sub-categories. The re-coding proceeded such that an incident/event could only be coded once within a sub-category. However, the incident/event could be coded across categories, as often an incident carried multiple meanings. Consider this extract from an interview with ID 8. She said,

“...I wanted 75 new clients by the end of the year. Due to my wonderful DDs, my formal one and my current one, I've inherited [old clients], plus my own clients, I think by the end of the week I'll have over 75.”

In this example, the extract was coded for both Outcomes>Positive (because ID 8 successfully achieved her annual goal) and was also coded as Goals>Goal Type>Performance Goal (because she had a specific goal that focused on an outcome). This process was carried on until the codes reached saturation where no new categories or sub-categories were needed to characterize the data. In total there were 6 core categories and 27 sub-categories that synthesized the 99 codes generated in the open coding phase. Table 5.1 highlights the final set of codes and their description.

Table 5-2: Phase 2 Coding - Generating Core Categories

Selective Code	Category	Sub - Category	Description
Outcomes	Mixed		The outcome of an activity or a decision was neither a clear success, nor a clear failure. Or the outcome of the activity/decision had aspects that were positive and aspects that were negative.
	Negative		The outcome of an activity or a decision was negative; a non-desireable outcome.
	Positive		The outcome of an activity or a decision was positive; a desireable outcome.
Goals	Goal Type	Performance goal	This goal focuses on the achievement of a goal that is an outcome of a series of activities. A performance goal can also be the result of achieving in-process goals
		In Process goal	This goal focuses on the leading behaviours or activities that are predictors of success.
	Goal Monitoring	Visible Monitoring	An individual visibly displays their goals and track progress towards goals (Ex: dashboards, notes on calendars etc..)
		Mental Monitoring	An individual mentally tracks their goals and progress, but does not display it
		Not Monitoring	The individual does not actively monitor progress towards goals
	Goal Pursuit Strategies	General Plan	The individual had a high level or conceptual plan
		Specific Plan	The individual had a specific or detailed plan
	Goal Revision	Goal Lowered	Based on performance feedback, the individual lowered their goal
		Goal Maintained	Based on performance feedback, the individual kept their goal at the existing level
		Goal Raised	Based on performance feedback, the individual raised their goal
Individual Pursuit of Goals	Ability to Influence Performance Outcomes	Out of My Control	The individual perceived the reasons for their performance as outside of their sphere of influence. They do not believe they can control or affect the desired outcome because of these factors
		Within My Control	The individual believes that they are able to control or positively influence the factors that led to performance outcomes
	Emotional Reactions	Positive Reactions	The individual experienced a positive emotional response to an event
		Negative Reactions	The individual experienced a negative emotional response to an event
		Mixed Reactions	The individual experienced a combination of both positive and negative emotional responses to an event
	Personal Strengths		Personal strengths that the individual self-identified or that the manager attributed to the individual
	Self Identity		Traits or characteristics that the individual self-identified about themselves
Team Pursuit of Goals	Team Goals		The role and impact of team goals on goal pursuit
	Information Sharing Amongst Team Members		The role and impact of information sharing on goal pursuit
	Team Interpersonal Relationships		The role and impact of interpersonal relationships on goal pursuit
Coaching for Performance	Personal Development		Coaching topics that focused on providing specific personal development to help the individual in their goal pursuit
	Tactical Guidance		Coaching topics that focused on providing specific advice on how to overcome obstacles the individual faced in their goal pursuit
Barriers to Coaching	Individual		Barriers that the individual faced in seeking coaching
	Manager		Barriers the manager faced in providing coaching

### 5.2.3 Phase 3 Coding - Focused Coding, Generating Theory

After the open and selective coding phases were completed, the emergent codes felt sterile and somewhat disconnected from each other. While they reflected the content of the data, they did not seem to capture the spirit of the data; it felt as if the voices of the participants



had vanished and their journey to achieve a goal was not obvious based on the codes. What was missing was a series of frameworks or networks to organize the selective codes, their categories and express the relationships between them. It was at this point that the coding process shifted from the pure inductive thinking of Glaserian GT into a Constructivist GT approach that, through the use of gerunds, allowed the voices of the participants to be elevated.

In order to apply the principles of Constructivist GT, abductive thinking was essential. The abductive thinking process began with a series of mind experiments to generate possible causal networks, frameworks, and models that reflected the spirit of the data, and allowed the individual voices to be heard. The triggers for these mental excursions were the outlier data points that had been observed during the data collection phase. To aid in the creative process, the outlier data points were reframed as questions. In total, five questions were used to develop the theoretical models. These were:

- 1) At the Recruiting Company, why did the team in Bangalore succeed, whereas the Toronto team did not?
- 2) Why did so many people tell stories about their personal history when asked their about their goals and/or progress towards goals?
- 3) Why were some individuals successful in achieving their goals, while others weren't?
- 4) Why did the FSC Manager coach frequently, while the RC Manager did not?
- 5) Why did the RC Manager avoid coaching his lowest performing employee?

To answer these questions, the coded responses were re-read, and rough sketches of potential relationships were developed. These conceptual sketches were rooted in the voices of the participants, this researcher's experiences with the participants during the

action research cycles and the professional and academic expertise that this researcher brought into the study. With a series of conceptual maps drafted, these emerging ideas were then tested by examining how various individuals moved through the models, which in turn led to a series of refinements to the models that reflected the learnings from the testing. The process of testing and iterating the design of the models continued until they captured the nuance of the data, and conceptual saturation occurred.

This coding process mirrored the process that Charmaz herself uses in her coding practice. For Charmaz, codes need to be useful starting points that enable explanation. In her view, the quality of a theoretical code is judged by the degree to which it creates 'conceptual reach' and has explanatory power (Bryant, 2017). Charmaz also readily acknowledges that her process for theory generation starts with a close reading of the data, and only then does she bring her experience and expertise into the construction of theory (Bryant, 2017). This researcher also followed this approach to generate theory. The first two phases of coding were necessary to organize the concepts that were present in the data; to get a 'close read' of the data. This provided a solid base to move into the creative work of applying one's experience, expertise, and respect for the data, to critically analyze and generate new theory.

The Focused codes that were generated through this process are listed in Table 5.2.

Table 5-3: Phase 3 Coding - Focused Coding, Generating Theory

Focused Code	Element	Sub Element	Description
<b>Structural Elements of the Goal Pursuit Cycle (GPC)</b>	Observed Gap		The Observed Gap is the difference between an individual's desired goal and their actual performance. This 'Observed Gap', must be measured (informally or formally).
	Feedback Mechanism		A feedback mechanism is required to transmit information about the Observed Gap to the individuals needed to act upon this information. This can take the form of reports and tracking forms, or meetings, standing agenda items etc..
	Gap Analysis		This is an assessment that the individual takes to understand the causes of the Observed Gap
	Options & Decisions		With the causes of the gap identified, the individual engages in a series of activities to generate options on how to solve the issues and makes a decision about which path to move forward with
	Actions		Once a path has been decided upon, the individual engages in activity to execute their action plan
<b>Experiencing the GPC</b>	Identity		An individual's sense of self and rooted in their strengths.
	Emotions		How an individual experiences the results from their activities; how they respond to the Observed Gap.
	Choices		The individual makes a series of choices about how to move forward in their goal pursuit. This includes choices in how they assessed causality for the gap, choices in how they seek paths forward and choices about whether to maintain or change their goal.
	Actions		Actions are at the heart of moving towards a goal. By implementing their choices, the individual moves through to the start of the next iteration in the GPC.
	Results		Results are the measured outcome of the actions. The measurements may be formal or informal, public or private. But for the GPC to function, a gap must be observed.
<b>High Performer Characteristics</b>	Goal Focus		The individual is completely committed to their goals and hold themselves accountable to the goal. They are self-motivated and have a burning desire to succeed.
	Persistence		The individual work each day on the tasks necessary to achieve their goals. They demonstrate personal initiative and strong work ethic.
	Reflective Thinking		Individuals regularly reflect on their situation to identify paths forward that empower and motivate themselves; able to move from 'the dance floor to the balcony'
	Growth Mindset		The individual seeks to improve themselves. They set specific goals to make themselves better. Stay positive during difficult times and regularly experiment in order to learn how to overcome obstacles.
<b>Engaging in the Coaching Moment</b>	Appetite to Coach	Degree to Which Employee Seeks Coaching	The manager's perspective on how often the employee seeks coaching
		Fear of Employee's Reaction to Coaching	The manager's fear of how an employee will react to the coaching moment
		Mental Energy for Coaching	The mental energy that the manager needs to have in order to engage in a coaching conversation
	Available Time to Coach	Effort Required to Action Other Business Priorities	The personal effort that the manager needs to exert to action the various business priorities that they have been given
		Manager's Span of Control	The number of direct reports that the manager is responsible for.
<b>Coaching for Performance</b>	Tactical Guidance	Client Strategies	Coaching focused on overcoming obstacles with clients
		Task Guidance	Coaching focused on how to perform specific tasks to the role
		Technical Skill Development	Coaching focused on technical skills needed to perform the role
		Implementation of Choices	Coaching focused on the actions needed to implement the choices and decisions made to close the performance gap.
	Personal Development	Mindset, Self Confidence	Coaching focused on improving the individual's mindset and self-confidence
		Self-Development	Coaching focused on improving the individual's leadership and other personal characteristics
		Interpersonal Skills	Coaching focused on improving the individual's relationships with others

## **Summary**

The process of applying grounded theory methodology evolved from classic Glaserian GT to Constructivist GT over time. Open coding and selective coding followed Glaserian GT, while the theory generation step followed Constructivist principles. The use of gerunds allowed the voices of the participants to be more clearly heard and created rich and complex models of individual goal striving and managerial coaching for performance. Table 5.4 indicates how the analysis of the data followed the principles of grounded theory.

**Table 5-4: Comparison of the Principles of GT and the Practices Engaged in this Study**

Criteria Number	GTM Criteria	Present in This Study ?	Comments
1	The purpose of grounded theory methodology is to generate or discover a theory	Yes	This study generated new theory in managerial coaching for performance.
2	The researcher must set aside theoretical ideas so that the substantive theory may emerge from the data	Yes	The original focus of the study was on coaching for performance. Self Identity, Self Regulation and Control Theory were not the focus of the study, yet these emerged as central themes from the data.
3	The theory examines how individuals (or 'entities', or 'unit of analysis') interacts with the phenomena under study	Yes	All five models that this study generated examine how the individual interacts with the journey of goal pursuit.
4	The theory asserts a plausible relationship between concepts and sets of concepts	Yes	The models generated by this study were causal networks and indicate relationships between concepts
5	The theory is derived from data acquired from fieldwork (interviews, observations and documents)	Yes	All five models that this study generated were derived directly from the interview transcripts and built using constructivist grounded theory principles
6	Data analysis is systematic and begins as soon as data is available	Partially	The first 'data analysis' that occurred was the researcher's self-reflection of the interviews and results of the interventions. These happened immediately after the interviews and prompted new thinking about constructs (ex: self identity) that needed to be explored. Mezirow's 'Content, Process, Premise' method of reflection was used to structure the researcher's thinking. However, the actual coding of data did not occur until the research study data collection period was over. This was a choice by the researcher, as the focus was on implementing an action research methodology, rather than GT methodology.
7	Data analysis proceeds through identifying categories and connecting them	Yes	Initial, open coding was completed, followed by the generation of core categories and finally theoretical categories were generated. The models generated arose from the core categories and were finalized during the process of theoretical coding.
8	Further data collection (or sampling) is based on emerging concepts	Partially	Interview questions evolved throughout the course of the study, based on the observations that the researcher had during the study. However, classic 'theoretical sampling' did not occur, as the coding of the data did not begin until after the data collection window was closed.
9	These concepts are developed through constant comparison with additional data	Yes	The coding evolved based on the process of constant comparison.
10	Data collection can stop when no new conceptualizations emerge	No	Data collection was stopped when the year long data collection window closed, not when new conceptualizations emerged. However, the concept of 'category saturation' was applied during the coding process to test the validity of the conceptualizations
11	Data analysis proceeds from open coding (identifying categories, properties and dimensions) through selective coding (clustering around categories) to theoretical coding	Yes	This is how the coding process was executed. Once category saturation was achieved, theoretical saturation was also demonstrated
12	The resulting theory can be reported in a narrative framework or a set of propositions	Yes	The integrative coaching model depicts the interactions observed in the data

### **5.3 Model 1 - The Goal Pursuit Cycle (GPC)**

This section describes how The Goal Pursuit Cycle (GPC) was developed, and then provides examples of how the elements in the model came from the responses from the individuals in the study.

#### **5.3.1 How The Model Was Constructed**

The GPC provides a framework to understand the elements present in an individual's pursuit of goals. This framework emerged from the descriptive and process coding that occurred. The selective codes of Outcomes, Goals, and Individual Pursuit of Goals provided the basis for the theoretical coding that generated this model. To generate the theoretical codes, abductive logic was required, and the following question aided in that process:

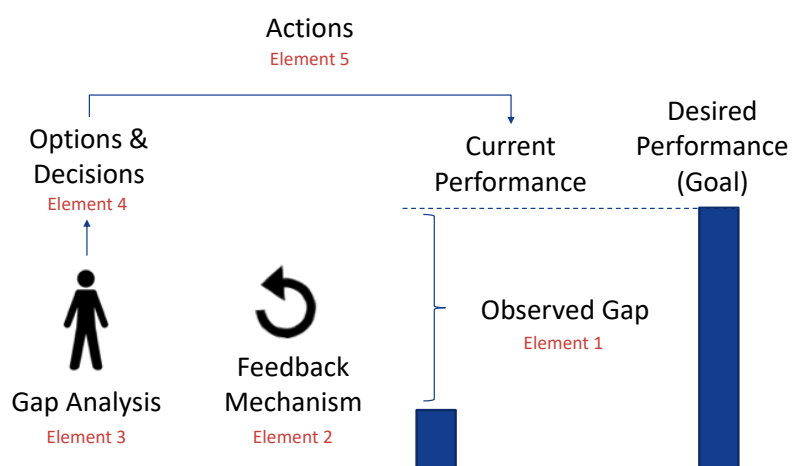
- At the Recruiting Company, why did the team in Bangalore succeed, whereas the Toronto team did not?

This question focused on the causes for the differences. Certainly, organizational culture at the Bangalore office and Indian culture as a whole could have a role in the difference, but this researcher has had professional experiences where organizations outsourced processes to India and the outcomes were not favourable, and results were not generated as quickly as they were in this instance. Therefore, a search for more structural and systematic reasons was undertaken. The elements of the model emerged when the RC manager described how he had built up the team in Bangalore (see Section 5.5 for more details). With those specifics, a generalizable version was derived and tested with the data provided by individuals in this study.

### 5.3.2 Overview of The Goal Pursuit Cycle (GPC)

The process of moving through the GPC was iterative, with each passage through the cycle creating a new starting point for the next cycle. The GPC itself was found to have five core components, namely: 1) a gap between the desired performance level and the actual performance level; 2) a feedback mechanism that provided the individual with information about their performance; 3) an analytical step, where the individual reviewed the feedback and assessed the causes for the gap; 4) an options and decisions step, where the individual sought options on how to overcome the perceived causes of the gap, and made a choice about which path to follow to improve their performance, and; 5) an actions step, where the individual engaged in activities directly focused on closing the gap. Figure 5.1 shows the components of the GPC and how they relate to each other. In the sections below, each element will be discussed in more detail.

**Figure 5-1: GPC Model 1 - The Elements of the Goal Pursuit Cycle (GPC)**



### 5.3.3 Element 1 - Observed Gap

#### Goal Setting

The GPC is rooted in an individual's attempts to reduce the gap between their desired state and current state. For individuals in the study, the types of goals varied, but every individual had a performance goal they were pursuing, such as increasing the number of individuals placed or hitting a specific income target. For instance, ID 2 had a goal to increase the number of contractors that he placed. In describing his goal, he said,

"I would Like to increase my contractor number by 4 contractors. I am currently at 10. So I would like to go to 14

For some, the choice of performance goal was also influenced by a recognition of what would motivate them to do the work. ID 8 explained why she focused on client acquisition, rather than income, and how she arrived at her Year 1 target of 75 new clients. She stated,

"I'm not driven by money, so I thought client base would be better than money. If I put a goal to it with money, I'm not going to work towards that, but the client base, I would work toward [that]....my five-year plan was to have 250 clients, and so 50 a year. I took 50, and I said, 'No, let's go for 75.' "

Others supplemented their performance goal with in-process goals. The in-process goals focused on elements that were in their control, and were leading measures of success. For instance, at the RC company, ID 4 and ID 5 both focused on increasing the number of resumes they submitted, as this was a leading indicator of placement success. ID 4 stated,



“I also set the goal to submit more resumes, which I achieved.”

And ID 5 stated,

“I just got back to basics [with my goals]... Go back to submits and handoffs and just do that because everything else, I don't know, I seem to maybe overthink it and just get nowhere.”

At the FSC, the need for an in-process goal, such as the rate of learning, was recognized, even if it was not measured. For instance, ID 13 a new Financial Advisor stated,

“I don't know how you quantify this, but I feel that for every quarter I want to be more knowledgeable than I was last, but I don't know how you quantify that or even qualify it. Because knowledge for me is the biggest thing ... As it pertains to FSC for example, I want to learn how a T-series fund differs from whatever, you know what I mean? Things like that, but I don't how you set that as a goal, per se.”

And ID 10 also commented on the importance of learning at FSC, and while he did not have a specific goal in mind, learning was an implicit, in-process measure of success. He stated,

“... in this business, there is a huge learning curve. Right in this office [is an industry leader who is a role model for us all]...[who] is right at the top of the learning curve ... Everyone else are in different stages of pursuing that role model. It's a question of how do you learn? How do you learn what you should do? It's a personal journey. Everybody in this business has to find their own answers.”

### **Observed Gap (Actual vs Target Performance)**

While each individual had different goals, they were all focused on closing a gap. Regular metrics were available to the individuals on the performance measures and in-process measure. The manager at RC stated,

“All of them, they all had their goals weekly, monthly, quarterly, from the beginning of the year”

And when discussing how progress was tracked, the manager at RC described a tool used to visualize performance. He said,

“Interviewer: What does the tool have?”

RC Manager: Everything, everything, goal setting, objective setting to you know, feedback, passing back things that you know if we're talking about something and want to address it later, we can just make a little note, go back to that”

At FSC, individuals had their own personal tracking and public tracking of results. ID 10 commented on the role of the Leader Board (a sales performance report that was displayed in the common area for all consultants to see) and how the gap between his desired performance and actual performance motivated him to strive harder to close the gap. He said,

“More [of a] personal objective is that I wanted to be at the top of the Leader Board where ID 12 is now currently. I was there at the top before and ID 12 passed me and I'm trying-- I'm going to get it back.”

For the GPC to function effectively, the individuals responsible for closing the gap had to be able to see the gap, and actively monitor it.

### **5.3.4 Element 2 - Feedback Mechanism**

The second component, the feedback mechanism, was essential to aid the individual in their goal pursuit. The purpose of the feedback mechanism was to precipitate analysis of the reasons for an observed performance gap. The feedback mechanisms could be formal or informal, public or private. The feedback mechanism and the observed gap for an individual were often, but not always, the same device. The Leader Board was one example of both a public report and feedback mechanism, where each Financial Advisor's sales performance was exhibited in public spaces such as the lunch room. There was a similar public mechanism at RC. ID 3 stated,

“We have a scoreboard in the bullpen if you walk down you'll see the chalk wall, yeah, how many interviews are you having, how many people you are submitting are resulting in client interviews, how many of those client interviews are resulting in offers. And how many of those offers are being accepted because offers don't always get accepted.”

Individual reporting was another formal mechanism that illustrated the Observed Gap, and acted as a Feedback Mechanism. This was utilized at both RC and FSC, and it allowed each individual to monitor their own progress towards their goal. ID 10 stated,

“[I review my progress] each day, each week, just in the process of reviewing what I'm actually doing. It's also a reminder to look up what I'm not doing as well. It's dynamic, but just simply based on looking at what I have in play. If I have nothing in play, I have a lot to go back and do, but if I have lots of great things in place then I know things are going well. It's like a rough check of where things are. Also, we get-- numbers are generated. Every week they put up numbers for example for everyone. Just looking at those, that also helps me to look back and to review where things are.”

However other feedback mechanisms such as formal meetings and informal meetings were also found to be relevant in the GPC. The informal meetings typically took the form of ad-hoc meetings or conversations with co-workers. The feedback in these interactions focused more on the quality of the work. In this particular example, the recruiter ID 3 received indirect, negative feedback from a co-worker. The negative feedback was delivered through non-verbal cues that the Account Manager provided. ID 3 stated,

“[The Account Manager said] ... '[Other Recruiter], do you have [any IT Developer] candidates for this client?' She would not even look at me [ID 3]. Why? Because I am stupid? No. She would automatically reject any candidate I would give her, and she would tell me stuff that didn't make any sense. I'm thinking, all right? I used to teach IT. Ten years. That makes something. I used to develop myself, so you cannot tell me someone is not a good developer or whatever. I would look at her.... She wouldn't even hear me.”

While the format of the feedback varied (formal vs informal), the feedback was only consumed when there was a mechanism in place. This feedback directly informed the individual's efforts in Element 3 - Gap Analysis.

### **5.3.5 Element 3 - Gap Analysis**

In this step, the individual focused on determining the cause of the performance gap, and evaluating the extent to which they could affect the performance gap based on their experiences in previous GPC iterations. The gap analysis revolved around two connected steps. The first was a self-reflection about the feedback itself, and the second focused on identifying actions that would influence the gap reduction AND that the individual could effectively action.

#### **Step 1 – Self-Reflection**

ID 13, who was a new employee identified as a high performer, called out the important role of self-reflection in learning the business and becoming a better Financial Advisor. He said,

“I'm a big fan of self-deprecating humour so I'm very open to good critiquing myself, seeing where I can improve. So I mean, if you can go back, rewind, see where I went wrong with, for example, what to say to my client. I'm more than willing to take my licks in order to better myself as a person 100%”

ID 6, another high performer, showed her reflexivity when considering the obstacles she faced when working with a long-time client. She said,

“Interviewer: Did you face any obstacles towards your goal for placements?”

ID 6: Of course, obstacles, example. See you feel, just because you feel you know the client, but you know what ... I prove to myself I don't know the client really.

The first guy [I presented to the client] was a Chinese guy, my perception was that they have a really, really, Chinese [staffing] environment because lots of Chinese people are placed [in the IT department], one guy six months ago with the same company Chinese guy, another guy was a Chinese guy, but the third one was a totally different Indian guy, totally different. My perception was completely broken, I guess assumption was broken. I guess you try to find out, we interviewed all those same calibre of people, but they ended hiring the Indian guy. It seems like [I learned] don't stereotype ... the client .... Try to think on a different, broader level [about the need of the client]...”

## **Step 2 - Focus on Activities That Can be Controlled or Influenced**

Once the individual assessed the reasons for their success/failure, they immediately shifted their focus to evaluating how to overcome the gap, and to identify elements that they could control and would influence the outcome. ID 4 stated,

“Interviewer: Why did you think it would be easy [to achieve your goal?]”

ID 4: Because when you think about it, it's just one [placement] per month, but you have to take into consideration the industry, the volume and the things that are out of your control. You can't control the orders that come in, you can't control if the client is going to hire from you or what have you. So there's a lot of things that are out of your control, you can only control what you can do.”

For some recruiters, improving activities in their control focused on increasing their work effort. ID 2 was a low-moderate performer at RC who had received coaching from his manager to improve his goal setting and performance. Through the coaching process ID 2

realized he could influence his placement rates based on something he could control - his work effort. At the end of the study, after achieving his quarterly goal, he stated,

“I feel like I assumed that I can do it [ achieve my goal], and I know I can. Now for sure I know more than ever, because *I've put the effort into it* [emphasis added].”

Other recruiters took different strategies to assess ways that they could improve their performance. In the case of ID 6, she recognized the need to align her activities with the goal of her Account Managers, in order to achieve her goal of placing more candidates. She described her alignment activities with the Account Managers, which focused on better communication and coordination, as well as her recognition that she needed to manage her emotions better. She said,

“...pretty much co-ordinating with my goal [with the Account Managers], like calibrating with my goal [with the Account Managers]... and yes it helped ... to look at my relationship [with the Account Managers] and tried to not control, tried to more listen to and understand what exactly [they need] and don't be upset by some [of the Account Managers]...”

In contrast, ID 11 - a low performer from FSC - described an incident where his computer, his primary working tool and mechanism to generate revenue, was not functioning for over a month. In this passage, he recounts the story of the computer failure, yet he cannot seem to recognize that he could have solved this problem in many ways. He appears to have resigned himself to the fact that the computer failure was out of his control, and that he was a victim of the circumstances. ID 11 described his situation in this manner,

“Last week, I finally just got a computer. My computer basically crapped out at the end of May. Hard drive, complete failure, lost everything that was on there. Had some backup but for some reason my backup isn't restoring completely properly. Anyways, long story short it took me a few weeks to get the new computer.

I was kind of out of commission for a few weeks ... You have very limited access to any of the systems or anything, even my email .... It kind of left me on the sidelines a little bit. I had some time to think about how I wanted to address things but I couldn't really do a lot as far as any action is possible. No computer, it's amazing how used to a technology you get these days whereas soon as it's gone you were like, "Oh my God what do we do now?"

Interviewer: Well, we can use this time here together productively, and we've got until four o'clock. Maybe we can start back what was your goal that you wanted to work on over the last quarter and then how did you progress towards it?

ID 11: Well, unfortunately and I hate excuses but the computer really does put you on a sideline because I just didn't find myself being very comfortable talking to people about a meeting and if they asked me to send them an email or ... I wouldn't have been able to do that without my computer.”

As demonstrated in this example, ID 11 was unable to self-reflect and identify options on how to solve a massive problem (losing 1/12th of the year's revenue). He rationalized his lack of activity about this event and accepted the fact that there was nothing he could do about it. He didn't even seek the aid of his manager in getting a 'loaner laptop' to help him while a new laptop was being ordered. This reaction to a failure contrasts with how high performers such as ID 6, ID 10, ID 13 responded to situations that were 'out of their control'. In comparison, high performers in this study were able to effectively practice self-reflection, and consistently found ways to empower themselves, even in situations where that were out of their direct control. This finding will be discussed in Section 5.6.



### **5.3.6 Element 4 - Options & Decisions + Component 5 - Actions**

While Options & Decisions and Actions are quite distinct elements of the GPC model, in the narrative of the participants they were inseparable and discussed interchangeably. Thus, this section will discuss evidence of both components in the GPC model.

Three pathways were identified as to how an individual arrived at a Decision. These were 1) based on the individual's experiences and personal judgement, 2) based on inputs from peers or 3) based on inputs from their manager. Actions naturally flowed from the Options & Decisions step. Each of the three pathways will be discussed and demonstrated with examples.

#### **Pathway 1 - Using One's Experience and Judgement to Make Decisions**

Using one's experience and judgement to make decisions was a common, and successful pathway for senior individuals. However, for those with moderate or low levels of experience, using their experience as the basis for decision making often led to sub-par outcomes. As seen in the last example, ID 11, a low performer with moderate experience, made a series of choices, based on his judgement, about how to react to his computer breakdown. In this case, he chose not to proactively seek other possible IT solutions to his problem. He chose not to reach out to his manager for support. He chose not to engage in prospecting or other lead generation activities. Instead, he chose instead to 'think about how he wanted to address things'. As this example highlights, a 'non-choice' was still a choice. He did not generate options on how to solve his computer predicament, and as a result, his revenue stream and client base were affected.

As individuals gained experience, the coaching frequency with their manager tended to reduce, and they used their experience to make more and more individual judgements. For instance, ID 12, who was also a low performer with a moderate level of experience, tended to only seek his manager's input on complex situations. Otherwise, he would make decisions on his own. His manager stated,

"I find that he's pretty independent, but then he'll leverage me in complex situations. He will ask the one-off questions, so I know he knows that, or at least he recognizes that I may know the answer, so I do get to see him once in a while."

Senior individuals tended to work independently and didn't seek, or want, their manager's input. ID 14, a highly experienced, and top performing sales rep at FSC said,

"I haven't done any coaching since I've been here. I'm actually been kind of grateful for it, because [my manager] has been wise enough just to leave me alone"

ID 3 a senior recruiter, who was also a high performer, described her expectation that senior people 'should know what to do' in this way,

"I'd say that's a big problem [needing your manager's input]. I mean, you hand-hold your child for a while, but at a point, you just tell them, "You need to do that", and after a while, you don't even have to tell them. You shouldn't have to tell them. You shouldn't even have to check up on them because once they understand the reality ... the motivation should be there."

### **Pathway 2: Using Your Peer's Inputs to Generate Options and Make Decisions**

Seeking input from your peers was another pathway to decision making. At RC, the high performing senior recruiters would often talk with each other to gather input on how to approach an issue. For instance, ID 6 (a high performer) would often use her peers as a sounding board in her decision-making process. She said,

“If I'm concerned about something, I usually go to people [on the recruiting team] to see am I correct or just need to double check with them or get their opinion about maybe I'm thinking wrong ...”

ID 4, a senior recruiter, whom the manager had classified as a low performer, also utilized the peer coaching process. She said,

“The peer coaching helped us become better teammates and just allowed us to work better with each other. It's good to sit down and talk to each other because we are all in this together.”

### **Pathway 3: Using Your Manager's Inputs to Make Decisions**

Most often, it was junior or moderately experienced employees who sought out a manager's input when making decisions. ID 2 (a low performer with moderate experience) sought help from his manager. In this situation, ID 2, was struggling to determine the best way to approach a client. After a number of coaching sessions with his manager, a solution was implemented, and successful results were obtained. This example also highlights the self-reflexivity of ID 2 (which was conspicuously absent with ID 11 and his computer breakdown example) as he described the questions he was struggling with, how he reacted to the repeated coaching sessions and finally the outcome that was generated. ID 2 said,

“... I guess [I was] just trying to figure out what some of the goals were with one of the clients we were working [on] in Province X.

It [took] a few months to figure out [the answers to the key questions of] ‘What does the company want to do with these people? Is it worth me spending time connecting with them, or should we just kinda leave it and is it worth even working on the jobs that come through’. And over the [coaching] conversations, initially I was like, ‘Oh man, like, you know, we have one [coaching] conversation and then another ...’, and I feel like the question still wasn't answered. But over the conversations looking back, you know that we were really building a strategy as to how to approach [the client] best. And then recently we've said, “Okay, well let's see how we can integrate the Bangalore team in helping out with these roles and such.” And most recently we've had success there. Actually, a guy just started today....”

The stark difference between ID 11 and ID 2's path to a decision is striking. Both were characterized as low performers by their manager, yet ID 2 demonstrated an ability to recognize the need for support and actively sought it. Perhaps not surprisingly, his performance in the second half year of this study was better than at the start. The coaching he received, and his focus on the actions from those coaching sessions, led to success. This also shows the impact of coaching on improving a failing employee's performance. Here, good coaching was able to improve a failing employee's performance, and the absence of coaching for ID 11 (because the employee did not seek it out), ensured that the employee would not be able to find a timely way out of their performance gap.

ID 13, a new employee who was classified as a high performer, had weekly coaching sessions with his manager. In it he sought out advice on ways to improve his performance

by leveraging the experience of the manager. He also describes how he's evolved the coaching session over time when he stated,

"... we still have our weekly Monday sessions, so nowadays, it's not more of a numbers thing, it's more things that I can improve during the week that I ask him about. For example, I've had this meeting with this person. It didn't go well, 'Do you think I should have done this instead of this?' It's no longer, 'Hey, I sold X amount of policies this week or I brought in this amount of dollars.' It's more so things I've seen that I feel like I can improve on and I ask him for what his take is on that particular scenario."

The manager at FSC described ID 10, a high performer with moderate experience, as also someone who would seek out his perspective. The manager also commented that this is a key characteristic of high performers. He said,

"ID 10 everyday was in my office. Sometimes he knows the answer but it's just to engage and show his presence. Those are the guys that eventually get rewarded."

In summary, those with low or moderate experience who sought out ideas from their manager on how to improve, generated better options on how to solve an issue than they would have on their own. Which in turn led to better decisions on the best actions to implement.

### **5.3.7 Element 5 - Actions**

The actions undertaken by an individual are the result of the Gap Analysis and the Options & Decisions that were made. It is at the Actions step where the differences between the high performers and the rest of their peers became clearly expressed. High performers executed strategies that focused on the critical activities that would yield the highest results. They were selective in what they worked on and did not waste time or energy on actions that were not contributing to their goal.

Consider the difference between ID 12, a low performer with moderate experience and ID 16, a highly experienced, top performer; both were Financial Advisors at FSC. ID 12, described his typical day and indicated that he would call 'five clients a day', which would equate to 20 clients a week, and engage in passive social marketing. He said,

"When I come in, the first thing that I would do is check my messages, both voicemail and email, then I post something on LinkedIn, which may be a news article, something that would catch people's attention. Make them think of something that we do, then I would contact five of my clients. If I talk to five clients per day, then that means I'll go through my entire client-base in about a quarter. That keeps me talking to people every quarter. Then, that will give me the ability to follow up with either something that we should have been doing or give them an idea of something else."

Whereas, ID 16, had a different strategy to his work. He believed in 'working smarter' and did this by focusing his cold calling strategy on specific streets in Toronto that tended to have people with over \$500,000 CDN in assets. He also placed a greater focus on the volume of

cold calls he made; he targeted calling 100 people in a week (compared to 20 for the intermediate performer). Regarding his prospecting strategy he said,

“I don’t work hard, I work smart. I learned that in the beginning too, working hard will just get you into the hospital and that’s about it.”

And he described his cold calling strategy this way,

“It’s basically cold calling, I do that every day. In this business, you just got to do the things that are going to breed results. I call people ... they’ll probably end up being somewhere between 5,000 and 10,000 people I call this year. You make your contacts, you get a sense for the warmth on the call or the need, you make notes around that, you enter them into a contact management system. So repeat contact is going to get you the business eventually.

If nobody else is showing an interest in these people except me, I’ll get the business eventually. It’s a process, sometimes it could take weeks, sometimes even a year or two, but people come around and I’ve done this for several companies...”

Clearly ID 16 had a long-term vision and strategic focus on how to develop his book of business. But he was also focused on the details of properly tracking the leads, and ensuring that he consistently followed up. He understood what to do and persisted in executing his plan. Every day.

At RC, a similar pattern emerged, where high performers implemented strategies that were different from the low performers. High performers there tended to adopt a ‘portfolio approach’ to recruiting (focusing on both contract and permanent positions), and focused on

execution. In describing one high performer (ID 6), her colleague noted her bias for action and speed of executing as critical success factors. She said,

“ID 6 she works on a lot, I don't know how she does it because I would get lost, I would forget to respond to a candidate or I would say I'm going to send you something and I won't send it because, not because I want to but because I would forget....she [ID 6] doesn't over-analyze, she doesn't waste time, that's why she's more successful than me because she makes more placements”

In contrast, when a recruiter identified as a low performer (with a moderate level of experience) adopted a more focused approach on contract opportunities, he discovered the challenges with his strategy. ID 2 said,

“I assumed that if I switched my focus from focusing on permanent opportunities to contract opportunities, it would be kind of like an automatic, you know, start gaining contractors instead of just kind of focusing on the perm jobs. But I felt like maybe it's a little bit more ... challenging on the contract side, just because I don't have that pipeline where I've kind of been speaking to these people for years, and when the opportunity comes up I can just pass them over there.”

### **5.3.8 Summary of the GPC**

This section described the Goal Pursuit Cycle model, and the elements necessary to successfully move towards goals. Each of the elements of the GPC (Observed Gap, Feedback Mechanism, Gap Analysis, Options & Decisions, Actions) need to be present for an individual to achieve their goals. The GPC is a process that the individual moves through



many times as they pursue their goal. With the GPC established, Section 5.4 will present a model of how an individual experiences the GPC as they work towards a goal.

## **5.4 GPC Model 2, Model 3 - How an Individual Experiences the GPC**

This section describes the role of a person's identity and emotions in The Goal Pursuit Cycle (GPC). A model of How an Individual Experiences the GPC was developed, and this section will describe how it was constructed and demonstrate how the elements in the model were present in the responses from the individuals in the study.

### **5.4.1 How the Model was Constructed**

The model of How an Individual Experiences the GPC emerged from the descriptive and process coding that occurred. The selective codes of Outcomes, Goals, and Individual Pursuit of Goals provided the basis for the theoretical coding that generated this model. To generate the theoretical codes, abductive logic was required, and the following questions aided in that process:

- Why did so many people tell stories about their personal history when asked about their goals and/or progress towards goals?
- Why were some individuals successful in achieving their goals, while others weren't?

The first question prompted consideration of why they framed their goal pursuit stories in the context of their personal or professional histories. By reflecting on this, the notion that their choices were linked to their sense of self emerged. The second question prompted consideration of how one's emotions played a role, because there was often an emotional response by the individuals who were not successful. The second question also triggered thinking that an individual's pathway through the GPC might be different if they experienced a positive result (and therefore a positive emotional response) versus a negative result (and negative emotional response). This thinking led to a variation of the 'How an Individual Experiences the GPC' model, which is the 'Positive and Negative Pathways through the GPC' model.

#### **5.4.2 Overview of the General Model (GPC Model 2)**

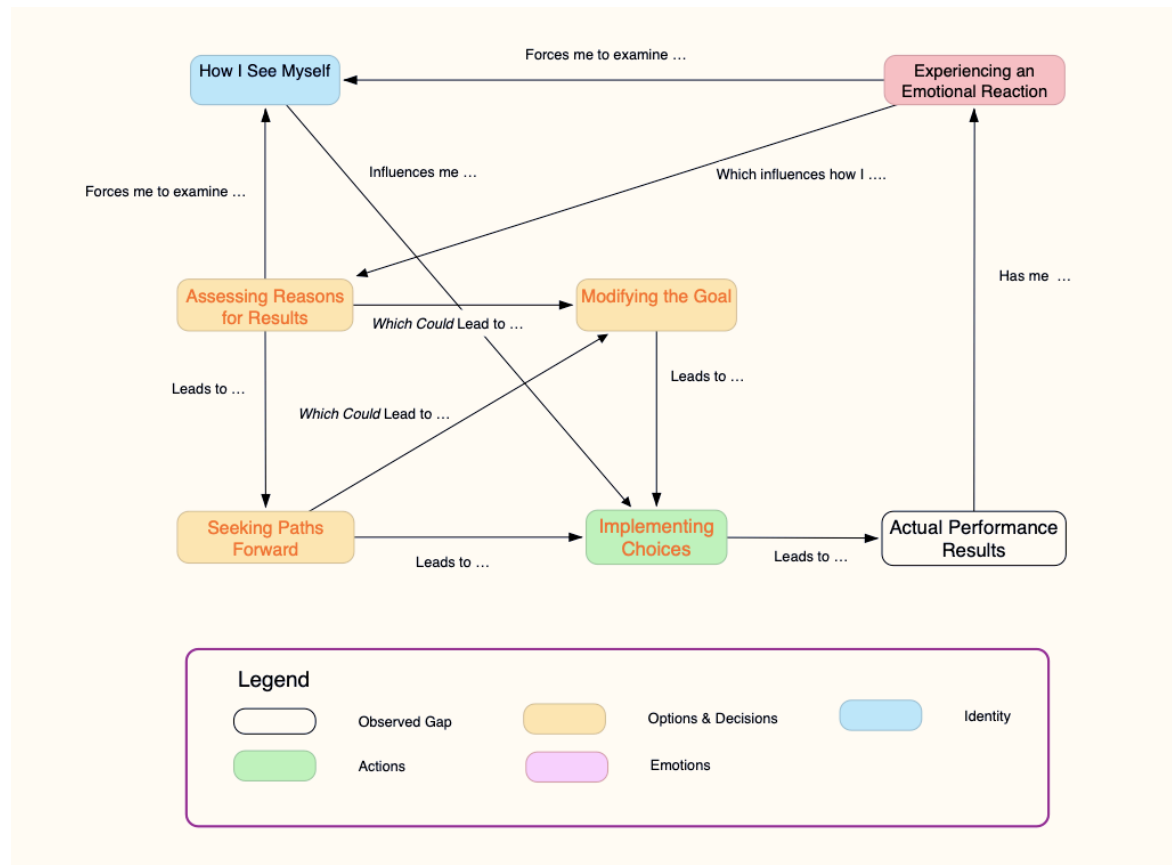
Movement through the GPC was a personal experience. Utilizing a constructivist approach, a general model of how an individual experienced the GPC was developed (Figure 5.2). Five constructs emerged through this process (Identity, Emotions, Choices, Actions, and Results), with the complex relationships built on the language used by the participants. Identity was how the individual saw themselves. It was a mental construct that was rooted in their personal and professional life experiences. Within the model, Identity framed the overall perspective the individual took in their goal pursuit strategies, and reinforced the utilization of one's strengths to pursue a goal. Identity was not described in the GPC, but played a background role in how individuals Analyzed the Gap, generated Options & Decisions, and the Actions that were undertaken. Emotions also played an important role in how a person experienced the GPC. They were triggered by the feedback process that naturally occurred in the Goal Pursuit Cycle. The feedback that was received, whether formal or informal, positive or negative, generated an emotional response in the individual.

The valence of that emotional response (positive, negative, or neutral) depended on the specific circumstances of the event, which in turn influenced the degree to which an individual perceived their ability to influence outcomes. Assessing the reasons for the results was the first conscious activity the individual undertook after receiving feedback on their performance results. For instance, as they reviewed their sales reports or reflected on the outcome of a meeting (or any of the other ways in which they received feedback), the individual began to self-reflect on the factors affecting the result they just obtained. Positive results tended to reinforce the decision that the path they were on was the correct one; that the personal strengths and capabilities they had used to make progress were effective and in so doing, reinforced their self-identity. On the other hand, negative results led to a deeper assessment of why the result occurred. This search for reason occurred through two perspectives; the first was to examine whether the circumstances that led to the negative result were likely to change in the future, while the second perspective focused on analyzing their own role in the failure and whether there was anything they could change in their own behaviour to create a different outcome. If the negative feedback occurred consistently over a long period (typically for six months to a year), AND threatened the individual's self-identity, then the individual would modify their goal downward. Otherwise, as long as the individual's self-identity was not at risk, the individual tended to maintain the goal level, even in the presence of negative feedback.

After assessing the reasons for the performance, the individual then shifted their attention towards seeking information about how to overcome the issues holding back their performance. The generation of these alternatives was based on their own experiences, from dialoguing with their peers, or coaching support from their managers. With a set of alternative paths forward identified, the individual then made a decision about which path to follow. In some cases, it was a single path, in others the choice was to adopt a 'portfolio' approach and utilize multiple solutions, and in some exceptional cases, the choice was to do

nothing at all. But once the decision was made, the individual moved into an Action step, where they implemented the choice, which in turn would lead to a new set of results, and the cycle would begin again.

**Figure 5-2: GPC Model 2: A Model of An Individual's Journey Towards a Goal**



### 5.4.3 The Development of the Constructs in the Model - (Identity, Emotions, Options & Decisions, Actions, Results)

The data that catalyzed the creation of these constructs were often unusual or unexpected comments that various participants made in response to a question. Each section below demonstrates a portion of the model. As the examples below show, the individuals moved

through many elements of the model in a very real and 'messy' way. Their lived experiences were at times painful and frustrating for them, but through this research process the constructs emerged and the relationships were illuminated.

#### **5.4.3.1 'How I See Myself' influences me 'Implementing Choices'**

The notion that Identity and Implementing Choices were connected to goal pursuit came from a number of ID 3's responses to questions. In one interview, ID 3 described herself as a 'miner', exhaustively searching for the right candidate for the role, unwilling to give up until the job is done. She said,

"... sometimes the job orders including LinkedIn or whatever are juicy and I can't keep off and it's going to take me more [time and effort] because I want to reach out to more people ... So if I find a lot of good people on the boards I'm going to say well I know I've seen five other candidates that look amazing but I'm not going to reach out to them because I exhausted the three hours I allocated for this search and who cares. 'Really?' That's not me, that's not me, I search and I get them. Like, I'm a miner, right."

And in another interview, ID 3 described why she was working on sourcing candidates for permanent positions, as her strengths were in finding unique candidates, and the persistence it took to find the 'purple squirrel' as she called it. She said,

"Interviewer: What are you working on?"

ID 3: Same. Same ol', same ol'. Back to my default. So, not [contract positions]. Those I stay away- You know what? ID 6, ID 4, ID 5 ... They jump on them [contract positions].

They seem to like it and they seem to be very good at it and that's not my strength. ...[Working on the contract positions] ... It's more administrative. I get bored. I'm sorry to say- It's not like, 'Oh, that's beneath me.' No, no, that's not what I mean. It's ... My strength is when I discover the purple squirrel, when I have to dig. You know, the dog with the bone?"

As these examples illustrate, the choices ID 3 made about the types of roles she would try to source, and how much effort she would put towards finding the right candidate, aligned directly with how she saw herself and aligned with her strengths. She saw herself as a 'miner', implying she was someone who would dig until she found what she was looking for. She also used the phrase 'like a dog with a bone' which also implied how tenacious she would be as she looked for the elusive 'purple squirrel'. She derived value for herself by demonstrating competence in finding candidates for difficult positions. As a result, she often chose to search for candidates for permanent positions because this allowed her to use her strengths and align her activities with her identity. The search for the 'purple squirrel' triggered the insight that identity and choices were connected.

**5.4.3.2 'Actual Performance Results' has me 'Experiencing an Emotional Reaction' which influences how I 'Assessing Reasons for Results' leads to ' Seeking Paths Forward' leads to 'Implementing Choices'**

ID 3's colourful language was also a source of inspiration that led to the exploration of the relationships between Results, Emotions, Options & Decisions, and Actions. From a results perspective, ID 3 was unhappy with her performance, and was frustrated that she was putting forward great effort without seeing the results she desired. She said,

“Found so many great candidates this summer, nothing moved. Nothing. The clients were like, frozen, all of them. Everyone. ... Like I work hard the whole summer, nothing shows!”

She continued,

“ ‘I don’t know what I’m doing wrong.’ That was me this summer. So every day, that’s all I could think of. What should I do different? I felt like a fly caught in a spider’s web. I’m being colourful, like a true Balkan person.”

She also shared how deep the emotions were being felt, and how she tried to maintain a veneer of calmness in front of her colleagues. She said,

“So I was too pissed off to even think about it [her recruiting performance]... When you get emotional, and you [are] in a panic mode, you’re not being rational. But sometimes I can’t deal with myself properly, because I’m very passionate. I’m very emotional, right? So when you see me on the [recruiting] floor you think that I’m the least emotional of them all. That’s just because I put the leash on myself, right? That’s why. It’s easy to put a leash on myself when I deal with others. It’s very hard to put the leash on myself, when I deal with myself.”

These emotional responses to her performance affected her so greatly that she chose to not take vacation, in order to give her a better opportunity to achieve her recruiting target. She said,

“I wanted to go on vacation with my son in June, but feel like going on vacation ... I didn’t go on vacation just because I feel I ... I felt I didn’t earn it. And so you understand how pissed off I was. Nobody would have said anything, or I wouldn’t have been denied

vacation or anything. I just couldn't go. I was beyond pissed off with myself and with everything on the market.”

In response to the poor results, ID 3's approach was to work longer (not taking vacation), work harder and work faster on any opportunity that came in - the only things she could control. At the end of the summer, she was able to place four candidates because 'she jumped on' the new roles. She said,

“So now [an Account Manager] brought in some [new] roles. I jumped on them, I made four placements finally. I was desperate, I'm telling you.”

As these examples illustrate, a person's emotional response to performance results, coupled with their own analysis of the drivers of the results, greatly influenced their choices of how to proceed next. In this case, ID 3 perceived the sources of the failures as outside her control and this greatly distressed her. As a result, she tried to take action on anything that was in her control that might create a better result. She made choices such as working harder, appearing calm in front of her co-workers and cancelling a vacation with her son, in order to try to achieve her goal.

#### **5.4.3.3 How 'Assessing Reasons for Results' could lead to 'Modifying the Goal', and How 'Assessing Reasons for Results' forces me to examine 'How I See Myself'**

Evidence for these relationships was presented by ID 5, who had been a top performer at his former company. Yet, when faced with performance results that were lower than his



expectation, his sense of self-worth was reduced and his self-identity as a top performer was called into question. In response, he lowered his goals in order to maintain his identity as a top recruiter who hit his targets. He said,

“I feel as though my own reputation [is at risk] ... I always used to be one of the top performers. It was myself and this other [person], we always used to knock it out of the park. Someone's going to the Chairman's Club. Things like that. I'm used to always making at least four or five placements a month and I figured that would be replicated coming here. It never has been.”

And when he consistently couldn't meet his goals, he lowered them. He said,

“I would always set myself goals when I came here. Would never meet them because ... Okay, I want to make 50 placements this year or I'm going to make four placements a month. I come here and I don't do that. In a way the past four years, okay let's lower my expectations, maybe I'll meet them.”

His inability to change his performance outcome was unsettling for him, even after four years of trying. These results put his identity at risk, and this continued to be unsettling for him. He continued,

“I knew coming in it was going to be different, but I was not maybe as prepared. I know I'm going back on history, but it relates to ... your question about setting goals. It's all very well setting them, but I've always disappointed myself every time, but I still try. ... I guess I'm just always used to meeting them. It's been difficult not meeting them, let's just say that.

That's been frustrating. I've dealt with it, well maybe I haven't, but I just accepted it, let's say that."

As these examples illustrate, ID 5's identity was shaken by his inability to achieve his goals. He had tied his sense of self to his professional success and when he consistently missed his targets, he lowered his goal in hopes of achieving a better outcome.

#### **5.4.3.4 How 'Assessing Reasons for Results' Leads to 'Seeking Paths Forward'**

ID 10 regularly assessed the reasons for his results. When faced with failure, he sought to understand both what went wrong, and how he could take ownership of the reasons for failure. In this example, he had identified a barrier to securing the client deal, and the manager directed him to an individual who had expertise in this type of barrier. He sought a path forward. Unfortunately, he did not receive the technical support he needed from this individual, and ultimately lost the deal. However, even with this negative result, he did not blame the external forces that affected the outcome. Instead, he looked at the situation and shifted his perspective to focus on what he learned, and how he could do things differently in the future. He empowered himself by turning a negative result into a positive learning outcome; he found another path forward. He stated,

"Interviewer: If we can just stay on that for a second. So you went to talk to the other individual [who the manager had suggested would have the specific advice ID 10 needed to overcome the client barrier], didn't get the answer you really needed to help you in this scenario, and then what happened next?"

ID 10: That one [the client opportunity] sort of slipped away. So that was an opportunity that was lost. In the end though, I realized that there was more information that I could also get on my own as well."

In another example, ID 10 faced the challenge of developing an initial strategy for a High Net Worth (HNW) client, and shared how he empowered himself through the research he undertook to overcome this barrier. He also realized that his lack of research in the past, contributed to his failures. In the situation below, ID 10 analyzed the reasons for his previous performance (lack of preparation), identified a new path forward (research the client's needs and devise entrance strategies to overcome the need), and then executed his strategy. ID 10 stated,

"...the hardest thing to come up with is the entrance strategy, that initial strategy that gets you in ... Understanding more clearly what that is, is what I think has helped. So, it has taken very, very careful research to find out what that is, and it is something I can see I was missing before and so, missing that, would have affected the conversion prospects and the persons may have reacted favourably but didn't. So, in hindsight I'm seeing that maybe it was because I wasn't able to zero in that one specific trigger."

These examples illustrate how ID 10 used his self-reflexivity to analyze the reasons for his performance and identify paths forward. Through this process, he consistently found ways to empower himself by identifying paths that he could actively engage in and would influence the outcome he desired.

#### 5.4.4 GPC Model 3 - Positive and Negative Pathways through the GPC

While Figure 5.2 described a general model of how an individual experienced the GPC, in reality, two distinct paths emerged based on whether the individual experienced positive progress towards goal or negative progress towards goal (see Figure 5.3). The elements of the model remained constant (Identity, Emotions, Options & Decisions, Actions, Results), however the impact of the interactions between the elements were different depending on the path.

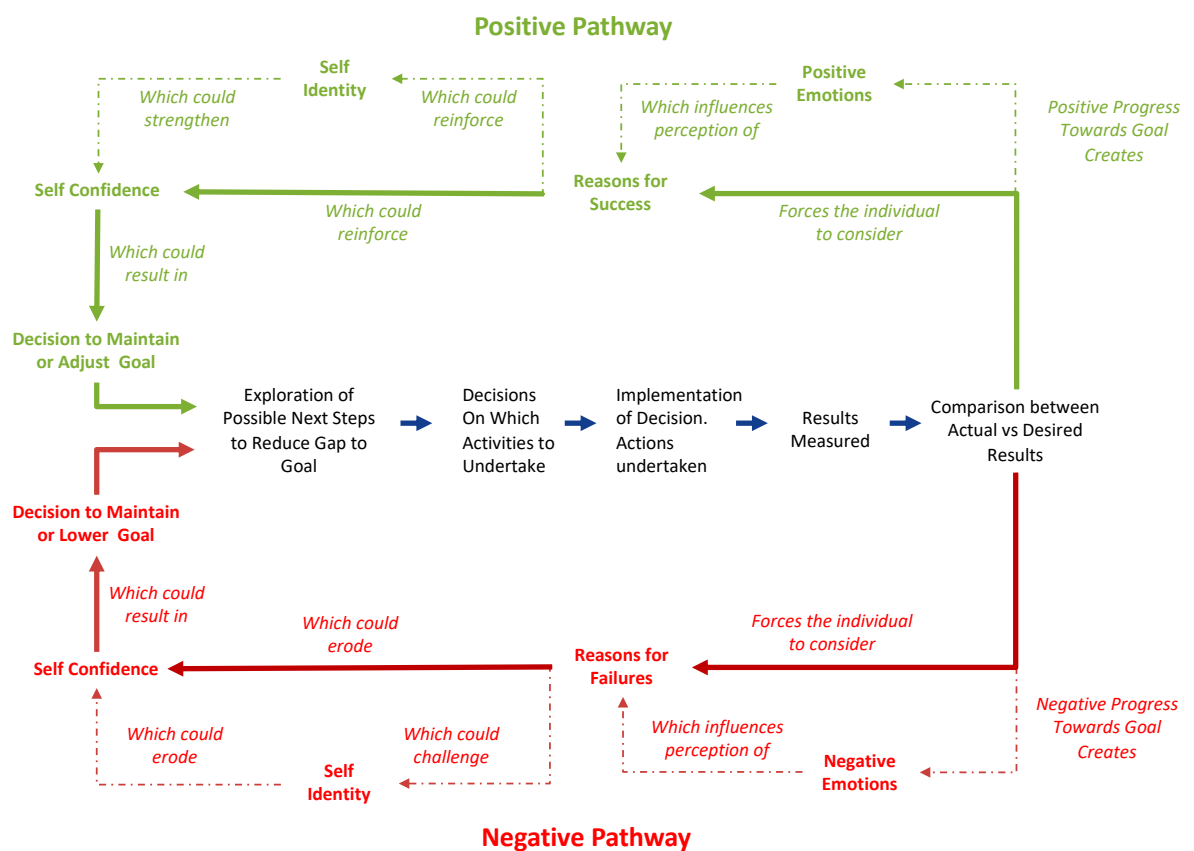
##### **Positive Progress Towards Goal**

For individuals who experienced positive progress, they experienced both an emotional reaction to the results, and a practical one. The practical response was to assess the reasons for the results, and to consider how these results validated their goal pursuit strategy in the previous GPC iteration. The second response the individual had was an emotional one. Here they experienced positive feelings at having successfully made progress towards their goal, and with their pursuit strategy validated, their self-confidence was strengthened and commitment to the goal renewed. In parallel however, was an indirect comparison of the reasons for their success with their strengths and self-identity. By achieving success, their strengths and identity were validated, and thus the individual's confidence about their choices and capabilities were reinforced. At this point, the individual moved into the Options & Decisions step of the GPC, and the process began again.

Recall the case of ID 2; this individual was identified as a low performer by RC Manager. One of the areas that the individual was struggling with was how to approach a client. Through coaching, the individual explored possible ways to overcome this challenge (including using the team from Bangalore to aid in the search process) and undertook a

series of actions to engage with the client. These actions yielded a positive result, and four candidates were placed with the client. Positive emotions were then generated in ID 2, and he attributed his success to his work effort and persistence on this client opportunity. The results affirmed the use of his strengths on developing client relationships and validated his self-identity. His confidence increased and he maintained his goal level.

**Figure 5-3: GPC Model 3 - Positive and Negative Experience Pathways through the GPC**



### Negative Progress Towards Goal

For individuals that experienced negative results, a similar series of steps occurred. The results focused the individual on the causes of the failures, and the need to determine the extent to which they could influence the outcome. In parallel, the negative results triggered an emotional response, often expressed as anger, anxiety, or frustration in this study. These

negative feelings were present when the individual assessed the reasons for the failure. This analysis could lead the individual to question their goal pursuit strategy, or seek alternative ways forward. Depending on how they perceived the causes of the failure (as something they could influence or not), their self-confidence could have been affected, and their identity challenged. If the individual saw the opportunity to have some measure of control/influence in their next steps, then their self-confidence remained and was not challenged. However, if the individual's lack of success was seen as something out of their control, they experienced a loss of self-confidence and lowered their goal as a result.

Recall the case of ID 5; this individual had been a top performer at his previous company and had an expectation of placing four or five candidates every month (his goal). However, his actual performance was much lower than that, which generated anxiety and frustration in him. His search of the reasons for this negative performance led him to conclude that there was nothing he could do to influence the outcome; that the reasons were outside of his control. This in turn challenged his identity that he was a top recruiter, his self-confidence was lowered, and each year he lowered his goal in hopes of achieving it. This process occurred over the course of years, but it highlights how negative progress towards goals interacts with identity, and goal revision. Eventually he stopped tracking goals as he felt they were unattainable.

### **5.4.5 Summary**

While the GPC (Figure 5.1) describes the necessary elements of goal pursuit, the experience of an individual moving through the GPC is more complex. A person's Identity and Emotions interact with the GPC elements and influence the choices that are made. Figure 5.2 presented a general model of how an individual experiences the GPC, while Figure 5.3

highlighted two different emotional pathways through the GPC. From this analysis, it is clear that emotions are linked to the performance feedback, and that the attributions one makes for success/failure are filtered through one's self identity. While the interactions of Identity and Emotions are indirect, they do influence an individual's choices.

## **5.5 The Goal Pursuit Cycle (GPC) in Team Pursuit of Goals**

### **5.5.1 The Unintended Experiment – The Benefit of Action Research**

In the true spirit of participatory action research, the manager of the recruiting team in Toronto, Canada took the learnings from the various interventions and applied the GPC directly to his team in Bangalore. In applying the GPC concepts, as a total system, the Bangalore team successfully achieved their annual sales quota in five months.

“Interviewer: Have you quantified any of the business benefit from this work?

RC Manager: I'd say part of it is reaching our yearly goal in five months. That's pretty good.”

However, the manager's path to this intervention started with his challenges trying to manage his team in Toronto. One of the key learnings from the RC Manager was the need for the leader to both fully understand the GPC, and to fully invest in the ongoing management of the goal pursuit process. He said,

"I've got to be honest, ... I feel like I wasn't on top of this for the entire study, and I think that commitment, which is why I was like, "Bangalore, you should see what we're doing in Bangalore because I actually did listen, I just didn't get it at first." Really it wasn't your explanation it was probably me. I just didn't understand the scope of it at the beginning, and how deep we would actually be going."

When asked why he chose to implement with the Bangalore team, the manager revealed that part of the reason was to prove to himself that he could implement these learnings, and that he believed in this process. He stated,

"Interviewer: Why did you choose to apply what you've been learning here to Bangalore?"

"RC Manager: Because Bangalore started as a team, and they're much greener, way less, they were open to everything. I also, I believed in everything, but I felt as though I didn't apply it the best way I could with this team [Toronto]. Part of it was to not just show you, but to show me that we need to do this. ... this is how we coach humans whether it's in business or sport or anything. You need to follow up, you need to have meetings."

He continued to express his desire to 'get it right' this time. He said,

"I just felt with Bangalore, getting them immediately with all of this integrated, it was almost like, you ever work on a project for a bit and then it's like, scrap it and you just start fresh? That's kind of how I felt. I was just like, I f\*\*\*ed the first half of it up [the interventions with the Toronto team], and okay, here's everything I've learned, boom, and now let's just do it."



### 5.5.2 Implementing the GPC in a Team Goal Pursuit Cycle

Successful implementation of the GPC in a team context required that the manager implement all five elements of the GPC (Figure 5.1) simultaneously. At the RC Company (Bangalore and Toronto), two groups (Recruiters and Account Managers) needed to work together to place candidates in the client's workplace, and the manager needed to implement mechanisms for the team to move through the GPC together. How the manager implemented the GPC as a management system is discussed below.

#### Observed Gap

An Observed Gap required two things: a specific, measurable goal and measures of current progress towards it. Setting goals right at the beginning was important. RC Manager said,

“Getting the goals in from day one, it makes it so much easier.”

But goals themselves were not enough to ensure success. The *alignment* across the pursuit team on the Observed Gap that they were going to work together to reduce, was the first step in implementing the GPC in a team environment. To enable this alignment, the RC Manager linked the team goals to the Customer Account strategies, and then broke those down into weekly activity goals. He said,

“it was really that weekly goal setting, but tied into what we were trying to achieve as a company within our customer accounts.”

Visible monitoring of the observed gap was also important. The RC Manager contrasted the different approaches to monitoring the gap in Toronto and Bangalore, and the team buy in towards the goal. In Bangalore the team was committed to achieving a team goal, while in Toronto, the individuals were focused on their individual bonus. To emphasize this point, the manager described with pride, how the Bangalore team had implemented a 'countdown' clock that showed the gap to target and focused the team on closing the gap. He said,

"You know, [in Toronto, the mindset is ] if we make 12 [placements] you get your bonus.

That type of thing. ... [Whereas in Bangalore] they've got a f\*\*king countdown clock. 11 to go!".

### **Feedback Mechanism**

For team pursuit of goals, consistent feedback mechanisms needed to be established, and regularly executed, in order to keep the team's activities aligned and focused on the most pressing issues holding back the team's performance. The frequency that the feedback mechanism was utilized, was linked to the rate at which decisions needed to be made regarding the goal pursuit. In Bangalore, the team implemented daily meetings to review the movement through the GPC at a micro-level, weekly meetings were held to review progress through the GPC at a summary level, and monthly meetings were used to examine the team pursuit outcomes at a more strategic level. From a practical level, the daily team meetings focused on the tasks (and progress) needed to accomplish their weekly goal. At the weekly summary meeting, the teams reviewed their progress on the week, discussed any issues and made decisions about what to do the following week to close the gap. The monthly meeting focused on a review on progress towards the monthly goal, and bringing in market intelligence so that the teams could proactively seek out candidates for new roles that were emerging in the pipeline. The RC Manager described the daily and weekly activities in the Bangalore. He said,

“we have gone to daily meetings, weekly summary meetings, goal setting, all of the goals are on [our goal tracking tool]. The leads are on it, all of that type of stuff. They understand the impact”

And he continued to describe the monthly meeting, and by contrasting the activities in Toronto, emphasized the need for the feedback mechanism to make the GPC function. He said,

“[In Bangalore] Each month it's like, here's what's gone well. Everybody's involved. It's not just like numbers and placements, it's like, here's what's going on in [Customer A], here's what's going on in [Customer B]. We might need to start pipe-lining this , that and the next thing. Whereas here [Toronto], it's just kind of like, okay well keep doing your thing that you've been doing for 15 years. That's, for me, is to get that structure [feedback mechanism] back here. The structure [feedback mechanism] and the goal setting. The structure [feedback mechanism] in those crucial conversations [is key with the team].”

### **Connecting the Feedback Mechanism with the Gap Analysis, Options & Decisions and Actions**

In practice, the Feedback Mechanisms (the daily meeting, weekly summary meeting and monthly strategic review) allowed the remaining elements of the GPC to be executed quickly, and maintain team alignment on the path forward. The Feedback Mechanism was the structural element that allowed the team to collectively analyse the gap (Element 3), develop possible ways to bridge the gap (Options), prioritize and decide which options to pursue (Decisions) and agree on the action plan to move forward (Actions).

## 5.6 Case Study of Team-Based Pursuit

As an example of how this GPC was applied in Western Canada, the Bangalore team was given an annual goal of placing twelve candidates in the Oil and Gas sector. To achieve this, it required the pursuit team (Account Managers and Recruiters), and the Account Managers more specifically, to identify and focus on key accounts in the Oil and Gas sector, and within each account, identify the specific types of IT roles that were needed, and the type of technical experience they would need (for example 'Microsoft Dynamics Project Managers with experience in X, Y, Z'). In addition, a critical aspect of placing a candidate was getting the right 'fit', from an organizational culture and technical capability point of view. Therefore the account manager had to understand both the larger organizational culture of the account, but also the team culture of the IT team that the candidate would be joining (for example, Company X has a command and control culture, and the IT Department uses 'Waterfall' design in software development'). This information was essential for the recruiter, because a software developer who is a proponent of Agile software development (which is a widely used software development methodology) would not be a good fit for this company. Another related aspect of 'technical fit' was how the candidate aligned with the technical vision for the company. Therefore, information about the larger picture of the IT environment and the technical details of the IT infrastructure roadmap were essential to ensure that the right candidate was sourced, as a lack of alignment in this area often meant that the client would not hire someone. All of this information had to be passed to the recruiter who then had to identify, screen and propose candidates who had the highest probability of being hired. As this example demonstrates, the coordination between the recruiter and account manager on these topics was essential to find the right candidates.

The practical challenge for the pursuit teams was that at the start of a pursuit, not all of this information was known. The specific details of a client's needs emerged over a series of

conversations with different people in the account; the initial conversations with the HR department would yield some information, but until the Account Manager actually spoke with the IT hiring manager about the project details, many of the technical details about the role would be unknown. Hence the importance of keeping the lines of communication open between the Recruiters and Account Managers. To manage this, daily huddles were implemented to ensure that there was a high degree of communication and coordination for every open position in the targeted accounts. Related to this, the team had weekly goals about which activities would be completed. At the conclusion of each week, the pursuit team would conduct a 'retrospective' to engage in a reflective process of evaluating what worked and what didn't in the past week, and adjusting their plans and goals for the following week. In implementing this suite of changes to both the management structures and processes, The Recruiting Company manager was able to continuously align the activities the pursuit team undertook, and reduce or eliminate barriers across silos that in the past had inhibited information flow and prioritization of activities.

In addition to these tactical changes, two strategic management processes were introduced also - a monthly business review and a quarterly business review. These allowed the managers to step away from the day-to-day activities of managing open pursuits to adopting a more strategic portfolio lens and allowed them to examine their progress to plan. These reviews focused on a more strategic conversation of the team's overall progress. They enabled a 'macro-tuning' of the account and market strategies, and for those decisions to cascade down to the weekly goals, and activities that the managers would take.

The effectiveness of this intervention was significant - it ran for six months and in that time the pursuit team hit their annual sales goal.

### **5.6.1 Summary**

The GPC model can be extended to team pursuit of goals. Additional processes need to be implemented in order to manage the Feedback process, gap analysis, option generation and decision-making activities of the group. However, when implemented as a total system, significant results can be obtained.

## **5.7 Model 4 – The Top Performer Model (TPM)**

This section describes the Top Performer Model, which describes the characteristics of top performers in this study, and how it was constructed.

### **5.7.1 How the Model was Constructed**

The Top Performer Model (TPM) emerged from the descriptive and process coding. The selective codes of Outcomes, Goals, and Individual Pursuit of Goals provided the basis for the theoretical coding that led to this model. To generate the theoretical codes, abductive logic was required, and the following question aided in that process:

- Why were some individuals successful in achieving their goals, while others weren't?

This question prompted thinking around the characteristics of high performers in the context of the GPC. By reviewing the comments from the manager about the strengths of the individuals, and closely examining the responses that individual high performers provided, a subset of attributes emerged that were common to the high performers, which became the TPM.

### 5.7.2 Characteristics of Top Performers

At the conclusion of the study, the FSC manager described the differences between high performers and low performers in his team.

“Interviewer: The contrast, the top performers and the bottom performers, from your perspective, what was the difference between those groups?”

Interviewee: I always tend to see that some just get it. They're self-starters, they're self-motivated, I always say like, they have a burning desire to succeed, no matter what and they'll just overcome any barrier or obstacle that gets put in front of them. They're always seeking to better improve themselves on a professional level and a personal level. That, I think, is the key thing, because at the end of the day, it's not whether I push them harder or not it's, am I there to support, come a time when there's an obstacle to get them really over that hump.”

These characteristics were synthesized into three key themes: Goal Focus, Growth Mindset and Persistence. Goal Focus emphasized the attention the individual put towards their goal. The FSC Manager described it as being ‘totally committed to their goals’, ‘holding themselves accountable’, being ‘self-motivated’, being ‘self-confident’ in their abilities to achieve the goal and ‘competitive’ with a desire to achieve their goal. The second theme was Growth Mindset. Here, the FSC Manager described it as ‘They’re always seeking to better themselves on a professional level and personal level’. And finally, the FSC Manager identified Persistence as a key theme. He said ‘they have a burning desire to succeed, no matter what and they'll just overcome any barrier or obstacle that gets put in front of them.

A fourth theme emerged when reviewing the interview transcripts of those identified as high performers, which was Self-Reflection. Whenever they were faced with challenges, high performers were consistently able to shift their thinking into a mode of a dispassionate observer, and were able to find ways to empower themselves on their path forward.

A summary of these themes and their associated attributes are provided in Table 5.4.

**Table 5-5: Top Performer Characteristics**

Top Performer Characteristics	Emergent from Study	Identified by FSC Manager
<b>Self Reflection</b>		
Regularly reflect on their situation to identify paths forward that empower and motivate themselves	1	
Able to 'move their thinking from the dance floor to the balcony'	1	
<b>Growth Mindset</b>		
Always seeking to improve themselves		1
Stay positive during difficult times		1
Set specific goals to make themselves better		1
<b>Persistence</b>		
Work each day on the tasks to achieve their goals		1
Personal initiative		1
Burning desire to succeed		1
Strong work ethic		1
<b>Goal Focus</b>		
Totally committed to their goals		1
Hold themselves accountable		1
Self - confident		1
Self-motivation		1
Competitive		1



### 5.7.3 The Top Performer Model (TPM)

All the traits in this model were necessary for an individual to achieve high performance when the path was uncertain. For a Financial Advisor to achieve their goal, they must build a book of business from the ground up. FSC Manager highlighted the difficulty of building a book of business when he articulated that the typical attrition rate of advisors was 50% within the first two years, and approximately 90% by the end of five years. The Financial Advisors who were successful, were highly goal oriented and as a result Goal Focus was placed at the top of the model. But wanting to be successful and getting there requires hard work, consistently over time. Thus, Persistence was placed adjacent to Goal Focus because it would directly affect the desired outcome. A Growth Mindset was also necessary because learning was at the heart of how a Financial Advisor would succeed in the long term. For a Financial Advisor this learning took on particular relevance because obtaining professional designations allowed them to demonstrate competence and gain access to a wider range of financial products/services to offer their clients. Learning was also important to improve their abilities as a sales professional. Successful Financial Advisors actively experimented with new sales approaches and techniques in order to learn what worked for them. Growth Mindset and Persistence were placed adjacent to each other because the learning process energized the individual and increased their desire to persist on task, even in the face of failures. The final element of this model – Self-Reflection - was a critical trait and a key differentiator between high performers and low performers. High performers consistently were able to self-reflect on their successes and failures, and take actions from those learnings that empowered themselves. This ability to find a way forward, even though they faced failures, was because of their reflexivity. Self-Reflection was placed beside Persistence because it increased the individual's desire to continue forward in pursuit of their goal. Figure 5.4 shows the Top Performer Model, and the relationships described here.

**Figure 5-4: Characteristics of Top Performers**



#### **5.7.4 Limitations of The Top Performer Model**

As noted, the Top Performer Model was built based on the inputs of FSC Manager, and a review of the experiences of those identified as a high performer. As a result, there are some limitations to this model.

##### **Limitation 1 - Goal Pursuit Focused on Complex, Unknown Paths**

The characteristics of this model were developed in an environment where the Financial Advisors were pursuing goals in market environments that were highly competitive, and where the pathways to finding business were largely unknown to the individuals.

Consequently, learning how to win business in this environment was a key characteristic of

successful financial advisors. For individuals working in environments where the path to goal is known, a different set of traits might be more important than the ones identified here.

### **Limitation 2 - Focus on Individuals not Teams**

This model is focused on the traits an individual needed to successfully pursue their goals.

This study did not directly investigate these factors in the context of team goal pursuit. Other factors will likely be important to augment these characteristics; characteristics such as team work, information sharing, trust and incentive alignment emerged from this study as possible elements of a team-based model. But this was not directly studied and warrants further investigation.

### **Limitation 3 - Limited Sample Size**

This model was built off of the experiences of one manager and their team. While there is an alignment with these traits, and the skills needed to successfully navigate a complex, uncertain environment, additional studies need to be conducted to evaluate the degree to which these attributes (or others) are present high performing individuals.

## **5.8 Model 5 - A Manager's Path to the Coaching Moment**

This section describes how a manager made the decision to coach, and how the model – A Manager's Path to the Coaching Moment - was built.

### **5.8.1 How the Model was Constructed**

The model of A Manager's Path to the Coaching Moment emerged from the descriptive and process coding. The selective codes of 'Coaching for Performance' and 'Barriers to Coaching' provided the basis for the theoretical coding that generated this model. To generate the theoretical codes, abductive logic was required, and the following questions aided in that process:

- Why did the FSC Manager coach frequently, while the RC Manager did not?
- Why did the RC Manager avoid coaching his lowest performing employee?

When reflecting on these questions, the stories from the RC Manager about his lowest performing employee were top of mind. At times during the interviews, the manager seemed preoccupied with this low performing individual, and would vent his frustrations over this individual's personal and professional failures. Yet he chose not to have a difficult coaching conversation. This led to insights about the role of fear and mental energy when making a decision to coach. Similarly, reflection on why the FSC Manager coached regularly while the RC Manager did not, led to the realization that the FSC Manager simply had more available time to coach. These realizations triggered the drafting of Model 5 – A Manager's Path to the Coaching Moment.

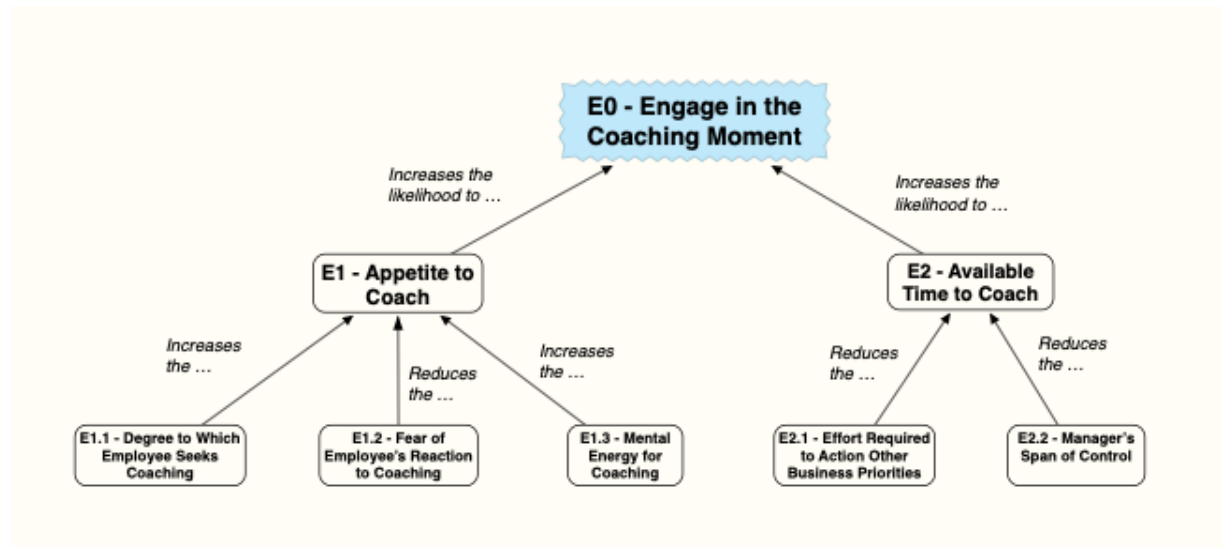
### 5.8.2 Overview of the Manager's Path to the Coaching Moment

The 'Coaching Moment' is defined as the coaching for performance interaction that a manager has with their employee. It can be a formal session, an informal session or 'in-the-moment', as a spontaneous reaction to an event they observed. In constructing this model, codes came from both the Manager's responses and the employee's responses. The model highlights various aspects of how the managers in this study made choices about whom to coach, and not to coach. The choice of the manager to engage in a coaching moment revolved around two constructs: their 'Available Time to Coach' and their 'Appetite to Coach'. 'Available Time to Coach' was a pragmatic construct that operated as a constraint for the manager. It reflected the fact that any time spent coaching was in competition with other demands for a manager's time. Evidence from this study showed that a manager's 'Available Time to Coach' was limited by their span of control (i.e., the number of resources directly being managed), and the effort that the organization expected the manager to exert on other business priorities. 'Appetite to Coach' was the second construct that emerged from the data. It was a judgement that the manager made based on their assessment of the likely emotional reaction the employee would have to the coaching, the degree to which the employee sought out coaching, and their own personal assessment of the mental energy needed to have a successful coaching conversation.

Figure 5.5 is the proposed model of A Manager's Path to Engage in the Coaching Moment. It highlights the relationships between the various elements and how they interact with each other. In the sections below, evidence will be presented that illustrates how the constructs 'Appetite to Coach' and 'Available Time to Coach' were developed, as well as presenting

data from the interviews to support the nature of the relationships that are proposed in this model.

**Figure 5-5: Proposed Model - A Manager's Path to Engage in the Coaching Moment**



### 5.8.3 E1- Appetite to Coach

Engaging in the Coaching Moment is a choice that the manager makes. It is proposed that one of two critical factors influencing that choice is the manager's 'Appetite to Coach'. This construct reflects the factors that the managers in this study considered when making the choice to engage in coaching. Each of the factors comprising Appetite to Coach will be discussed below.

### **5.8.3.1 Examining the Relationship between E1.1 - Degree to Which Employee Seeks Coaching and E1- Appetite to Coach**

The degree to which an employee seeks coaching heavily influences a manager's Appetite to Coach. If an employee does not proactively seek support, given all the other demands on a manager's time, the manager tends not to coach. The manager at RC stated,

"I really spend all of my time and energy with people who want it. People who don't, I just don't."

RC Manager also had one employee (ID 4) who was under-performing, and this belief (that the employee didn't want coaching) inhibited the manager's Appetite to Coach. He stated,

"But for somebody like ID 4, [I] don't coach them. They don't want coaching. You can feel their body language when they come in"

So, even though the employee's performance was hurting his business results, the manager did not engage in coaching for performance. In this particular case, two other factors were inhibiting 'a simple business decision' to coach; namely the E1.2 - Fear of the Employee's Reaction to Coaching and E1.3 - Manager's Mental Energy to Coach. These will be discussed shortly. The manager at FSC also made coaching decisions based on the degree to which an employee sought out coaching. He stated,

" I tell them, 'I'm hands-off, I'm always available when you need me. It's really up to you to take that initiative because I'm not going to be hounding you.' "

And he also stated how he perceives coaching in the context of goal pursuit,

“... at the end of the day, it's not whether I push them harder or not, it's am I there to support, come a time when there's an obstacle to get them really over that hump.”

The degree to which an employee sought out coaching was also influenced by their skill level in handling the activities and responsibilities of the role. Newer employees tended to seek coaching more frequently than employees who had been in the role for longer periods of time. And as the employee's skill level increased, their need for specific coaching on how to overcome obstacles reduced. For instance, when talking about a new employee at FSC, ID 13, the manager at FSC stated he often sought coaching and the manager's knowledge,

“because he [ID 13] is new, ...he's just a sponge right now.”

In contrast, ID 12, an employee at FSC with an intermediate level of experience, sought out coaching less frequently. When he did, it was focused on more complex obstacles,

“I find that he's pretty independent, but then he'll leverage me in complex situations. He will ask the one-off questions, so I know he knows that, or at least he recognizes that I may know the answer, so I do get to see him once in a while.”

And lastly, because individuals who were highly experienced, tended to have mastered the skills needed to perform in their role, they sought out coaching less frequently. At FSC, the manager stated about his most experienced employee (ID 14),



"ID 14 knew what to do and had existing clientele. Really, he just came off as, "I'm here, I know what I need to do. I'm in retirement mode so I'm not engaged. You're not going to see me every day. I'm just going to come in, I'm going to do my work and I'm going to leave."

At RC, one of the highly experienced employees (ID 3) stated that she didn't expect the manager to coach them, and indeed would try to solve the issue without engaging the manager,

"I don't expect him [my manager] to coach me, unless he sees something that he's like, 'Wow, this person is really stupid, let me give a tap like 'hey what are you doing?'" Right? If I have a question, I'll go and ask, .... Before going to ask him, I prefer to go around and ask amongst ourselves, because we know already the situation, we know the players well , so I try not to bother him."

In summary, more highly skilled employees tended to seek coaching less frequently than lower skilled employees, and a manager's Appetite to Coach an employee was influenced by the degree to which the employee sought out coaching. In short, those who proactively sought coaching, received coaching.

### 5.8.3.2 Examining the Relationship between E1.2 - Fear of Employee's Emotional Reaction to Coaching and E1- Appetite to Coach

Fear of how an employee would react to coaching played an unexpectedly large role in the study with the manager at RC. This fear was a perception that the manager had, based on real or imagined expectations of how the employee would respond emotionally to the coaching/feedback. In this study, the manager at RC had five direct reports participating, and one of them, who was his worst performer, did not receive the coaching needed to improve their performance. The reason for this was the manager's fear of the employee's reaction to an honest coaching conversation. The RC manager stated,

"The assumptions that I'm making are that I'm the only person ever in their life who is actually going to have this conversation with them. Everybody else has pussyfooted around it. **I don't want to crush their spirits** [Emphasis added]."

He also stated,

"part of it [not having a coaching conversation] is because I don't want to hurt their feelings."

This fear of the individual's emotional reaction, negatively influenced the manager's Appetite to Coach. He stated,

“You know I think in fairness to this individual, they receive the least amount of coaching, simply because and again, storing an excuse in my head, just not open to it....I have not at all coached this person on mindset, not in the last probably five years.”

This fear was not expressed in regards to the manager's other direct reports, and this phenomena was not observed with the manager at FSC. As a result, it is proposed that there is an inverse relationship between E1.1 - Manager's Fear of Employee Reaction to Coaching and E1 - Appetite to Coach; that is, the greater the fear of the employee's emotional reaction to the coaching, the lower the Appetite to Coach.

### **5.8.3.3 Examining the Relationship between E1.3 - Manager's Mental Energy for Coaching and E1- Appetite to Coach**

The manager's Appetite for Coaching was also influenced by their available mental energy for a coaching conversation. This was a self-assessment that the manager made, and if the manager believed that the coaching conversation would require more mental energy than they had available, the manager would avoid having that coaching conversation. Conversely, if the manager believed that the coaching conversation would not consume all of their available mental energy, they would engage in the Coaching Moment. The RC manager expressed the importance of mental energy (or his lack thereof) as a key element affecting his Appetite to Coach. When describing why he wasn't coaching as often as he would like, the RC manager said,

“...the other big one for me , Paul, that really is bigger than time is my mental energy. It feels like it's a lot less that what it was two years ago.”

The manager at FSC did not express this concept of mental energy as an enabler or inhibitor of coaching, but clearly this is an important element, as the RC manager declared his mental energy as an even greater factor on his Appetite to Coach than having Available Time to Coach. Based on this data, it is proposed that as the manager's mental energy for coaching increases, their Appetite to Coach will increase.

#### **5.8.4 Available Time to Coach**

The second construct for this model is the 'Available Time to Coach'. This is a practical assessment that the manager makes given their schedule, business priorities and other commitments. It is also a choice that the manager makes, about how much time is available for coaching (or not), and part of a larger trade-off that the manager makes, while balancing their organizational commitments and the individual needs of their team. Practically speaking, the manager's Available Time to Coach acts as a constraint in the decision to engage in the coaching moment.

It is proposed that there is a positive relationship between Available Time to Coach, and Engaging in the Coaching Moment. That is to say, that as the Available Time to Coach increases, there will be a greater likelihood that the manager will Engage in the Coaching Moment. Similarly, if there is less Available Time, the manager will be less likely to engage in the coaching moment.

#### **5.8.4.1 Examining the Relationship between E2.1 - Effort to Action other Business Priorities and E2- Available Time to Coach**

The Effort to Action other Business Priorities is a practical assessment that the manager makes about the work effort needed to lead, support or enable other business priorities. It is also a choice that the manager makes, about the relative importance of coaching his team, versus the other business priorities they have been tasked with. For the manager at RC, there was a great deal of organizational change that he was leading and in describing what has occupied his time, he shared,

“... just a lot of changes. Reporting structure, new groups, I've got a group in Bangalore now...The compensation change [a major internal initiative to shift from individual compensation to a team based compensation model] has been the biggest thing ...”

The manager at RC expressed his workload this way,

“I'm working until nine o'clock at night in three different time zones right now”

And as a result,

“I always feel like I'm not, like there's never enough time for me to really engage with people the way I need. There is time, I just feel like I'm - I just feel really thin and really spread”

Leading these initiatives made for less time to coach his team. One of the members of his team noted,

"Look, he's in Calgary this week, he's in India next week, how much really coaching and stuff can you do from there?"

In contrast, the manager at FSC was not leading other organizational initiatives, and had the time to regularly coach.

"I meet with all the guys. I'm meeting with them now weekly, just really looking at their activity ratios, focusing on what they did in the past week with regards to meetings or appointments, let's say, if there's a new meeting coming along I'll say, "Let me go with you so that we can work on this case together," so they get my perspective on it. They learn at the same time, so they can really get that hands-on experience."

Based on this data, it is proposed that there is a negative relationship between the Effort to Action other Business Priorities and Available Time to Coach.

#### **5.8.4.2 Examining the Relationship between E2.2 - Span of Control and E2- Available Time to Coach**

'Span of Control' refers to the number of direct reports that a manager has. The greater the number of direct reports, the greater the Span of Control. The greater the Span of Control, the less time there is for any one individual. Span of Control acts as a constraint that the manager must deal with, and negatively affects Available Time to Coach. Span of Control

was not an issue raised by the FSC Manager, but at RC, the employees naturally made the connection between Span of Control, and the manager's choice of whom to coach. ID 3 said,

"I think he has ... I don't know how many ... 30 people reporting to him. Oh, I forgot how many, but tons in different time zones ... He has more junior people. I have to have common sense, right? If he coaches me, when is he gonna coach, the junior ones?"

And the RC manager himself commented on the trade-off of having a large Span of Control, and the decision about whom to coach,

".. when you and I first started to speak, I had 18 [direct reports]. And so, what happens is that when there are issues I will ... focus on the more junior folk first and then kind of work my way up."

The senior employees recognized that the manager's Span of Control was too large and adjusted their behaviours too. They simply resisted going to their manager for support because they felt he was too busy. According to ID 3,

"I try to be as low maintenance as possible because he has his plate full."

The downside of having a large span of control was the prioritization of who receives coaching. The manager at RC stated,

"a lot of the senior folks have had little to no attention in the last few years"

One of the senior recruiters (ID 4) indicated that the RC manager would prioritize his coaching based on seniority,

“... with more junior recruiters, he definitely has a more hands-on approach. He's checking in regularly. "Where are we at? What do you need help with?" With more senior recruiters, him and I, we have an understanding that I don't work very well under micromanagement, and if you want to see results from me, leave me alone. He gets that. Not all bosses would get that, but I find that it works best for me because I can work on something without having a boss breathing down my neck. Yeah, he's different with everybody. He doesn't use the same approach with all of us. He uses the approach that is needed for that particular person.”

But through this action research process, the manager realized that not coaching someone, simply because of their seniority, was a poor choice. He stated,

“It's a bad assumption that the more senior people need less of my time”

And when discussing a recent strategic initiative on ‘self-directed work teams’ that had been implemented over the past few years, but had not obtained its desired outcome, he stated,

“And it's interesting, with ID 4 [a senior employee who was a low performer], especially over the last year, as her autonomy and freedom increased, her responsibility completely decreased and so did her production.”



The RC manager realized that his coaching (or lack thereof in this case) was a factor in the team's underperformance. He stated,

“my boss was always on me like, ‘you're too hands off.’ I'm like, ‘They're a senior team, that's all they wanted.’ He's 100% right. There's a reason that all of these people, at their ages, are not in leadership roles, they need direction. What I believed, because this is what they told me, was just, ‘No, we're good.’”

In summary, a larger Span of Control forces the manager to prioritize who is coached. The manager makes this choice to maximize the impact of his Available Time to Coach, and focuses the coaching on those with the largest skill gaps. However, more senior resources tend to be neglected, and as a result their production can deteriorate. Based on this data, it is proposed that Span of Control negatively influences the Available Time to Coach which in turn negatively influences the manager Engaging in the Coaching Moment.

### **5.8.5 Which Employees Engage in the Coaching Moment**

High Performers proactively engaged the manager in coaching moments and sought out advice. Said the manager at FSC,

“Like, [ID 13] was one of them. I could tell, as a rookie, that he would be successful just because of the way he engaged himself within the team, within the company. Always proactively reaching out for me and I never say no. He knows that I'll be there, but I can tell that he's on it. He's on the ball.”

In the case of FSC, the manager's willingness to make time available for those who wanted coaching was also used to highlight to low performers on the team that results were possible if they focused on things they could control. He stated,

"I want them to see that, you know what, there are other members of the team that are fully engaged [with the coaching] , and look at their results and what they're getting. That will directly be attributed to their attitude, their mindset, their level of engagement and all that stuff."

When asked about who was most receptive to coaching, the manager at FSC immediately called out two of his high performers. The first, ID 10, had been with the business for 2-5 years, and the second, ID 13, had been with the organization for less than two years. The content of the coaching was different based on their experience. For ID 10, it was about 'polishing' and 'refining' whereas for ID 13, it was learning about the entire business.

"Most receptive to coaching - ID 10 [a high performer with moderate experience], ID 13 [a high performer with low experience]. [ID 13], because he's new, so he's just a sponge right now. .... Yes, polishing. For ID 10 [and others], they all need to polish themselves when it comes to ... because I see the activity, and they'll see a lot of people, but their closing rate is, I would say, below average. To me it's, "You just need to polish your style." If you're good at attracting, that means you've figured out the attraction first and first meeting. The second meeting usually involves facts and figures, so maybe they need to actually incorporate that into practice. Then of course, be able to polish that presentation to close the client."

For the manager, the degree to which the employee was willing to 'put in the time' and 'do the work' necessary to be successful was also an important consideration in their desire to

coach. For example, at FSC, the manager commented on his employee who was receptive to coaching,

“ID 10 [a high performer with moderate experience] everyday was in my office. Sometimes he knows the answer but it's just to engage and show his presence. Those are the guys that eventually get rewarded.”

In contrast, the manager at FSC identified employee ID 12, who is a low performer with 2-5 years of experience at the company he rated that employee's receptiveness to coaching as '50/50'; because he has experience, the basic questions had been answered through work experience, and he now asks for coaching on more complex scenarios. The manager at FSC stated,

“[For] ID 12, [a low performer with /moderate experience, his receptiveness to coaching is] ... 50/50 because I find that he's pretty independent, but then he'll leverage me in complex situations. He will ask the one-off questions, so I know he knows that, or at least he recognizes that I may know the answer, so I do get to see him once in a while.”

For individuals with low experience, the role of coaching was very important. The examples of two low performers - ID 11 and ID 2 - were discussed extensively - and the key difference between the performance of these two individuals, was that ID 2 started to seek coaching advice from the manager and by the end of the study was achieving his quarterly goals (ID 11 did not). Individuals of moderate experience also benefited from coaching. The difference between ID 12 (a low performer with moderate experience) and ID 10 (a high performer with moderate experience) was also discussed. In this case, the high performer regularly sought out the advice from the manager, while the low performer only went to the

manager for advice in those situations when he didn't know the answer. For an individual with moderate experience, the nature of the coaching interaction with the manager changed. Sometimes it was to learn strategies for complex scenarios, but for the high performer, they continued to interact with the manager, even for problems that they already knew the answer for. In this way, they were developing their business acumen, learning if their judgement was correct, and testing their thinking before trying it in the marketplace. This was something that high performers did consistently. For senior individuals, they tended to use their experience to make choices. Senior individuals at both RC and FSC believed that they should 'know what to do' and didn't feel the manager should be coaching them. At FSC, the senior individuals had developed their own work practices, and tended to avoid seeking help. However, at RC, the senior individuals sought advice from their peers (rather than the manager) about challenges they were facing with their clients. These individuals trusted the expertise of their peers and actively sought it out.

### **5.8.6 Summary**

A manager's path to Engage in the Coaching Moment was a choice based on their Available Time and Appetite to Coach. A manager coached more often when they had the Available Time to Coach and the Appetite to Coach. The Available Time to Coach was influenced by the effort required to action other business priorities, and the manager's span of control. The Appetite to Coach was influenced by the degree to which the employee seeks coaching, the manager's fear of the employee's reaction to coaching and the manager's mental energy for coaching.

## 5.9 Case Study - Comparing the Goal Pursuit Journey of a High Performer, and a Low Performer

Models 2 and 3 described how an individual experiences the GPC through their Identity, Emotions, Options & Decisions, Actions, and Results. This section will demonstrate how these elements manifest themselves with a High Performer and a Low Performer. Through the following examples, it will be demonstrated that an individual's identity informs the choices and actions one makes to bridge the performance gap.

### 5.9.1 How a High Performer Experienced the GPC

#### Identity

ID 13 had worked in a variety of sales roles during high school and university, and credited these experiences with helping him overcome his introversion. They also made him realize how much he enjoyed working in sales and meeting new people; he saw himself as a sales person. He said,

"ID 13: I worked at the highest selling Best Buy [a consumer electronics store] in Canada.... [it was] Five and a half years before I quit this. That was my first job I ever did. I kept it all the way through [high school and university] . It just helped me develop as a person. I was a very, very introverted person when I started. I was right for sales. I was forced to meet people I didn't want to. Before ..I would have said 'no' to this meeting, because I just I couldn't stand meeting new people. Now it's all I love doing. Just a big evolution from that.

Interviewer: When did you start to realize that you loved the interaction with people?

ID 13: When I realized I'd start at 9:00AM. I look at my watch and it was 8:00 PM and I didn't realize I didn't take lunch. I didn't feel the effects of being tired. It just like, it's not work ... and I loved it."

ID 13 was a new hire at FSC, yet quickly established himself as a high performer within the new hires on the sales team. This individual was first generation Canadian, born to an immigrant family. His parents desired him to become a doctor or lawyer, and he studied neuroscience at the university level. When the time came to apply to medical school, he ultimately chose not to pursue these studies having decided that the lifestyle of a doctor was not commensurate with the salary they received. He said,

"This time last year I was actually doing my MCAT [the entrance exam required in Canada to apply to medical school] to become a doctor, but halfway through it I'm like this not something I want to do with the rest of my life. When I worked for a doctor for about nine months and I saw the healthcare profession, I'm like doctors don't make anywhere close of what they should make. I don't have the goodwill in me to be that kind of person. I'm honestly the type person of who wants to make money, but if you want to make money don't become a doctor. All my best friends are doctors, they're finishing residency, it's not what I want to do. It's a very altruistic profession."

ID 13 was motivated to make money. He said,

"For me, again, because I'm very materialistic, it's all financial, what I want to achieve, how much I want to make."

And to do that he was committing to focus on his career. He said,

“At this stage in my life, my career is the most important. At least that’s how I feel. I feel this is the most crucial time to focus, to give your all in your career, because if you're married and have kids, I think you would have to take them into consideration, and at this point I can just do this 24/7”

## Emotions

Emotions were not explicitly expressed in the two interviews that took place with ID 13. However, from the perspective of this researcher, he seemed to be a rational, level headed individual who responded to setbacks in a positive manner and focused on finding a path forward that he could directly influence.

## Options & Decisions, Actions

*Options & Decisions* reflected the series of activities the individual took to analyze the performance gap, develop options (or strategies) to overcome the gap, and ultimately make a decision about which strategy to action. *Actions* referred to the implementation of the choice(s). In the following passages, ID 13 describes his pursuit strategies (learning and self-development, targeting his warm market, cold calling, and prospecting at sports events). One of ID 13’s strengths, and keys to his success, was his focus on learning. He was willing to try new sales approaches, learn the business and learn from his mistakes. He said,

“I’m a big fan of self-deprecating humour so I’m very open to good critiquing myself, seeing where I can improve, so I mean if you can go back, rewind, see where I went wrong with what to say, for example a client. I’m more than willing to take my licks in order to better myself as a person 100%”

ID 13's strategy to develop his business was to target people in his network, his so-called 'warm market'. He did see success with this approach, but also realized he needed to try different approaches. He made a conscious choice to try three different approaches of prospecting, namely approaching an older clientele through his network, cold calling people outside of his network, and going to professional baseball games to meet people outside his network. Through this process he put himself in control of his prospecting activities and saw some success. He said,

"For me, it's more using my warm market. I knew a lot of people who, from my previous place of employment, who are young professionals. I went to University with three young professionals who- like myself - who don't know what to do with their money. That was the market I targeted. Those who don't have a lot of assets but have a good cash flow to potentially build up their net worth. That's what spoke to me after.

I've shifted my focus toward the people who are older people in their 40s, 50s who actually have been saving for a while ... I have been cold calling; I'm not a big fan of it. I feel like my personality doesn't translate through the phone. You just sound like every other person trying to sell something on the phone, so I'm not a big fan of that.

I haven't done my own networking event yet but maybe in the future, once I get more established. Honestly, it's been mostly through my warm market. Also, going to Jays games [the 'Jays' are the professional baseball team in Toronto] , I've met-- I've booked a couple of appointments there just by talking to people around me because I showed up in a suit and everyone's wearing a blue jeans T-shirt. I just try to pretend I don't know anything about baseball and let them teach me. You build camaraderie through there."



He also put a great deal of effort towards making himself more knowledgeable. This choice, to focus on something that he had control over, was also been important in improving his ability to earn new clients. He said,

“For me it's, I'm a work rat so I'll be at the office from like-- Well, I come in pretty late. I come in at like 10:00AM and 11:00AM. I'll stay till like 11:00PM or 12:00AM at night. For me, it's all about the learning process. In previous things, I don't have a financial background but I'm always trying to look for ways to improve. Whether it be putting in the work, in terms of trying to set up for a meeting or trying to learn about the person I'm going to meet with, or trying to learn more about what they need, what solutions they require, and try to make myself knowledgeable. I think that's what allowed me to be successful. Always grinding all the time. All day. Basically.”

His manager stated,

“ID 13, I believe is very committed. He's just one of those young, hungry type of guys. He's here everyday. Now he's here on a daily basis. Before, he wasn't, but he realized he needs to be here, he needs to put in the time, he needs to have that commitment. He's seeing the change because you are more involved with the people in the office, you get to talk, you get to share experiences, share stories, you're in the trenches with everybody, so that's that.”

## **Results**

These efforts led to real results. ID 13 stated,

“Goal-wise, let me think. The only goal we had was just a number of clients and amount of income I wanted. Client-wise, I didn't get where I wanted. Income-wise, I did get there, but there's always room for improvement. The last quarter was good.”

### **Summary of How a High Performer Experienced the GPC**

In summary, ID 13 clearly demonstrated four of the five elements of the GPC - Identity, Options & Decision, Actions, and Results. From an Identity perspective, he saw himself as a highly motivated, financially driven sales rep. His pursuit strategy focused on activities he could control and were targeted at specific market segments. He was also highly reflective, open to feedback, was willing to experiment with different approaches to prospecting for new clients. These characteristics led him to implement a variety of approaches to prospecting, and through his perseverance he achieved his goals.

### **5.9.2 How a Low Performer Experienced the GPC**

#### **Identity**

ID 11 had been with FSC between 2-5 years and came to FSC from another financial services organization. In his previous role he worked on internal projects with deliverables and operated in a team environment. He saw himself as a big picture thinker, a strategic planner, and an organizer. However, he admitted that executing on the details was not a strength. He said,

“My strength is an ideas guy. I'm creative ... and I'm definitely good. I have the strategic vision. I've always been a good strategic planner, but then when it comes down to the day to day kind of stuff, it's where I can get bogged down. ”

His identity as a strategic planner, and strength at orchestrating larger projects, was also demonstrated in his involvement with charities. In this case, he took responsibility for organizing a charity softball tournament and sought other opportunities in his community to organize and lead. He said,

“There's other work that I do like, I get involved in charitable situations. I organize a charity softball tournament, which unfortunately didn't happen this year, but that was on the charity side of things. I like being able to get involved in stuff like that. I'm actively seeking to get into my neighbourhood and organizing or helping to contribute and organize as well ... It's important for me to be able to share and that it's not just about me. It's about helping to make it a better place for everybody else, too.”

In line with this identity, he did not see himself as a ‘sales person’, but rather an advisor or ‘counsellor’. He said,

“I don't see myself as a sales person necessarily. I feel like I'm a counsellor, somebody who can help you out in order to provide assistance, and I prefer to see it that way.”

His primary motivation was not making money, but living a modest, comfortable life. He said,

“Interviewer: What is success for ID 11?”

ID 11: For me I think we got into this a little bit in one of our previous conversation. For me it's not so much to be a multi-millionaire, or that kind of thing. Money isn't my primary activator. It's just more or less being able to provide for my family with a healthy successful life that way ... I've pretty modest goals when it comes to money and that sort of thing. I don't need to be in a big house. I wouldn't mind traveling. I wouldn't mind

making sure my kids are comfortable. Then I don't want the struggle for money when I get to retirement age and that thing. Aside from that... It's more about friends, family just being comfortable and happy. That's pretty much it.”

ID 11 also saw himself as someone who should be able to ‘figure things out for themselves’. When discussing why he never sought out the coaching support of his manager, or anyone else that he might learn from, he said,

“It’s just not a habit for me to do that [seeking help], because I’ve tended to have to do things on my own from an early age”.

### **Emotions**

Emotions were not explicitly expressed in the two interviews that took place with ID 11, even though he did share examples of work and personal experiences in which setbacks occurred. He tended to keep his emotions inside him and appeared to accept events as they happened and try to make the best of the situation. He said,

“The past is the past, can't change that. What I can focus on, is today and tomorrow, and I got to make sure I keep doing that.”

### **Options & Decisions**

Because ID 11 had been with FSC for 2-5 years, he understood what needed to be done in his role, and was well aware of the practices needed to be successful as a Financial Advisor. He understood that in order to connect with potential leads, he needed to make many phone calls to people who would not be interested in talking about financial services. He said,

“The dials are just - It is just a numbers game because lots of people have [an unrealized need for financial help] but it's getting to the people that are at that point, looking for some help.”

He also understood that a sales person needed to be confident on the phone when speaking with prospective clients, and he believed he could do it. Yet, he admitted that he did not feel comfortable being a salesperson. He said,

“ID 11: “You've got to have that comfort and confidence in what you're doing on the phone because it comes through. It's like when they say, “Smile when you're on the phone.”

Interviewer: Absolutely.

ID 11: Because people can hear it. Same thing happens with the confidence in your own knowledge and experience as well. I think that carries through. I think ID 12 has that. I think I have that as well. Just for me, it's getting past the fact that I'm actually trying to sell this person and I have to add *my own hesitance of being a salesperson...* [emphasis added]”

He also said,

“I've always been pretty good on the phone, but I've never actually actively tried to sell people over the phone. It comes back to that again, visualizing myself as a salesperson which I'm not. *I don't see myself as a sales person necessarily. I feel like I'm a counsellor* [emphasis added], somebody who can help you out in order to provide assistance, and I prefer to see it that way.

That's not the best way to necessarily get an audience with somebody with a phone, to talk about it that way, because you have to be a bit of a salesperson in order to get that initial sit down with somebody. For me, it's just finding that the phone approach that works best for me and kind of refine that.”

ID 11 could identify his issues, but did not recognize the need to develop options on how to move forward. He did not seek to learn from his peers,

“Interviewer: Who in your peer group do you think is the best one on the phones?”

ID 11: That's a good question. I don't know”

Nor did he enlist his manager's help in overcoming this gap. He said,

“Interviewer: The reason I bring up some of these things that these be great things to talk to [your manager] about the internal thing.

ID 11: Fair enough. There's always things to learn. I've no illusions that I know everything I need to know to be most effective in this business. You can always learn from other people. With the new people, they can come in and have ideas that no one else has even thought of. It could be somebody that's started in the business a week ago and they come up with something that's fresh. Always good to talk to other people and get their perspectives. No question about it. Somebody like [my manager] with his knowledge and experience having worked with a lot of different people in the industry. I'm sure he's got a lot to show, you're right about that”

When asked in the second interview whether he had sought out any coaching he replied,

“Interviewer: Did you have any coaching this quarter?”

ID 11: No, unfortunately, no. I thought about what you and I talked about the last time with the coaching with [my manager], and you made a good point. When the time comes, I just blank, I just can't think of anything at that particular time that I really need to spend that time with [my manager].”

This inability to develop options was also highlighted when he described an incident where his computer, his primary working tool and mechanism to generate revenue, was not functioning for a month. As noted earlier in this chapter, he appeared to simply accept the obstacle and was unable to identify any other possible courses of action. He appeared to have resigned himself to the fact that the computer failure was out of his control and that he was a victim of the circumstances. Recall how ID 11 described his situation,

“ID 11: Last week, I finally just got a computer. My computer basically crapped out at the end of May. Hard drive, complete failure, lost everything that was on there. Had some backup but for some reason my backup isn't restoring completely properly. Anyways, long story short it took me a few weeks to get the new computer. I was kind of out of commission for a few weeks ... You have very limited access to any of the systems or anything, even my email .... It kind of left me on the sidelines a little bit. I had some time to think about how I wanted to address things but I couldn't really do a lot as far as any action is possible. No computer, it's amazing how used to a technology you get these days whereas soon as it's gone you were like, "Oh my God what do we do now?"

Interviewer: Well, we can use this time here together productively, and we've got until four o'clock. Maybe we can start back what was your goal that you wanted to work on over the last quarter and then how did you progress towards it?

ID 11: Well, unfortunately and I hate excuses, but the computer really does put you on a side-line because I just didn't find myself being very comfortable talking to people about a meeting and if they asked me to send them an email or ... I wouldn't have been able to do that without my computer."

When asked whether he used his manager to help generate options about this situation, ID 11 said,

"Interviewer: Did your manager help you through this process?

ID 11: I didn't really have a chance to talk to him. I didn't get into talking to him. I didn't really think that it was much but then again maybe I'm not giving him that opportunity, and that's my fault."

As these examples highlight, ID 11 was unable to self-reflect and identify options on how to overcome obstacles (becoming more proficient with sales calls or finding a solution to his computer issue). In both cases he tried to 'figure it out on his own' and did not even think to seek help from his manager or others.



## **Actions**

ID 11 frequently discussed thinking about what he needed to do to improve his performance, or describing why he could not act, and less about implementing his action plan. In this case, prospective clients often rescheduled appointments, and he had difficulty implementing his plan. He said,

“Life doesn't always agree with your plans, and so I ended up [this summer] doing a little bit more of life-work balance than I anticipated. But you know what, for me, that's not a sacrifice in any way. You got to take care of your family and I definitely was going to focus on that. The same time, I did think about what I want to do for the rest of this year, and I was reaching out to people this summer, but unfortunately, summertime is never a good time to reach a lot of people.

I don't want to hold that up as an excuse, because you can still reach people if you're persistent enough. I just found that I was getting a lot of reschedules, "I'm leaving early today, can we do this again in a couple weeks?" And that kind of stuff. Which is understood, I know. I've been working downtown for a long time now, and I understand this is how it is in the summertime.”

In this exchange, he continued that he spent his summer thinking about his goal pursuit strategy, but how ultimately, he came up with no new insights about how to grow his business. He said,

“ID 11: I just spent a lot of time thinking about, okay, what do I want to focus on in the fall so that I don't lose time doing that in the fall? Now I can hit the ground running.

Interviewer: Where did your mind take you? Where did you end up?

ID 11: It's just thinking about what I want to do, what I want to focus on and what I have to look at to be successful. I mean, I don't think I've come across any huge revelations. The business is what it is, you got to get out there and talk to people. There's no secret formula. Anything I can think of, it's been done 1000 times before, I'm sure. It's a very competitive business and there's a lot of smart people out there."

## **Results**

ID 11's goal was to achieve an annual revenue of \$100,000, but his actual performance was much lower.

"ID 11: No, I haven't been anywhere close to \$100,000 yet but then there's been other challenges in the way that I haven't had focus that I needed to necessarily 100% on the business."

His poor performance had occurred throughout the year, while he implemented his plan, it did not yield the results he hoped for.

"Interviewer: Aside from the technology issue which happened in mid-May to mid-June, if you think about the lead up to that, from January, February to May how were things going through that period of time?

ID 11: Through the beginning parts I definitely was following the game plan that I had set. I wasn't necessarily getting all the results that I wanted right away. There were certainly some good inroads made that I think could lead to somewhere maybe later this year. As

far as the end result of bringing the business in the door I wasn't meeting that expectation yet.”

### Summary of How a Low Performer Experienced the GPC

In summary, ID 11 demonstrated four of the five elements of the GPC - Identity, Options & Decision, Actions, and Results. From an Identity perspective, he saw himself as a strategic planner, an organizer, a ‘big picture’ thinker and someone who should be able to ‘figure things out’ on their own. He did not see himself as a sales person, but rather an advisor or counsellor. He was not financially motivated, but aspired to a modest, comfortable life. When faced with performance challenges, he did not use the knowledge of his peers, nor did he seek help from his manager. He also spent a great deal of time *thinking* about to do, rather than *doing* the work needed to overcome the observed gap, and when his thinking highlighted the need to engage in sales activities that did not align with his identity, such as cold-calling, he was not motivated to persist on task. In this way, his Options & Decisions, as well as his Actions were clearly informed by his identity. And in the absence of managerial coaching, he was unable to change his behaviour pattern. Consequently, he missed his financial goal by a large margin.

### 5.9.3 Comparing and Contrasting the High Performer and Low Performer

These two examples illustrate that even though the elements of moving through the GPC are the same for individuals (Identity, Emotions, Options & Decisions, Actions, Results), the content of each of these elements is markedly different for high performers and low performers (see Table 5.5). In both cases, the individuals were trying to navigate towards a goal, where the best path forward was unknown. They were both trying to **find their way**, yet one was successful and the other was not. To find their way, the individual had to move

through the Goal Pursuit Cycle. But moving through the GPC was ultimately about choices and action; choices about how to take personal ownership of the causes of the performance gaps (or choices to avoid taking ownership of the gap), and choices about which actions to undertake and attempt to close the gap. These choices and actions were influenced by their identity and how they responded emotionally to the observed gap. The four attributes of the Top Performer Model were the key behaviours that helped an individual 'find their way' when the path forward was unknown. The high performer demonstrated all of these characteristics (Goal Focus, Persistence, Growth Mindset, Self-Reflexivity), while the low performer did not demonstrate persistence, growth mindset or self-reflexivity behaviours, and marginally demonstrated Goal Focus. These examples also highlighted the role of the manager in enabling an employee's success. For the high performer, he regularly sought out his manager's coaching and support to overcome challenges, whereas the low performer never did. Clearly, coaching can make a difference in employee performance, but only if the manager engages in the coaching moment.

**Table 5-6: Contrasting a High Performer and Low Performer's Experience in the GPC**

Element	High Performer	Low Performer
Identity	Sees himself as a 'work rat' focused on learning the business; Wants to be successful; Motivated by money; sees himself as a salesperson	Sees himself as a big picture thinker, strategic planner and organizer; Wants a comfortable lifestyle; Not motivated by money; Prefers to work on his own; does not see himself as a salesperson
Emotions	Not expressed directly in interviews	Not expressed directly in interviews

Element	High Performer	Low Performer
Options & Decisions	Frequently sought coaching; learning mindset; multiple pursuit paths for prospecting; owned sales results and did not rationalize any failures. Sought new learnings and applied them.	Did not seek coaching; owned sales results but rationalized his failures. Did not seek or find new learnings from the negative performances
Actions	Daily activity; high work rate; always in office; ability to self-manage the daily detailed work	Focused on <i>thinking</i> about what to do, rather than <i>doing</i> ; low effectiveness and desire to manage the daily detail work
Results	Achieved quarterly target	Missed quarterly target by a large amount

## 5.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter focused on demonstrating how a constructivist grounded theory approach was utilized to develop five models that characterize an individual's goal striving journey. When the path forward is unknown, it is a process of *finding your way*, and each of the models developed in this study introduced different perspectives to describe how individuals 'find their way' to a goal. Model 1 – The Goal Pursuit Cycle, presented a framework to visualize goal pursuit. Models 2 and 3 highlighted the mediating role of identity and emotions in the choices that individuals make while they are finding their way to the goal. Model 4 – The Top Performer Model, introduced attributes that best enabled individuals to find their way, and Model 5 – Pathway to the Coaching Moment, highlighted important factors that influenced a

manager's decision to coach, and the vital role of coaching in helping an individual find their way to the goal. Below is a brief summary of each model.

### **5.10.1 GPC Model 1 – The Goal Pursuit Cycle**

The first model, The Goal Pursuit Cycle, was a general model that provided an overall framework on how an individual pursues goals. It described goal pursuit as an iterative experience focused on gap closure.

The GPC had five general elements that were required for an individual to strive towards a goal. The first element was an observed gap. This was a necessary starting point, because if the individual did not observe or perceive a gap from their current performance versus their goal, there would be no need to enter the GPC. For the GPC to function, there needed to be a gap to be closed. The second element of the GPC was a feedback mechanism. This could take the form of a report, a visual display in the workplace, or could occur in meetings. The third element was gap analysis. Successful gap analysis required the individual to self-reflect on the observed gap, identify potential causes of the gap, and to focus on those causes that they could influence. The fourth step required the individual to generate options on how to successfully solve those root causes, and make a decision about which actions they would implement. The fifth and final element of the GPC model was the actions step, where the individual engaged in the selected activity, and attempted to close the gap with their work efforts.

The GPC was also elaborated upon in the context of team pursuit of goals. In this case, the same elements of the model described the experiences of the Bangalore team's processes.

The main difference between how the model operated in a team environment, versus with an individual, was that the leadership needed to implement structures and processes to ensure that each element of the model was performed. These structures and processes were necessary to create alignment across the team with respect to information sharing, decision making, and actioning next steps. For an individual, a formal feedback mechanism wasn't needed; the individual was the mechanism. However, with a team, formal mechanisms needed to be put in place to operationalize the GPC.

### **5.10.2 GPC Model 2 – How an Individual Experiences the GPC**

This model focused on describing how an individual moved through the GPC and from this analysis, two new elements emerged - Identity and Emotions. Both of these factors influenced an individual's pursuit of goals. Identity, and the strengths that an individual ascribed to themselves, informed the implementation choices they made. Emotions also influenced how the individual assessed the reasons for the gap. If the individual felt they could not affect the outcome, or were unable to self-reflect and identify possible paths forward, they inevitably fell short of their goal. Those who could find ways to take ownership of the result (even if it was negative), and discover opportunities to learn from the failure, were successful over time. This was the essential difference between the low performers, and the high performers - the high performers consistently found a way to take charge of their failures, and to identify things they could do differently in the future.

### **5.10.3 GPC Model 3 – Positive and Negative Pathways through the GPC**

This model focused on elaborating the individual's path through the GPC. In this case, the focus was on how a positive and negative gap resulted in the individual experiencing the GPC differently. The positive path, led to a confirmation for the individual that the gap analysis they had conducted was correct, that their action plan worked and in so doing, reinforced their sense of self. As a result, the individual would be willing to either maintain their goal at the current level or would raise it.

A negative result led the individual through the negative path. This forced the individual to assess the reasons for the gap, which could erode self-confidence and challenge their self-identity. These negative influences forced the individual to examine their current goal, and either maintain it or lower it.

#### **5.10.4      Model 4 – The Top Performer Model**

This model focused on the characteristics that the Top Performers demonstrated while moving through the GPC. Four essential characteristics were identified: Goal Focus, Persistence, Growth Mindset, Self-Reflection. Goal Focus characterized the degree to which the individual committed to their goals, and the attention they gave to it during the goal pursuit. Persistence described the work ethic and commitment needed to achieve the goal. Growth Mindset highlighted the need for the individual to consistently better themselves, and how they regularly sought out new ways to learn how to achieve their goal. The final element, Self-Reflection was essential as this characteristic allowed individuals to deal with failure situations, and find ways to be empowered in their goal pursuit. Those who demonstrated these traits outperformed their peers.



### 5.10.5 Model 5 – The Manager's Path to the Coaching Moment

A manager's coaching can make a difference in an employee's performance. But not every employee receives coaching. A manager makes a choice to engage in the 'Coaching Moment', which was defined as the coaching for performance interaction that a manager has with their employee. It could be a formal session, an informal session or 'in-the-moment', as a spontaneous reaction to an event they observed. For a manager to engage in the coaching moment, two things needed to be present: an Appetite to Coach, and the Available Time to Coach. The Available Time to Coach was influenced by the effort required to action other business priorities, and the manager's span of control. The Appetite to Coach was influenced by the degree to which the employee seeks coaching, the manager's fear of the employee's reaction to coaching, and the manager's mental energy for coaching. High performing employees tended to get more coaching because they sought out coaching, the manager did not fear their reaction to coaching, and there was little mental energy that the manager needed to have in order to engage in the coaching conversation. In contrast, low performers typically did not seek out coaching, or even realize they needed coaching. And in one exceptional case, the coaching moment was avoided due to the manager's fear of the low performing employee's reaction to the coaching and the manager's lack of mental energy for a difficult conversation. However, when the managers in this study engaged in the Coaching Moment, they were able to help the employee move through the GPC more effectively and achieve better results.

### **5.10.6 Concluding Thoughts**

While the GPC journey was an individual one, the manager could affect the outcome through their coaching. These five models provide a guide to managers on how individuals pursue goals and the characteristics of high performing employees working in complex, uncertain environments. For individuals, these models provide a framework to understand their experiences. And for teams, the experiences of applying the GPC in Bangalore provides a window to understand the necessary structures and processes needed to create alignment in a team-pursuit. The implications of these models for business and how these models relate to the literature will be discussed in the next chapter.

## 6 Conclusions

### 6.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter begins with a reminder of the research questions and the associated gaps in the literature. From there, a description of the contributions to literature will be discussed. The discussion will then move to research methodology, and the contributions that this study has made to Action Research methodology and Grounded Theory methodology in particular. Following that, the discussion will shift to the essential differentiator of a DBA - contribution to practice. In this section, the focus will be on how individuals can leverage the insights from this study to improve their effectiveness in goal pursuit, and how managers can use the models developed in this study to improve their coaching. With the contributions articulated, the limitations of the research will be discussed which will naturally lead to a discussion on recommendations for future research.

### 6.2 Contributions to the Literature

This study focused on three important gaps in the managerial coaching literature. These were: 1) there is little evidence of the factors that influence the day-to-day decisions by managers to take advantage of coachable moments; 2) the domain of employee coaching is in need of scientific rigour both for construct clarity and theory development, and 3) the call for control theory to be an organizing framework for coaching. To investigate these gaps, the study utilized action research to generate data, and a constructivist grounded approach to generate answers for three research questions: 1) how do individuals strive for goals in complex, uncertain environments; 2) what are the goal striving characteristics of high performing individuals, in complex, uncertain environments; and 3) what influences a

manager's choice to coach for performance. Each research question supported more than one gap in the literature and these relationships are summarized in the table below. The rest of this section will focus on the contribution of the study to each of the gaps in the literature.

**Table 6-1: Summary of the Key Gaps in the Literature and the Research Questions**

Gap In Literature	Source	Research Question 1 How do individuals strive for goals in complex, uncertain environments?	Research Question 2 What are the goal striving characteristics of high performing individuals in complex, uncertain environments?	Research Question 3 What influences a manager's choice to coach for performance?
There is little evidence of the factors that influence the day-to-day decisions by managers to take advantage of coachable moments	Turner and McCarthy (2015)	N/A	N/A	✓
The domain of employee coaching is in need of scientific rigour both for construct clarity and theory development	Grant & Cavanaugh, 2004; Hagen, 2012; Hamlin, Ellinger, & Beattie, 2006; Mclean, Yang, Kuo, Tolbert, & Larkin, 2005, Cassidy & Medsker, 2009; Pousa, 2012; Pousa & Mattieu, 2014	✓	✓	N/A
The coaching for performance literature has recently called for control theory, a central principle of self-regulation, to be considered as a possible organizing framework for coaching	Gregory et al., 2011	✓	✓	N/A

### **6.2.1 Gap 1 - There is little evidence of the factors that influence the day-to-day decisions by managers to take advantage of coachable moments**

This study contributed to the literature by highlighting a set of factors that influence a manager's choice to coach, and how the utilization of skills and performance coaching develops a set of attributes that were identified as the key differentiators of high performing employees.

### **Visibility into Factors that Influence a Manager's Choice to Coach**

Turner and McCarthy (2015) highlighted that there is little evidence of what factors influence the day-to-day decisions by managers to take advantage of coachable moments. In their research they found six broad themes that influenced this choice: 1) the awareness of the coach of a coachable moment, 2) the employee's openness to coaching, 3) the relationship and level of trust between the manager and coachee, 4) the available time the manager had to coach, 5) the location for the coaching moment, and 6) the coach's skills themselves.

Model 5 - The Manager's Path to the Coaching Moment - highlighted two constructs that influenced the manager's choice to coach. This model articulated that a manager needed to have both an 'Appetite to Coach' and the 'Time to Coach', and that the degree to which these were present influenced the amount of coaching the manager engaged in. The 'Appetite to Coach' construct showed that a manager's desire to coach was influenced by the degree to which the employee sought out coaching, the manager's own fear about how the employee would react to the coaching, and the mental energy that the manager had to conduct the coaching. This notion of managerial fear influencing the choice of coaching was highlighted in a study by Turner and McCarthy (2015), as was the need for 'available time' to coach, and this model supports those findings from their study. However, their study did not discuss the concept of the 'mental energy' that the manager needs in order to engage in the coaching moment, nor the degree to which an employee proactively seeks out coaching, so in this regard, Model 5 contributes new insights into the factors that influence a manager's choice to coach.

### **6.2.2 Gaps 2 & 3 – The Lack of Coaching Construct Clarity, and The Call For Control Theory To Be Considered As A Possible Organizing Framework For Coaching**

This gap was studied by exploring how an individual moves towards a goal, and the characteristics of a high performer. By investigating these areas, control theory, was found to be a useful organizing framework for coaching, and the characteristics of high performers aligned with the goals set forth by skills and performance coaching. These conclusions will be discussed in more detail.

#### **The Alignment Between the Goals of Skills and Performance Coaching (SPC), And The Characteristics Of High Performers**

Model 4 - The High Performer Model, visualized the attributes of high performers (Goal Focus, Persistence, Growth Mindset, and Self-Reflexivity). These attributes complemented the focus that the literature had identified in Skills and Performance Coaching (SPC), which was to have the managerial coach engage in dialog with the coachee to: 1) find positive motivation, 2) expand mindful awareness, 3) build self-efficacy, 4) recognize learning opportunities, 5) design learning experiments, 6) support perseverant efforts, and 7) savour every success (Tschannen-Moran, 2010). The only coaching aspect of SPC that the Top Performer Model did not touch on was the need to 'savour every success'. For instance, Self-Reflexivity aligned with 'expanding mindful awareness', 'building self-efficacy', 'recognizing learning opportunities', and 'supporting persevering efforts'. Equally, Growth Mindset aligned with 'expanding mindful awareness', 'building self-efficacy', 'recognizing learning opportunities', and 'design learning experiments'. Persistence as a characteristic mapped directly to the 'support persevering efforts' goal of SPC coaching, and the Goal Focus attribute, which had elements of personal accountability and 'burning desire to

succeed' as it's core, aligned with 'find positive motivation in the employee to achieve their goal'. As a result, this study augments the SPC literature and provides support that SPC coaching will develop more capable employees operating in complex, uncertain environments. A summary of the aspects identified by Tschannen-Moran (2010) and the Top Performer Model are outlined in Table 6.2.

**Table 6-2: Connecting Skills and Performance Coaching to the Attributes of High Performers**

Goal of Skills and Performance Coaching	High Performer Attributes			
	Goal Focus	Persistence	Growth Mindset	Self-Reflexivity
Find positive motivation in the employee to achieve their goal	✓			
Expand mindful awareness			✓	✓
Build Self-Efficacy			✓	✓
Recognize Learning Opportunities			✓	✓
Design Learning Experiments		✓	✓	
Support Perseverent Efforts				✓
Savour Every Success	Not expressed by participants			

## Self-Regulation

Control Theory (CT) and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) describe the structure of self-regulation (Kanfer, 2012). These theories introduced the foundational concepts of the feedback loop, and goals/sub-goals arranged in a nested hierarchy, into the self-regulation literature. This study confirmed that these concepts were in use by the participants.

However, the GPC model also augmented our knowledge of the feedback loop, as it focused it on the actions/behaviours of an individual engaged in goal pursuit and re-contextualized it in the language of the business. In doing so, the GPC enabled itself to be used as a coaching framework, because it focused on a sequence of actions/behaviours that both an individual, and a manager, could recognize and work together on improving (through coaching).

In depicting how an individual experiences the GPC (Model 2), and the positive and negative pathways through the GPC (Model 3), the influencing role of identity and emotions in the context of goal pursuit were articulated. Lord et al. (2010) highlighted that self-regulation occurs at varying levels of abstraction, and that long-term goals trigger the activation of the working self-concept. In this study, self-identity was shown to be a factor in how an individual made choices about which goal pursuit activities to engage in, and operated as an implicit standard (reference point) against which performance feedback was compared. If over a long period of time, the feedback consistently conflicted with the individual's working self-concept, then eventually the individual would lower their goal; this was seen very clearly through the experiences of ID 3 and ID 5.

Model 3 visualized the feedback loops of the GPC with positive and negative pathways. It supported the findings of studies by Ilies et al. (2010), and Cron et al. (2005). In these two studies, the findings showed that positive affect led to upward goal revision, negative affect led to downward goal revision, and that the lowering of the goal was due to a reduction in self-efficacy. Of note in Model 3 is that it does not refer to 'self-efficacy', but rather 'self-confidence'. This particular word choice was made because the managers in this study consistently referred to their coaching focus on improving their employee's 'self-confidence'. However, in the context of this study, when a manager referred to 'self-confidence', they were describing their employee's 'self-efficacy'.

In summary, the Goal Pursuit Cycle depicts the self-regulatory process of individual goal striving. Since managerial coaching for performance is focused on achieving business goals, the GPC could be utilized as a coaching framework. When used this way, it allows the manager to identify which part of the employee's self-regulatory cycle is least effective, and then focus their coaching on how to increase the employee's self-efficacy in that area.



### **The GPC in Team Goal Pursuit**

DeShon et al. (2004) studied self-regulatory processes around the pursuit of team goals. They found that an individual's self-regulatory processes were separate from a team's regulatory processes. They also found that team-efficacy increased with positive feedback, and that both team-mastery and team-performance orientations were positively correlated with team-efficacy. However, the greatest performance successes were with a team-mastery orientation. Quigley et al. (2007) studied the impact of motivation, incentives, and trust on knowledge sharing within a team and its impact on goal pursuit. In their business simulation, they found that knowledge sharing was greatest when there were high norms within the team on knowledge sharing. They also found that self-set goals were the highest when there was high trust between team members and high self-efficacy. Lastly, they found that team performance was highest when knowledge sharing was high, and the team had high self-set goals.

### **Extending the GPC Model to Team-Pursuit of Goals**

While not the intent of this study, through the actions of the RC manager in deploying the GPC to his team in India, evidence of the GPC operating in a team environment was opportunistically gathered. The RC Manager deployed the GPC as a system of management, and used it as a mechanism to focus the members of the two departments on a set of discrete goal pursuit activities that occurred at a team level AND as a mechanism to maintain alignment between the groups on their pursuit activities. By doing so, he maintained his team's focus on the goal and strengthened the team-efficacy about their ability to successfully execute the tasks needed to achieve the goal. When considered as a system of team management, the GPC acted as an enabler of: trust, mastery orientation, team-efficacy, knowledge sharing and higher self-set goals. The manager used it as a

process to bring the different team members together, create alignment of thinking and maintain focus on actions that would generate the greatest step towards the goal. Take for example the Observed Gap. For the team to be effective, they first had to discuss which gaps should be measured, then prioritize and agree on the most important gap(s) to measure. With that complete, they needed to discuss and agree on how to measure the gap, what the desired gap reduction target would be, how progress would be monitored, who would be responsible for developing and disseminating any reports to the team, and at what frequency. The process of working through this was essential to generate the buy-in and alignment with the individuals, and the team as a whole. It also took time and effort to complete. But without treating the Observed Gap as a 'process step', and engaging in the dialogue to align the team on the various aspects of the gap, the goal pursuit team was unlikely to achieve an optimal outcome. In a similar way, the second element - the Feedback Mechanism- needed to be co-created with the team. In a team pursuit, the Feedback Mechanism was often a team meeting in the form of a 'daily huddle' or 'weekly team meeting'. What made the feedback mechanism effective was the scope of its mandate. It's purpose was three-fold: 1) bring the individuals who could influence the process of gap closure together to discuss the current state of the gap, 2) identify the key issues generating the gap, and 3) to increase the rate of knowledge sharing amongst the team members. Once the feedback mechanism was engaged, the next step, Gap Analysis, occurred naturally. In practice, the first half of the daily huddle was focused on clarifying the problems (and ruling out those potential issues that were NOT the issues creating the gap). The second half of the daily huddle focused on the team working together to generate deeper thinking on the root causes of the key issues, and to prioritize next steps. These next steps focused on developing options around how to solve the issues, taking a decision on which solutions to implement, and then acting on those choices.

Just as self-regulation has many levels of abstraction (Lord et al., 2010), so too did team regulation in Bangalore. In this case, the RC Manager implemented a weekly review meeting to act as the feedback mechanism on weekly goals, and implemented a monthly meeting to reflect on progress towards quarterly goals. These nested feedback loops mutually reinforced the choices that were being made, and enabled better decision making because information was cascading down from the more strategic monthly meeting to the tactical weekly and daily meetings. Similarly, information flowed up from the activity level, to aid in the decision making processes at the weekly meeting, which in turn pushed more relevant information about the strategic gaps to the monthly meeting.

As demonstrated through this example, when the GPC was deployed as a management system, it institutionalized the norms of knowledge sharing, and thus increased the effectiveness of knowledge sharing across the pursuit team. It also increased trust, self-set goals, and team efficacy as was demonstrated by the Bangalore team achieving their annual performance goal in five months. In this way, this study contributed evidence towards the team-regulation literature. It also highlighted both that the GPC model can be transferred to another organization, and that it can be scaled from self-regulation to team-regulation. The natural experiment in Bangalore, India also provides evidence that team-regulation needs structure and process to be successfully enabled.

## **Summary**

This study has addressed two gaps in the managerial coaching literature. Findings from this study highlight that top performers ‘find their way’ to their goal by leveraging the attributes identified in the Top Performer Model, and that these characteristics align with the focus of Skills and Performance Coaching. The GPC highlighted the steps that individuals take in pursuing goals, and re-framed self-regulation in the language of business. Models 2 and 3

focused on how an individual experiences the journey of moving towards a goal, and shed light on the influencing roles of identity and emotions in goal pursuit. This study also contributed to our understanding of the factors that enable managerial coaching and the barriers to engage in a coaching moment by introducing the construct of 'Appetite to Coach' and its sub-elements of Mental Energy, Fear of Employee Reaction and Employee's Desire for Coaching. The study also provided a glimpse into the scalability of the GPC from individual goal pursuit to team pursuit and the important role of the GPC as a mechanism to improve team knowledge sharing, trust, and team-efficacy, which result in higher self-set goals, and greater team performance.

### **6.3 Contributions to Methodology**

One of the main critiques of action research is that it does not lend itself to theory generation and that little is written about how to do it in the AR literature (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007). Conversely, the grounded theory literature has written extensively about the techniques necessary to generate theory and as a result, many action researchers have integrated grounded theory into their research methodology (Teram, 2014). In this study, grounded theory was used to add rigor to the data analysis and enable theory generation. Since little has been written in the action research literature about how to generate theory, this study makes a methodological contribution to the literature by articulating processes on how to increase the adoption rate of interventions, and how to abductively create theory.

### **6.3.1 Tactics to Gather Data - Improving the Adoption of Interventions Through Intervention Workshops**

From an action research methodology point of view, four principles emerged from this study about how to effectively implement interventions. These were:

- 1) Focus on problems that participants believe are important.
- 2) Simplify the intervention to its most basic form.
- 3) Design workshop interventions using the Kolb cycle.
- 4) Expert facilitation is needed to create transformational learning in the workshop.

Each of these principles are discussed below.

#### **Principle 1: Focus On Problems That Participants Believe Are Important**

The first learning was that the intervention itself needed to be focused on a problem that the group believed was important. If the group did not believe there was a problem, they would not engage in implementing the intervention. This was demonstrated clearly with the manager's rejection of the coaching book intervention that was designed to provide them information on how to strengthen their coaching practice. In this case, the managers did not ask for an intervention to improve their coaching; it was an intervention that was imposed on them, and it was not accepted. Conversely, the peer coaching process was adopted because the individuals at RC Company felt this was a problem, and that the technique would help them improve it.

### **Principle 2: Simplify The Intervention To It's Most Basic Form**

The second learning was that the selection of the 'right problem' was not enough to guarantee the success of the intervention. In this study, the participants at the Recruiting Company identified that there was a need to better track the coaching activities and their progress towards goal. This triggered the design and implementation of a Coaching Process Form. The design of this form was overly complicated, and too time consuming to complete. Unsurprisingly, not a single individual engaged in the use of the tool that they had requested. It was 'over-engineered' and from the point of view of the individuals, not worth the effort to complete it. In hindsight, a better strategy would have been to design the form together with the participants in a workshop format, and to distil it down to its essentials; if tracking coaching activities and reflections on that process was important enough to do, Principle 1 should have been enacted, and a workshop should have been conducted.

### **Principle 3: Design Workshop Interventions Using The Kolb Cycle**

Designing the workshops to follow Kolb's learning cycle increased the adoption of the interventions. Every successful intervention in this study was implemented via a workshop that was designed and delivered using the Kolb Cycle. All other interventions failed to yield a behavioural change in the participants. The workshops all moved through the following steps. The first step was to introduce the focus of the intervention (such as peer coaching), and then to describe how to apply the tool/process/technique. This was done in a short period (typically fewer than 15 minutes), to maintain the energy and engagement of the participants. With the tool explained, the researcher/facilitator initiated an exercise for the participants to apply the tool. This provided the 'concrete experience' necessary in Kolb's model of adult learning. The exercise itself might only have taken 10-15 minutes, but was enough for the individuals to have experienced the process, and to have some thoughts to share. The facilitator then moved into a group exercise to focus on reflective thinking (Kolb's second stage). This involved a series of prompt questions that the individuals would reflect

on. With this complete, the facilitator would lead the group through a discussion to draw out themes, gain consensus from the group on their experiences, and synthesize what they learned from it. This step of aligning on the insights and themes moved the group through the abstract conceptualization phase of the Kolb learning cycle. Lastly, the facilitator led the group through a discussion of how the tool/process/technique could be applied in their teams and garnered support to pilot it during the coming days and weeks. In this way, the participants moved into 'active experimentation' which was the final element in the Kolb model. By adopting an action learning strategy to intervention implementation, the participants bought in to the change and adopted it.

#### **Principle 4: Expert Facilitation Is Needed To Create Transformational Learning In The Workshop**

An intervention workshop, while needing to be thoroughly planned, is a highly unpredictable experience. As a result, an accomplished facilitator is needed to be able to react to the situations emerging in the workshop and guide the participants through the Kolb learning cycle. This requires the facilitator to be very comfortable managing their own thinking, and the group's thinking, through three simultaneous processes that follow Mezirow's transformative thinking model. The first level of thinking that the facilitator needs to manage, is the content of the workshop. The facilitator needs to understand the actual workshop content (in order to answer questions from the group), the spirit of the content (in order to respond to unexpected lines of inquiry from the participants), and the overall objective of the intervention (to guide the direction of any ad hoc decisions that need to be made during the workshop). The second level of thinking that the facilitator needs to manage is process. All successful workshops have a flow and are timebound. The activities in a workshop lead the participant from one step to another in a way that feels natural. The facilitator needs to maintain the flow of the workshop, even when unexpected things happen, and must be constantly vigilant on the way the workshop is being experienced from the point of view of

the participants, the business itself, and the researcher; each stakeholder must benefit from the workshop and the facilitator is responsible for managing the process of the workshop to ensure a positive outcome for all. The third level of thinking that the facilitator must possess is the ability to illuminate any lurking assumptions that are emerging from the participants, the business, or the researcher and to bring these into the group discussion. When all three levels of thinking are present (content, process, assumptions) then all stakeholders have a positive workshop experience and there is buy-in to the change the workshop is instigating.

The other practical reason why expert facilitation is essential is that the participants are taking time away from their busy day to come to the workshops that were generally 1.5-2 hours in duration. They must feel like the time was worthwhile. Because if they do not, they may not return to the study, and if enough negative feedback is generated by the participants, the organization could decide to halt the study. On the other hand, if the facilitation is strong, and the interventions are focused on important problems, designed to be simple and easy to implement, and the group has a transformative experience in the workshop, then there is a high likelihood that the intervention will be implemented.

### **6.3.2 How to Generate Theory - A Technique to Engage in Abductive Thinking**

From both an action research methodology and grounded theory methodology point of view, a methodological contribution from this study was the demonstration of a technique on how to think abductively. To think creatively, a series of steps were used to catalyze the ideation process that led to the creation of the theoretical models. The first step was to identify any significant events that appeared to be outliers, contrarian or in some way unexpected. With



these identified, the second step was to establish a standard, or reference point, that they would be compared to. The third step was to create a question that contrasted the unexpected event against the standard. This step, the creation of the question, was the critical step to trigger the abductive thinking. The fourth step was to move into a divergent thinking pattern where possible answers to the question were generated (i.e., hypotheses), which was followed by the fifth step, a convergent step, where these answers were reduced, simplified, reworked, and ultimately prioritized to a set of hypotheses that 'made sense' given the constant comparison that was occurring between the hypotheses, and the coded data. The sixth step, focused on drawing relationships between the constructs. This visualization exercise provided the vehicle to engage in a deeper level of constant comparison as it moved the analysis to a comparison of both content of the constructs, and a consideration of how they related to each other. The seventh step was to validate the models with individuals not familiar with the study, to gather feedback on the reasonableness of the model.

## **Summary**

This study contributed to research methodology in two ways. The first was through the articulation of four principles to increase the effectiveness of intervention workshops, and thereby increase adoption of the intervention by the participants. The second contribution was the demonstration of a procedure for abductive thinking. This procedure can aid researchers in their movement from selective coding to theoretical coding.

## **6.4 Contributions to Practice**

One of the strengths of grounded theory is its ability to generate middle range theory; theory that is rooted to specific social phenomena or that is situated in its context (Eriksson and

Kovalainen, 2011). Eriksson and Kovalainen (2011) also note that this strength is one of the chief criticisms of grounded theory; that too often its practitioners do not generate grand theory. However, as a practitioner, middle range theory is immensely useful because it is situated in context. The thick narrative of grounded theory allows the reader to engage in mental excursions, where the stories and models of participants allow the reader to imagine the scene, and extrapolate the findings into their own world. In contrast, for a practicing manager, grand theory can come across as 'academic', abstract, and too distant from their daily challenges. This study focused on creating middle range theory, where the emergent models articulated aspects of goal striving and managerial coaching that were practical, and rooted in the evidence provided by practicing managers, financial advisors and recruiters. The impact of each model on the practice of business is discussed below.

#### **6.4.1 Model 1 – The Goal Pursuit Cycle (GPC)**

##### **Making the Language of Self-Regulation More Approachable**

The concepts and language of self-regulation were derived from cybernetics (Karlovy, 1993), but in their typical representation are abstract and academic in tone. The GPC on the other hand, is a representation of self-regulation that is expressed in the language of business. The term 'goal pursuit cycle' (rather than 'self-regulation cycle') was a purposeful choice because it establishes the central reason for self-regulation, namely the pursuit of goals, directly in the title of the model. This reframing of the academic language into the language of the 'layman', was a direct result of using a constructivist grounded approach to the data analysis. By using a constructivist grounded approach, the voice of the participants surfaced, and the practical steps that the individuals took to pursue were more explicitly stated. This in turn created a model of goal pursuit that was more recognizable by those working in business.

### **The GPC as a Coaching Framework**

The GPC can also be considered as a coaching framework. In this way, the model acts as a blueprint to inform both the employee and the manager that there are unique stages of goal pursuit, and that the individual moves through them sequentially. In practice, there is often a tendency for an individual to move quickly from the observation of a gap to implementing a solution. However, as the sequential nature of the model implies, the quality of the solution that is implemented is influenced by how well the gap was analysed, the options that were generated, and the decisions made about which options to move forward. To simply jump to a solution increases the likelihood that the instinctive choice that the employee made was sub-optimal. By exposing the structure of the feedback loop to the employee, the manager can engage in a very different coaching conversation, which focuses on clarifying the employee's current understanding of the step they are in, exploring a range of options on how to move to the next step, and finally supporting the employee's decision on how to proceed. For any manager (but especially new or aspiring managers) this is of benefit, as it demystifies the goal striving process, and makes explicit what was perhaps intuitive or tacitly understood.

### **Enabling the GPC with Coaching Questions**

Having a mental model of goal pursuit also allows different questions to be posed. In the case of the GPC, more specific and contextually relevant coaching questions can be used by the manager to increase the effectiveness of the goal pursuit by their employee. Managers will have their own coaching style, but the general form of the questions in each phase should follow a diverge-converge pattern. A manager should start the coaching with a divergent question that is specific to the issue, and phase of the GPC that their employee is in. By doing so, they will trigger the employee to engage the creative part of the mind to

answer the question, generate new options, or identify new possibilities. For instance, if the employee was in the Gap Analysis step of the GPC, the manager could ask a divergent question such as 'What do you think is causing the gap?', or perhaps a more deeply focused question such as 'What is your role in the gap? And, how might your actions have contributed to the gap?'. These type of divergent coaching questions force the employee to think. They initiate a search for an answer, which is a creative process, and also illuminate for the manager, the level of understanding that the employee has of the gap. With potential options generated, the manager would then shift to a convergent question that focuses on activating the individual's analytical processes. Continuing with this example, a convergent question that the manager could ask is 'What do you think is the most important issue/problem that needs to be addressed to overcome this gap?'. This type of question is a 'focusing question', as it forces a convergence of thinking about the central issue causing the gap. When coaching into the GPC, it is essential that divergent and convergent questions are paired together. A series of diverge-converge question pairs can also be linked with great effect and when done well, a natural flow in the coaching conversation is created.

Since the GPC also acts a framework for coaching, Table 6.3 provides a sample set of coaching questions that a manager could use to support their employee's progression through the GPC. These questions were generated after the study, based on this researcher's professional experience. They are provided as an example of how a manager could use the GPC as a coaching framework. Managers can use any questions to coach for performance, but from experience, questions following a divergent-convergent pattern have been found to be very effective. By following this pattern, the manager can move the individual's thinking in a fluid way that generates results. The focus of the coaching pattern is to continuously empower the employee to find activities that they can have control over that will move them towards their goal.

Table 6-3: The GPC as a Coaching Framework

Constructivist Model Element	GPC Model Element	Purpose of Coaching Questions	Sample Coaching Questions	Divergent Question	Convergent Question
Results	Observed Gap	Create awareness and alignment with coachee on which gap to focus on, and how it can be observed (measured).	How many different ways could you measure your goal?	✓	
			How many different ways could you measure <i>progress</i> towards your goal?	✓	
			Which of these ways to measure the goal are the most important?		✓
			Which reports are available to monitor progress?	✓	
	Feedback Mechanism	To define the feedback mechanism(s) that will drive gap analysis	What is your target performance level on these measures? And what is your actual performance today? Should we continue to move forward and close the gap?		✓
			What are possible ways that you could gather feedback on how you are progressing towards your goal? (Consider meetings, informal discussions, existing reports etc..)	✓	
			Which of these would be the most useful for you, in terms of understanding your gap and enabling a gap analysis?		✓
			What needs to be done to enable these feedback mechanisms?	✓	
Choices	Gap Analysis	To identify and prioritize the key drivers of the observed gap	What needs to be done NOW?		✓
			What do you think is causing the gap?	✓	
			Are there other possible causes of the gaps that you have not mentioned? What else could be contributing to the observed gap?	✓	
			What is your role in this gap? How might your actions have contributed to this gap?	✓	
	Options and Decisions	To develop options on how to solve the prioritized drivers and decide which one(s) to implement.	What do you think is the most important issue/problem that needs to be addressed to overcome this gap?		✓
			What are possible ways we could solve this issue/problem?	✓	
			What are you really good at? How could you apply these strengths to help you overcome the reasons for the gap?	✓	
			If Google, Amazon or Apple were to solve this problem, how would they approach it?	✓	
			What are you assuming about the reasons for the gap? If that assumption wasn't true, what would you do?	✓	
			Which of these solutions would have the biggest impact on solving our issue/problem?		✓
			Which of these solutions do you have the most control over? Which one(s) do you want to implement?		✓
Actions	Actions	To develop an action plan that the coachee agrees to	What are all the activities you need to do in order to implement your most important idea?	✓	
			What sequence must they be done in? Can any activities be done in parallel?		✓
			What would have to be true for your solution ideas to work?	✓	
			How can we test these assumptions? What would a successful test look like?		✓
			What help do you need to implement these plans?	✓	
			What are you going to do coming out of this meeting?		✓
			What is the most important thing I can do to support you on this?		✓
Emotions	N/A	To raise the self-awareness of the individual about how they responded emotionally to the gap and the effect that their emotions had on their choices	When did you last experience success? What are all the things you did to create that success?	✓	
			How might you create more of those positive experiences? What are all the things you could do to re-create the circumstances for your success?	✓	
			What are all the aspects of the current goal pursuit do you feel you can influence?	✓	
			Which of these do you feel would make the biggest impact on your goal pursuit now?		✓
			What emotions did you experience when you Observed the Gap?	✓	
			Which ones most affected you?		✓
			Where else have those emotions presented themselves at work?	✓	
			Was the impact positive or negative? How did they impact your performance?		✓
			What thoughts do you have on how to prevent (or minimize) the impact of negative emotions on the activities you do at work?	✓	
			How many ways could you change the situation that triggers the negative emotional response?	✓	
			When the negative situation occurs, what are all the things you could do to shift your focus away from the event itself, into something you can influence?	✓	
			Which of these ideas do you think would make the biggest impact on managing your emotions?		✓
Identity	N/A	To create a link between how the individual sees themselves and the choices they make at work that reinforce this identity.	What is one technique or idea that we have come up with that you would like to try to implement?		✓
			What are all the things you are really good at? What do you love to do? How does this show up at work?	✓	
			When do you feel most energized at work? What activities or situations create positive energy for you?	✓	
			Which of these are most applicable to your current goal pursuit?		✓
			What new skills/capabilities would you want to develop in the coming years to make you an even better version of your current self?	✓	
			Which of these skills/capabilities are most applicable to your current goal pursuit?		✓
			What is one capability that you could develop during this goal pursuit that would help you move towards your longer term vision for yourself?		✓

### 6.4.2 Model 2 – How an Individual Experiences the GPC

While the GPC described the process of goal pursuit, it does not describe how an individual experiences the journey towards the goal. When examining how an individual experiences goal pursuit, two additional elements were important - Identity and Emotions. Expressing

these two elements in a model of goal pursuit was important because it made these intangible factors visible. By putting them in a model, there is now a platform for both individuals and managers to discuss the role of identity and emotions in the choices that the individual is making during their goal pursuit; it provides a basis to engage in deeper and broader coaching conversations with their employee. For the individual, it allows them to visualize that an emotional response to a result is natural, that it influences the choices they make and over time, and their emotional response to performance discrepancies may even affect how they see themselves. Because it is expressed as a causal network, it allows the manager and the individual to discuss how the various elements are being experienced and how they are affecting the employee's performance. Additionally, by highlighting the role of emotions in goal pursuit, a coaching dialogue about emotional intelligence is a natural outcome. In short, from a contribution to practice, this model allows for a different, and deeper, coaching conversation to be had.

### **6.4.3 Model 3 – Positive and Negative Pathways Through the GPC**

Both Model 2 and Model 3 can be used interchangeably by the manager to understand how the individual experiences the GPC. Model 3 portrays a picture of how the individual experiences positive and negative feedback. In a similar way to Model 2, this model facilitates coaching conversations by establishing a common set of activities that the individual moves through. The distinction that this model creates is the separate pathways based on positive or negative progress towards goals. This model also presents a more 'process driven flow', and by clearly delineating these paths, it allows a 'compare and contrast' discussion between how the individual experienced positive success versus negative results. This creates a powerful coaching mechanism for the manager as it provides them the opportunity to ask questions such as 'When did you last experience

success?', 'What role did you play in creating that success?' or 'What aspects of the current goal pursuit do you feel you can influence? And how might you do that?'.

Another practical contribution of Model 3 was the use of the business vernacular to describe the pathways. Terms such as 'self-confidence', 'reasons for success/failure', 'Decision to Maintain or Adjust Goal', were used because these were the phrases that the individuals used in their interviews. The literature also highlights the importance of these concepts, but expresses them differently. For instance, 'self-confidence' maps to 'self-efficacy', 'reasons for success/failure' maps to 'failure attributions' and 'Decision to Maintain or Adjust Goal' maps to 'goal revision'. The benefit of the constructivist approach is that the models themselves feel natural to practitioners and thereby increases the likelihood that they will be used as the managers and individuals can more readily see their experiences expressed by the model.

#### **6.4.4 Model 4 – The Top Performer Model**

This model highlighted four key attributes that high performers shared when pursuing goals in complex, ambiguous settings (goal focus, self-reflexivity, growth mindset, and persistence). The usefulness of this model is that it highlights the importance of these attributes in achieving high performance and provides a focus for managers and HR/OD practitioners to develop content that will support the development of these capabilities in their organization. For a manager, awareness of this model can also shift their coaching focus. For instance, to coach for Goal Focus, they could ask questions such as "How important is achieving this goal to you?", "How do you monitor your progress towards goal and the outcomes of the actions you take to move towards this goal?". To coach for Self-Reflexivity, the manager could ask "What worries you most about closing this gap?", "How much risk are

you willing to take to achieve this goal?”, “How often have you gotten out of your comfort zone while pursuing this goal?” or “What role do you believe you play in the performance results you have observed?”. To coach for Growth Mindset, the manager could ask questions such as “What do you think you need to learn, in order to be successful with this goal?”, “How do you learn best?”, or the manager could connect coaching on both self-awareness and growth mindset with a series of linked questions such as, “What might you be assuming about this gap? What tests might you create to determine if this is true?”. Persistence can also be coached through the use of questions such as “What are all the actions you could take that are in your control, and will move you towards your goal?” or “What have you learned [about pursuing this goal] since we last met? Given that, what are the possible changes that can be made to the pursuit plan? Which ones make the most sense to you?”

As these examples demonstrate, the attributes from the Top Performer Model can be a useful starting point for very powerful coaching conversations that will strengthen the performance of the employee.

#### **6.4.5 Model 5 – The Manager’s Path to the Coaching Moment**

The usefulness of any model is the degree to which it helps explain the phenomena being studied. In this regard, Model 5 presents two constructs that help describe why a manager engages in the coaching moment. The first was the Appetite to Coach, which comprises three sub-elements - the degree to which the employee seeks coaching, the fear that the manager has of the employee’s reaction to coaching, and the mental energy the manager needs to coach the employee. The second construct was the Available Time to Coach. Available Time to Coach was influenced by the effort that the manager needed to exert on



other business priorities, and the manager's span of control. Like Model 4, this model adds value in the HR/OD and Managerial Coaching practice areas by highlighting the fact that there are reasons why managers choose not to engage in a coaching moment, and the fact that a number of these factors are based on perceptions by the manager. Thus, this model allows HR/OD practitioners to become aware of these barriers, and provides a basis to design programs that will overcome them. Each of the elements of the model could be developed as experiential workshops that would allow the manager to self-reflect on their current state, learn a basic set of practices to better self-manage each factor, and then develop an action learning plan to implement the practices.

### **Coaching the Coach**

With the usage of a few simple coaching questions, this model can also form the basis of a very different coaching conversation between a manager and their manager. For instance, to explore the factor 'Fear of Employee's Reaction to Coaching', the manager's manager could engage them in a powerful conversation by asking questions such as "Who on your team is the least likely to respond to coaching?", "What do you believe their reaction to coaching would be?", "Where else do these [employee's] reactions/behaviours/mindsets show up in their work?", "What affect do you think NOT having a coaching conversation with them is having on them? On the team?", "What would have to be true for you to have a courageous coaching conversation with them?", "What might you be assuming about this individual that is prohibiting you from having a coaching conversation with them?", "What could you do to set yourself up for a successful coaching conversation with them?". By asking questions such as these, the manager's manager can learn what is holding back the manager from having the difficult coaching conversation, and potentially highlight that there are a number of assumptions holding back the manager from acting.

Similarly for the factor Mental Energy for Coaching, there is an opportunity to create more awareness in the manager as to the impact of this factor on the coaching choices they make with their employee. By engaging in a coaching conversation about this, the manager's manager could shift the focus of the manager from 'not having the mental energy' for these conversations, to ways in which they can manage their own mental energy differently and put it to the best use. For instance, the manager's manager could ask questions such as "When do you have the most mental energy at work?", "What was the coaching experience like, for you and for your employee, when you were full of mental energy?", "What situations drain your energy? How might you reduce or eliminate your participation in these?", "What do you think is the impact of coaching your employee with 'less than optimal' levels of energy?", and "How many different ways could you maintain or increase your mental energy?". Any combination of these questions would trigger a productive conversation about how to proactively manage their mental energy with respect to employee coaching.

In short, this model allows managers to become more aware of the conscious and unconscious choices they make each day about coaching their people, and affords them the opportunity to become more proactive in their journey to the coaching moment.

## **Summary**

A grounded approach was used to develop the models in this study. As a result, there is an inherent applicability to them because they were developed inductively. The GPC is a useful model because it makes tacit knowledge explicit. In this way it provides a map that highlights different points in the goal pursuit journey, and allows individuals and managers to navigate the journey with greater awareness. Because of this, the GPC becomes a coaching framework. With the use of coaching questions that follow the diverge-converge pattern, a manager can increase the goal focus, self-reflexivity, growth mindset of their employee, and

persistence on task. The results from this study can also be of use to HR/OD practitioners as they develop content to improve the effectiveness of their people, and realize the importance of the Kolb learning cycle in designing effective action learning programs for their teams.

## **6.5 Limitations of the Research**

This thesis has demonstrated the role of self-regulation in the pursuit of goals, and has shown how it was applied in both individual goal pursuit and team pursuit of goals in complex, ambiguous environments such as sales. These models also act as a framework for coaching because they describe behaviours that the individual (or team) must engage in to achieve goals, and acts as a common blueprint to guide a coaching dialogue between the manager and employee. This study also made contributions to action research methodology as it demonstrated how the use of adult learning principles in designing intervention workshops, and the use of expert facilitation during the workshops could increase participant buy-in and willingness to implement the intervention concepts in their regular work routines. From a grounded theory methodology perspective, this study highlighted the important role of questions in triggering abductive thinking and how the use of divergent-convergent thinking patterns could be used to generate theoretical models. Ultimately, this study developed five models to strengthen the managerial coaching literature, however there are limitations to the findings, which will be discussed below.

### **6.5.1 Limitation 1 - Inability to Explore Key Emergent Insights with Participants**

One of the early methodological decisions was to hold-off on conducting detailed data analysis of the interview data until the end of the study. This was done to maintain momentum through the action research cycles, to keep the focus was on designing the next set of interventions, and from a stakeholder management point of view, to ensure that client expectations were properly managed during the interventions. This led to a positive action research experience for the participants, however because attention was not given to conducting the deep data analysis during the study, it was not possible to get access to the participants to follow-up on emerging insights from the data analysis. For Models 1, 2 and 3 this was less of an issue, however for Models 4 and 5 it was material.

#### **Impact on Models 1, 2, 3**

Models 1, 2 and 3 showed the GPC through different lenses. The variations of the GPC model emerged through glimpses of insight that resulted from the various responses of each participant, and through this collection of data fragments, a cohesive causal network of goal pursuit emerged. No one participant provided the total picture. Some participants discussed identity, others discussed identity and their emotional response to performance gaps, different individuals discussed their strategies (or lack thereof) to overcome barriers, managers talked about coaching for self-confidence etc. But through this, there was enough substance and repetition to the data fragments, that a fulsome picture of the causal network could be drawn. Additional interviews would not likely have changed the shape or interactions of the causal network in Models 1, 2 and 3, but would have allowed the participants themselves to confirm that these models represent their views and experiences.

#### **Impact on Model 4**

Model 4 focused on the characteristics of top performers pursuing goals in complex, ambiguous settings. In its current form, the model is useful, as these characteristics were demonstrated by the top performers, however it would be inappropriate to describe it as 'complete'. This is because determining the characteristics of top performing individuals was not a central research question for this study, and therefore the interview questions did not probe for it. Had more data collection opportunities been available, the identified traits could have been explored more fully, and other aspects of a top performer could have emerged. This model, while a useful starting point, requires further investigation to fully describe the characteristics of top performing individuals in single person pursuit teams, two-person pursuit teams and multi-person pursuit teams.

#### **Impact on Model 5**

Model 5 focused on the factors that influence a manager's choice to engage in the coaching moment. It is a useful model, in that it contributes to both theory and practice, however it is not a fulsome model. This is evidenced by the fact that there was not enough supporting contextual data from the interviews to create a causal model showing interactions and feedback loops, which one would expect in a situation such as this. The inability to draw a causal network, implies that there are potentially other factors that contribute to the manager's choices, and that the full mechanism driving a manager's decision to coach has not been fully exposed. The lack of richness in the data occurred because the focus of the study was not on the inhibitors of managerial coaching. As with model 4, had additional interviews been available, a more holistic model could have been created.

### **6.5.2 Limitation 2 - Transferability of the Models - Limited Sample Size and Differing Sales Contexts to Study How Individuals Strive for Goals**

These case studies focused on two organizations, with a total of two managers and twelve individuals. The organizations that participated in this study were from differing industries, and had differing client bases; the Recruiting Company operated in the B2B space, while the Financial Services Company operated in the B2C space. Another key difference between the two organizations was the composition of the pursuit team. At the Financial Services Company, the pursuit 'team' was comprised of one individual - the Financial Advisor. Whereas at the Recruiting Company, the pursuit team comprised of Account Managers (who did not participate in the study) and Recruiters (who did participate in the study). As a result, the context of the goal pursuit was quite different between the two organizations. And while the GPC cycle was shown to transfer between these two contexts, it would be highly recommended to conduct follow-on research with other 'pure' single-person pursuit teams to examine more deeply how the GPC model operates in that situation. In a similar way, because the Recruiting Company operated in a 2-person pursuit team configuration (Account Manager + Recruiter), it would be beneficial to conduct another study to evaluate the transferability of these findings into other simple pursuit teams. This study did not examine pursuit teams comprised of three or more people, and it would be expected that as the size of the pursuit team increases, other influencing factors would emerge as important.

### **6.5.3 Limitation 3 - Data Feeding Models Came From the Pursuit of Goals in Complex, Uncertain Environments**

The models developed from this study were situated in sales contexts where the path to a sales transaction were complex, uncertain and highly competitive. In both organizations, the participants could only engage in activities that would influence an outcome, but the reality was that they were not in control of the client's final purchase decision. As a result, the participants in both organizations were constantly trying to learn how to navigate through uncertain waters to achieve their goals. However, there are many situations in business where processes and activities have been standardized and work is highly repetitive – the opposite of the context that these models are rooted in. This study did not consider goal pursuit under these conditions and it is useful area for future research.

### **6.5.4 Limitation 4 – The Possibility that the Researcher's 'Power' in the Researcher-Participant Relationship, Influenced the Data Provided by the Participants**

One of the goals of action research is to reduce the distance between the researcher and the researched (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). This implies that the action researcher has power in the relationship between themselves and the researched, and one of the possible implications of this power, is that the participants may selectively provide information that the researcher *wishes to hear*, not necessarily the truth. If this was the case, then the analysis that was based on this information, as well as any models or frameworks developed from this information, would not fully represent the phenomena being studied.

At the heart of this risk is the issue of trust. Does the participant trust the researcher enough to tell them the truth, and how would the researcher know if the participant trusted them? A corollary of this is to ask 'how psychologically safe did the participant feel?', with the assumption that if they felt safe, they would share their true thoughts.

Participants demonstrated psychological safety in numerous ways during this study, such as revealing their emotions during interviews, by acting in a way that demonstrated their own autonomy in making decisions, and by choosing alternative paths than the ones suggested by the researcher during the interventions. In terms of revealing emotions, there were a variety of ways this was done. One participant, in describing their relationship with management, broke down and cried in the middle of the interview, because of the stress and frustration that was felt. Other participants candidly shared the frustrations they felt with themselves as they failed to achieve goals, and were clearly proud when they shared stories of their successes. Visible displays of emotion such as these left the impression that the participants were truthful in their responses about their goal pursuit journeys.

Other evidence of trust and psychological safety were demonstrated by the choices participants made about whether to accept (or not) the interventions that were introduced. For instance, participants gave feedback during Action Research Cycle 3 that some of the interventions were ineffective (and should be stopped), while others were somewhat effective (and needed to be modified). Had a degree of trust and psychological safety not been present, the participants would not have spoken up and engaged in dialogue over what to change. Another example came from a low performer at FSC. The individual had asked for advice during their interview about how to improve their results, and in this intervention, two pieces of advice were given: engage with their manager, and engage with their peers who



were accomplished in the task. In the subsequent interview with the same individual, they were asked if they had followed up with their manager and/or engaged with their peers. The participant responded that even though they thought these were good ideas, they had not done either of them. This example shows that the participant felt safe enough to respond honestly about their own actions, even when they did not follow the explicit advice of the researcher. It also highlights that even though the researcher had a measure of power (being able to introduce interventions), and could have been perceived as an extension of management, the participants themselves also had power. They had the power to choose what they wanted to do (or not), to say what they wanted (or not), and through this demonstrated that the power the researcher held over their choices was limited.

In summary, it is possible that the participants may have withheld information, or altered how they presented it during this study. But upon reflecting on the overall research journey, there was a high degree of safety and trust throughout the action research cycles, and the responses the individuals gave about their own goal pursuit journeys felt truthful and natural. However, additional studies are needed to evaluate the degree to which the models developed in this study are dependable, credible, confirmable and transferable (Guba and Lincoln, 1992).

## **6.6 Recommendations for Future Research**

This research focused on the key gaps that the literature has identified between coaching and performance. While this study has made contributions to these gaps, continued research is needed. The following areas are suggested:

1. The Goal Pursuit Cycle (GPC)

- Further examining the transferability of the GPC in 1-person, small pursuit teams (2-3 individuals), and moderate sized pursuit teams (4-7 individuals) in complex, ambiguous environments such as sales;
  - Examining the transferability of the GPC in project teams working inside an organization;
  - Examining the transferability of the GPC to internal work teams focused on executing repetitive, known activities;
  - The role of organizational processes and other influencing elements that enable the GPC in the team pursuit of goals;
2. The Role of the GPC as an Organizing Framework for Coaching
- Examining the effectiveness of the GPC as a performance coaching framework;
  - Identification and development of tools to enable managers to use the GPC as Performance Coaching Framework ;
3. The Influence of Identity and Emotions on Goal Pursuit
- Examining how individual self-identity shapes activity choices in goal pursuit;
  - Examining how individuals manage their emotions through the GPC and its implications on the choices they make;
  - Examining how individual self-identity and team-identity interact when pursuing team goals;
4. The Top Performer Model (TPM)
- Examining other characteristics of top performers that should be included in the TPM;
  - Development of a scale to measure the elements in the TPM
  - Examining the degree to which the TPM (which focuses on an individual) extends to a Team TPM in complex uncertain environments;
  - Examining the degree to which the TPM extends into individual and/or teams focused on executing repetitive, known activities;

5. Engaging in the Coaching Moment

- Further examining the enablers and barriers for a manager to engage in a coaching moment;
- The influence of Appetite to Coach in the coaching and performance relationship.

## 7 Personal Reflections

### 7.1 Reflecting on a Year Long Action Research Study

Chapter 4 covered the details of the Action Research cycles and gave the reader insights into how the interventions evolved over time. But in looking back at the *process* of action research itself, five important insights were discovered: 1) AR is a journey into the unknown, 2) the choice of interventions is really about managing trade-offs, 3) how an intervention is introduced is a critical choice; 4) the process of sense making is the only thing you control, and 5) AR is not for the faint of heart. Each of these lessons will be discussed in more detail.

#### **AR is a Journey Into the Unknown**

In action research, almost everything the researcher does is a reaction to new and emerging information. Only the starting point of the first intervention is pre-defined; everything after that is a result of what is discovered in the AR cycles. Often new information is uncovered which exposes assumptions that were made in the research design, or shift the meaning of data that was captured earlier. Because of this, the action researcher is continuously evolving their thinking about the interventions, and revising their plans about the next steps in the study. One of the key inputs into this decisioning process is the feedback from the participants about what is working (or not) with the intervention. Their input is vital to create interventions that work, and to help make sense of the nuance and implicit meaning in the language of the business. Participant feedback also helps clarify what steps should be taken next in the study, and more importantly how to best take those steps in order to avoid potential problems that are not obvious to an outsider. To navigate through the unknown AR pathway, both the participants and researcher must work together.

### **The Choice of Interventions is Really about Managing Trade-offs**

Every AR project starts with a plan, or roadmap, on how the researcher envisions the study progressing. But because the AR journey is filled with unanticipated changes, the path forward is constantly being assessed to determine if the current path is the correct one, and whether it is worth it to continue exploring a certain line of inquiry. In the case of this study, the factors affecting the path choice were: the time remaining in the study, the number of interventions that could be practically introduced, lack of access to relevant data/systems to gather supporting performance data, limited access to participants and manager, and the researcher's available time to design, implement, and revise the interventions.

The intervention(s) chosen were ultimately a compromise between what the researcher wanted to do, what was possible given the constraints, and what was realistic for the participants to implement. Given these conflicting criteria, the design of the intervention was critical; it needed to interact with the topic under scrutiny, yet be practical enough to be usable in the organizational environment. It had to be useful enough that the participants would choose to use it, and allocate their energy towards it (over other competing demands for their time and energy). It also had to be simple enough that the participants could execute it successfully, with minimal (if any) supervision. The interventions did not have to be perfect to generate useful data, but they did need to be 'good enough' to have the participants apply them. In this way, being flexible with the intervention design aided in their adoption.

### **How an Intervention is Introduced is a Critical Choice**

For an intervention to be useful, it must be used. *How* the intervention is introduced is a critical choice for the action researcher, as it directly affects the adoption of the intervention itself. Consequently, the introduction of an intervention needs to be considered from a change management perspective. The rigor of the change management activities should

match the degree of behavioural change that the participants are being asked to undertake. If a trivial behavioural change is required, then the change management can be quite simple, even an email instructing the participants what to do may suffice. However, if the desired behaviour change is not trivial, a much more hands-on and interactive engagement with the participants is needed. In this study, not having a meaningful engagement with the participants caused two interventions to fail (Int2: Coaching Book for Managers and Int5a: Coaching Process Form), and these were due to the underestimation of the behaviour change element.

### **The Process of Sense-Making is the Only Thing You Control**

After the first action research cycle, the illusion that the researcher had control over the interventions was shattered. What became apparent was that it is the participant's choices about what activities they would do (or not do), and the environment that they operated in (management priorities and organizational culture) that drove the utilization of the interventions. So, what was the role of the action researcher, if not to conceive and implement interventions? After the second AR cycle, it became clear that the role of the researcher was not to implement interventions per se, but rather to drive the process of sense making throughout the AR Cycle. With that insight, the definition of a successful intervention changed; yes, the intervention needed to be a well thought through attempt to stimulate a response in the environment, and yes it needed to be introduced correctly in order to generate useful data, but an intervention was now defined as 'successful' if it effectively enabled the sense-making process. This mental shift allowed a greater feeling of control over the study, while simultaneously giving permission to allow the interventions to follow whatever course they took. This was a very liberating realization as it removed the burden of having to create a 'perfect' intervention, because a 'perfect intervention' was impossible given the inherent trade-off choices in every design. So instead, the focus shifted to create interventions that were 'good enough'; good enough to study the topic of interest,

good enough to be adopted by the participants, good enough to get the job done and generate useful data.

The sense-making process was key therefore to being able to successfully harvest the insights from the interventions. This became the focus starting in AR Cycle 3, and it was here that the power of the group workshops and the interviews were utilized to iterate the interventions, and gain clarity on what was working.

### **AR is Not for the Faint of Heart**

Looking back on this action research project, there is a logic and flow to the interventions, but what is difficult to express is how at every stage of the study, choices needed to be made that were marked by uncertainty and the unknown; what interventions would be appropriate, how would the participants react to them, how the interventions would be used in their daily work, and whether the interventions would even yield insights, were all unknown when they were implemented. And this occurred with every AR cycle.

On top of this, when doing action research with a business, it was also clear that the organization itself was hoping to achieve a business result from this work. So, the interventions took on an even greater importance, and the stress that it created should not be underestimated. However, this is what also makes Action Research interesting and exciting. Action research is not for the faint of heart, and to be successful in this type of research, you must be comfortable, being *uncomfortable*.

### **Concluding Thoughts on Action Research**

There are many ways to generate theory. There are many ways to generate meta-learnings from the practical experiences of business. But for making the connection between theory and practice, and exploring how to operationalize theory, I for one, cannot think of a better

way than Action Research. This type of research is not easy, nor is gaining access to organizations to conduct this type of research easy; and a year is a very long time to conduct live operational research - anything can go wrong, and probably will. But, it is incredibly worthwhile and it is my hope that more researchers have the opportunity, and courage, to take this path. To quote Robert Frost,

“I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I -  
I took the one less travelled by,  
And that has made all the difference.”

- Robert Frost, The Road Not Taken



## 7.2 Reflecting on the DBA Journey

*“The real voyage of discovery lies not in discovering new lands but in seeing with new eyes”*

*- Marcel Proust*

Conducting research is a journey of discovery. Through the DBA I learned that it requires new eyes to discover new land, and that if you want different answers, you must ask different questions. Asking different questions requires you to adopt a different perspective from the one you already know. But to do this, you must first become aware that other perspectives are possible, learn what each one contributes, and *then* make a choice about which perspective to adopt. It is only at this point that you are in a position to ask different questions, and find different answers. Since questions generate answers, one of the most powerful insights for me was the role of ontology in shaping questions, epistemology in shaping answers, and how many people (including myself for a large part of this study), are unaware of how their point of view on knowledge creation shapes the very questions they ask. At the start of the program, the questions about ontology and epistemology seemed ‘academic’ and ‘trivial’ to my practical engineering brain; I was simply going to design a study, run some organizational experiments, collect data via interviews, and analyze it. In my mind at the time, these philosophical questions were simply ‘noise’ surrounding what I needed to do, or so I thought. This mindset continued, even as my action research study began. However, as participants responded to the interventions and interviews in unexpected ways, I began to wonder why they responded in the manner they did. A shift in my thinking began as I got serious about the data analysis. I tried to approach the data as a *tabula rasa*, and it was then that I realized how wrong I had been about my philosophical stances. In the case of my study, there was no *one-truth*, but many people’s *own-truth*, and the grounded approach to data analysis solidified this insight. This was a breakthrough in my

thinking, and it took a deep reading of the interview transcripts, and the process of constant comparison, for me to realize it.

The DBA has deepened my existing skills too. I entered the DBA program as an experienced Lean Six Sigma change agent, an expert facilitator, and an accomplished educator. These strengths were critical during the Action Research cycles, as they gave me confidence that I could navigate through the complex and uncertain path of designing and implementing interventions in organizations pursuing business critical goals. The AR cycles were imperfect, some failed and others were successful, but moving through this process, and using Mezirow's framework for transformative thinking, allowed me to make sense of the chaotic process of implementing change. I became comfortable, being uncomfortable, and came to deeply understand that the only things I could control was the process of change, and the rate at which individuals/teams moved through the change process itself. Everything else was out of my control, and it was liberating to realize that the 'everything else' was 'data' for my subsequent analysis. This emancipatory insight has carried through into my action learning consulting, and has relieved the pressure of being a 'perfect consultant'. It has given me the knowledge (and confidence) to explain to my clients how they can expect to feel during the engagements, and to provide them assurance that they and the organization will be stronger as a result of the process.

The focus of my consulting has also evolved based on the learnings from the DBA. When I began the program, my work was a mixture of developing and implementing corporate training programs focused on process improvement and leadership development, with a few action learning programs. Now the focus has shifted such that almost all of my work focuses on designing and implementing action learning projects to solve important business problems. In fact, I now routinely coach clients NOT to engage in training-only programs, but instead to engage in action learning, because this is how adults learn best. I now work with

my clients to design a program to solve a business problem, such that the participants and the organization obtain a return on their investment.

When I look back on the DBA, I realize that the real power of the program is that it gently, but consistently, forces you to confront that which you do not know. Growth happens when things get uncomfortable, and through the process of realizing my knowledge boundaries, wrestling with my limitations, developing skills to overcome them, and then breaking through these false ceilings, I developed a deep-seated belief in my abilities to answer any question. Through this, I realized that the only thing that was holding me back, was me. But this, of course, is what was understood at the end of the journey. I now appreciate the DBA not only as a liminal space on the journey from practitioner to scholar, but as a liminal space in developing one's self. As I leave this program, I realize that I am still me, yet I am different, forever changed.

*"And the end of all our exploring*

*Will be to arrive where we started*

*And know the place for the first time"*

*- T.S. Elliot, "Little Gidding"*

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## **Appendix A – Example of Workshop Intervention**

# Financial Services Company

## - Sales Team Coaching Study

### Goals, Obstacles and Assumptions Workshop

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June 16, 2016

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## Agenda



- The Process of Dialogue
- Dialogue 1 Exercise
- Dialogue 2 Exercise
- Next Steps

## The Process of Dialogue



- Brainstorm by yourself your thoughts/ideas/perspectives about the questions that are presented (3-5 min)
- Thinking Round : Dialogue with Partner (10 min)
  - Person 1 will have 5 minutes to talk and think out loud about the questions; Person 2 simply listens, does not interrupt and gives their colleague their full attention
  - Person 2 will have 5 minutes to talk and think out loud about the questions; Person 1 simply listens, does not interrupt and gives their colleague their full attention
- Write down any new ideas that have emerged (3 min)
- Team Sharing Round: (10-15 min)
  - Each person will have the opportunity to share an insight with the group
  - Write down any additional insights that emerge

## Dialogue 1



- Consider the goal you set.
  - What obstacles presented themselves to you?  
What did you learn in trying to overcome them?
  - What assumptions did you make about this journey? What did you learn from them?
- How might you use this information to help you in the future?

## Dialogue 2



Consider the coaching sessions you have had towards your goal.

- Content
  - What was the focus of a typical coaching session? What did you cover? Was it successful? Would you do anything different?
- Process
  - What was a typical coaching session like? How did you prepare for it?? How did you experience the coaching session itself? What did you do after the coaching session?
- Assumptions
  - What assumptions did you make about the coaching process? What assumptions did your coach make?
- What have you learned about the coaching process?

5



## Debrief



- What have you taken away from this discussion?

## Next Steps



- Review your goal and the actions you are taking to accomplish your goal. Have a dialogue with your manager on what's working (or not).
- If you were to make one change that will most help you achieve your goal? What would it be? Talk with your manager about the change you want to make. Develop a plan to make it happen.
- We will cover the content of this workshop in our next interviews

## **Appendix B – Example of Interview Questions**



## Manager Interview Guide

The Henley Business School, University of Reading, UK, is conducting a research study to better understand the degree to which coaching, goals and self-efficacy affect the performance of individuals in achieving their goals. In our interview we will cover the following questions, and may follow any themes that emerge in our discussion.

### Question Set 1: For Each Recruiter....

- What was the goal that they selected to work on this past quarter? Were they successful?
  - If yes, what do you believe were the key factors contributing to their success?
  - If they were not, what do you believe were the key factors contributing to their lack of success?
  - To what extent do you feel they leveraged their strengths in working towards their goal?
  - If you were to classify their key developmental need, would it be a skill that needs developing? A mindset that needs improving? Other? ... and do you think they can develop this?
- What was your personal coaching strategy for them?
  - What did you focus your coaching on?
  - How much time did you spend coaching this individual?
  - Did you have any specific plans or tactics in how you wanted to coach them?
  - How did you monitor their progress towards their goal? How often did you monitor it?
  - What was a typical coaching session like for this individual? Can you provide an example of a typical coaching conversation/session with them?

### Question Set 2: Reflection on Your Coaching Experience

- Consider your coaching experiences with the members of the team since we started this study. Looking back,
  - What is your goal for coaching your people?
  - What seems to be working well? Can you share an example?
  - What obstacles (if any) have you faced in coaching your team?
  - What assumptions have you made about your coaching? (Consider assumptions about yourself, your team, etc...)
    - Which assumptions turned out to be true/valid?
    - Which ones turned out to be false/inaccurate?
  - Is there anything you plan to change in your coaching strategy or tactics for this coming quarter?
  - Is there anything else that you would like to share with me about your coaching goal(s) and your journey towards it?
- Are there any personal insights you have derived from these questions, or your experience in pursuing your coaching goals?

Thank you for your honest answers.



## Recruiter Interview Guide

The Henley Business School, University of Reading, UK, is conducting a research study to better understand the degree to which coaching, goals and self-efficacy affect the performance of individuals in achieving their goals. In our interview we will cover the following questions, and may follow any themes that emerge in our discussion.

### Question Set 1: Progress Towards Your Goal since our last interview

- What goal did you choose to work on this past quarter?
  - How was your progress towards that goal? Did you reach it?
  - Are you still working towards it?
  - To what extent do you feel you leveraged your strengths in working towards your goal?
- What obstacles have you faced (if any) in your journey towards your goal?
- If you were successful in achieving your goal, why do you believe you were successful? If you were not successful, why do you believe you were not?
- Looking back on your performance, what key assumptions did you make when you set your goal? (Consider assumptions about yourself, your team, your clients, the business, the competition etc...)
- Which assumptions turned out to be true/valid? Which ones turned out to be false/inaccurate?
- Is there anything else that you would like to share with me about this goal and your journey towards it?

### Question Set 2: Reflecting on your Coaching To Date

- Did you have any coaching sessions with your manager regarding your goal? How many? Where did the sessions occur? What did your coaching sessions focus on?
  - Were the sessions effective? Ineffective?
- Can you relate an example of either a good coaching session you had with your manager/coach?
- Were there any ineffective coaching sessions? Can you relate an example of one of these?

### Question Set 3: Goals for the next 3-4 months

- Moving forward, what goal do you want to set for yourself over the next 3-4 months?
- What are the key tasks/activities you will need to accomplish in order to successfully achieve your goal?
- How confident are you in your ability to successfully complete those tasks and achieve your goal?
- Looking ahead to the pursuit of your goal, what do you believe the coaching sessions with your manager should focus on?

### Question Set 4: Reflective Thinking

- Reflecting on your previous goals and experience working towards them, do you plan to do anything differently this quarter?
- Are there any personal insights you have derived from these questions, or your experience in pursuing your goal?

Thank you for your honest answers.

## **Appendix C – Example of Weekly Email Reminders**

## Appendix C – Example of Weekly Email Reminders

Tuesday, May 21, 2019 at 11:54:05 AM Eastern Daylight Time

**Subject:** Coaching Reminder and Inspiration (Week of Aug 14 - Aug 20, 2016)  
**Date:** Monday, August 15, 2016 at 9:11:53 AM Eastern Daylight Time  
**From:** Paul Snowden  
**To:** [REDACTED]

**Attachments:** image001.png

Good Morning Everyone,

*'Things which matter most must never be at the mercy of things which matter least.'* – Goethe

*'The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing'* – Steven Covey

Time is precious. You only have so many hours in a day to accomplish what you must accomplish, and once that time is gone, you will never get it back.

**What is the main thing that you must accomplish this week?** *Write it down at the top of your page.* What are the things that you can do that directly help you achieve your goal. Be as specific as possible, and write them down on the left hand side of the page. What are the other things that are vying for your time and attention? *(Write them down on the right side).*

### My Goal This Week

ACTIVITIES/ACTIONS THAT DIRECTLY HELP ME ACHIEVE MY GOAL	THE OTHER THINGS ON MY TO DO LIST

It is your choice how you manage your time. What will you choose? Those things that help you achieve your goal? Or the items on 'Other Things' list, which seem important, but are really just noise.

How can you leverage your peer coaching conversations this week to help you achieve your goal?

Be amazing!

- Paul

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## **Appendix D – Open, Selective and Theoretical Codes**



## Open Codes

Open Code - Level 1	Open Code - Level 2	Description
Coaching	Coaching Initiated By Employee	The employee initiates the coaching conversation
	Coaching Initiated By Manager	The manager initiates the coaching conversation
	Formal	The coaching conversation occurs formally and is planned; is scheduled
	Informal	The coaching conversation occurs ad hoc; is not planned
	Highly Frequent Coaching	Coaching at least four times per month (once per week)
	Medium Frequency Coaching	At least once a month
	Low Frequency Coaching	Once or twice every 3-4 months (or less)
	None or Very Little	Once or twice a year
	Delegated Coaching	Coaching is delegated to an untrained subordinate
	Coaching Impediments	Those barriers present for a manager to provide coaching
Barriers to Coaching	Barriers to Seeking Coaching	Those barriers present that prevent an employee from seeking coaching
	Employee's Conscious Choice Not to Seek Coaching	Individual Doesn't Believe they Need Coaching
	Lack of Manager's Availability	Manager does not have time to coach
	Unconscious Decision to Not Seek Coaching	Individual doesn't realize they need coaching; they think they are ok
	Belief that People don't need it	Manager believes that the individual does not need coaching
Coaching Topics	Ability to Grow Sales	Coaching topic focuses on how to grow sales
	Lack of Clarity on Career Path	Coaching topic focuses on the employee's career path
	Quality of Output	Coaching topic focuses on the quality of the output the employee is generating
	Quantity of Output	Coaching topic focuses on the quantity of output the employee is generating
	Self Confidence	Coaching topic focuses on the individual's self-confidence
	Speed	Coaching topic focuses on how quickly the individual jumps on new opportunities
	Dealing with Difficult People (Internal to Org)	Coaching topic focuses on how to deal with difficult people inside the organization
	General Business Coaching	Coaching topic focuses on general business topics
	How to Deal with Clients	Coaching topic focuses on how to deal with clients
	How to overcome internal company issues	Coaching topic focuses on how to overcome internal company issues
	Mindset	Coaching topic focuses on the individual's mindset
	Personal Development	Coaching topic focuses on the individual's personal development
	Specific Strategic Advice	Coaching topic focuses on specific strategic advice to win in the marketplace
	Specific Tactical Advice	Coaching topic focuses on specific tactical advice to win in the marketplace
	The Focus of the Coaching is on Deep Internal Issues with the Employee	Coaching topic focuses on issues that are deeply personal for the employee
Factors Affecting Manager's Choice to Coach	Lack of Mental Energy	The manager does not have the mental energy to engage in a coaching conversation
	Lack of specific feedback to Coachee	The manager does not have specific feedback for the employee
	Leadership Style	The manager's leadership style affects their decision to coach
	Manager Fears	The manager's fears and worries affect the decision to coach
	Manager upset with employee	The manager is upset or frustrated with the employee, which affects their decision to coach
	Manager's Employee Performance Ranking	Manager makes a choice to coach based on the employee's performance
	New Org Structure	Manager makes a decision to coach based on the organizational structure
	Organizational Culture	Manager makes a decision to coach based on the organizational culture
	Time Spent on Other Projects	Manager makes a decision to coach based on the time the spend on other projects
	Span of Control too Large	Manager makes a decision to coach based on the number of direct reports
Goals	Goal Hierarchy	There is a goal hierarchy in place for the employee (proximal and distal goals)
	Learning Goal Orientation	The employee has a learning goal orientation
	Performance Goal Orientation	The employee has a performance goal orientation
	Upward Goal Revision	The employee raised their goal
	Downward Goal Revision	The employee lowered their goal
	Goal Remains the Same	The employee chose to keep their goal the same
	Goal Setting Challenges	Challenges associated with setting goals
	Learning Goal	The employee set a learning goal
	Performance Goal	The employee set a performance goal
	RFT - Prevention Focus	The employee has a prevention focus
	RFT - Promotion Focus	The employee has a promotion focus
	Self-Efficacy	The employee demonstrates self-efficacy
Individual Self-Regulation	Emotion (Affect)	The influence of emotions on self-regulation
	Capability to Achieve Goal	The employee believes they have the capability to achieve the goal
	Endorsing of Goal	The employee endorses the goal
	Mental Monitoring of Goals	The employee monitors the goal in their mind; does not use other means to track progress towards goal
	Not Monitoring Goals	The employee does not monitor progress towards goal
	Tools to Monitor Goals	Tools the employee and/or the manager uses to track progress towards goals
	Visual Monitoring of Goals	The employee or manager visually monitor progress towards goals
	Motivation to achieve goal	The employee is motivated to achieve the specific goal
Employee's Problem Solving Strategy	Path Forward Known - Algorithmic	The employee knows the path forward, and has developed a specific routine that they execute without a second thought
	Path Forward Known- Heuristic	The employee knows the path forward, and has a set of guidelines on how to solve the particular problem. But the path to the goal is not algorithmic
	Path Forward Unknown	The employee does not know the path forward. Must discover it themselves.
Employee's Style of Working	Deep Analysis	The employee prefers to do deep analysis to accomplish the tasks
	Experimental	The employee prefers to experiment to learn new ways of working
	Follow the Process	The employee prefers to follow the process
Failure Attributions	Lots of Variety	The employee gets bored easily and prefers variety in the tasks they perform
	Controllable	The employee diagnoses the causes of failure as something in their control
	Uncontrollable	The employee diagnoses the causes of failure as something out of their control
	External	The employee diagnoses the causes of failure as something external to themselves
	Internal	The employee diagnoses the causes of failure as something internal to themselves
	Stable	The employee diagnoses the causes of failure as something stable over time
Pursuit Team	Unstable	The employee diagnoses the causes of failure as something unstable over time
	Account Strategy	The pursuit team has a clear and agreed upon account strategy
	Frequency of feedback	The frequency that the pursuit team obtains feedback on the progress to goal
Pursuit Team Self-Regulation	Goal Alignment across teams	The degree to which goals are aligned across members of the pursuit team
	Communication	The degree to which the pursuit team communicates with each other
	Issues Holding Back Team's Performance	Issues holding back the team's performance
	High Knowledge Sharing	Degree of knowledge sharing within the team
	Medium Knowledge Sharing	Degree of knowledge sharing within the team
	Low Knowledge Sharing	Degree of knowledge sharing within the team
	Outcomes	The outcomes that the pursuit team generated
	Processes	The processes present within the pursuit team
	Structures	The structures present within the pursuit team
	Team Based Compensation	The compensation structures with the pursuit team
	Team Failure Attribution	The failure attributions the pursuit team makes
	Team Goal	The pursuit team's goal(s)
	Team Self-Leadership	The self-leadership that the team engages in, without the manager
Interventions	Intervention 1 - Goal Setting	Participant feedback on Intervention 1
	Intervention 2 - Coaching Book	Participant feedback on Intervention 2
	Intervention 3 - Peer Coaching	Participant feedback on Intervention 3
	Intervention 4 - Weekly Goal Setting Reminder	Participant feedback on Intervention 4
	Intervention 5a - Coaching Process Form	Participant feedback on Intervention 5a
	Intervention 5b - Weekly Coaching Reflection	Participant feedback on Intervention 5b
	Intervention 6 - Team Goal Striving Process	Participant feedback on Intervention 6
	Intervention 7 - The AR Process	Participant feedback on Intervention 7
	Least Useful Intervention	Participant feedback on the least useful intervention
	Most Useful Intervention	Participant feedback on the most useful intervention
	Participant Ideas to Improve Study	Participant feedback on how to improve the study

## Selective Codes

Selective Code	Category	Sub - Category	Description
Outcomes	Mixed		The outcome of an activity or a decision was neither a clear success, nor a clear failure. Or the outcome of the activity/decision had aspects that were positive and aspects that were negative.
	Negative		The outcome of an activity or a decision was negative; a non-desireable outcome.
	Positive		The outcome of an activity or a decision was positive; a desireable outcome.
Goals	Goal Type	Performance goal	This goal focuses on the achievement of a goal that is an outcome of a series of activities. A performance goal can also be the result of achieving in-process goals
		In Process goal	This goal focuses on the leading behaviours or activities that are predictors of success.
	Goal Monitoring	Visible Monitoring	An individual visibly displays their goals and track progress towards goals (Ex: dashboards, notes on calendars etc..)
		Mental Monitoring	An individual mentally tracks their goals and progress, but does not display it
		Not Monitoring	The individual does not actively monitor progress towards goals
	Goal Pursuit Strategies	General Plan	The individual had a high level or conceptual plan
		Specific Plan	The individual had a specific or detailed plan
	Goal Revision	Goal Lowered	Based on performance feedback, the individual lowered their goal
		Goal Maintained	Based on performance feedback, the individual kept their goal at the existing level
		Goal Raised	Based on performance feedback, the individual raised their goal
Individual Pursuit of Goals	Ability to Influence Performance Outcomes	Out of My Control	The individual perceived the reasons for their performance as outside of their sphere of influence. They do not believe they can control or affect the desired outcome because of these factors
		Within My Control	The individual believes that they are able to control or positively influence the factors that led to performance outcomes
	Emotional Reactions	Positive Reactions	The individual experienced a positive emotional response to an event
		Negative Reactions	The individual experienced a negative emotional response to an event
		Mixed Reactions	The individual experienced a combination of both positive and negative emotional responses to an event
	Personal Strengths		Personal strengths that the individual self-identified or that the manager attributed to the individual
Team Pursuit of Goals	Self Identity		Traits or characteristics that the individual self-identified about themselves
	Team Goals		The role and impact of team goals on goal pursuit
	Information Sharing Amongst Team Members		The role and impact of information sharing on goal pursuit
Coaching for Performance	Team Interpersonal Relationships		The role and impact of interpersonal relationships on goal pursuit
	Personal Development		Coaching topics that focused on providing specific personal development to help the individual in their goal pursuit
Barriers to Coaching	Tactical Guidance		Coaching topics that focused on providing specific advice on how to overcome obstacles the individual faced in their goal pursuit
	Individual		Barriers that the individual faced in seeking coaching
	Manager		Barriers the manager faced in providing coaching

## Theoretical Codes

Focused Code	Element	Sub Element	Description
<b>Structural Elements of the Goal Pursuit Cycle (GPC)</b>	Observed Gap		The Observed Gap is the difference between an individual's desired goal and their actual performance. This 'Observed Gap', must be measured (informally or formally).
	Feedback Mechanism		A feedback mechanism is required to transmit information about the Observed Gap to the individuals needed to act upon this information. This can take the form of reports and tracking forms, or meetings, standing agenda items etc..
	Gap Analysis		This is an assessment that the individual takes to understand the causes of the Observed Gap
	Options & Decisions		With the causes of the gap identified, the individual engages in a series of activities to generate options on how to solve the issues and makes a decision about which path to move forward with
	Actions		Once a path has been decided upon, the individual engages in activity to execute their action plan
<b>Experiencing the GPC</b>	Identity		An individual's sense of self and rooted in their strengths.
	Emotions		How an individual experiences the results from their activities; how they respond to the Observed Gap.
	Choices		The individual makes a series of choices about how to move forward in their goal pursuit. This includes choices in how they assessed causality for the gap, choices in how they seek paths forward and choices about whether to maintain or change their goal.
	Actions		Actions are at the heart of moving towards a goal. By implementing their choices, the individual moves through to the start of the next iteration in the GPC.
	Results		Results are the measured outcome of the actions. The measurements may be formal or informal, public or private. But for the GPC to function, a gap must be observed.
<b>High Performer Characteristics</b>	Goal Focus		The individual is completely committed to their goals and hold themselves accountable to the goal. They are self-motivated and have a burning desire to succeed.
	Persistence		The individual work each day on the tasks necessary to achieve their goals. They demonstrate personal initiative and strong work ethic.
	Reflective Thinking		Individuals regularly reflect on their situation to identify paths forward that empower and motivate themselves; able to move from 'the dance floor to the balcony'
	Growth Mindset		The individual seeks to improve themselves. They set specific goals to make themselves better. Stay positive during difficult times and regularly experiment in order to learn how to overcome obstacles.
<b>Engaging in the Coaching Moment</b>	Appetite to Coach	Degree to Which Employee Seeks Coaching	The manager's perspective on how often the employee seeks coaching
		Fear of Employee's Reaction to Coaching	The manager's fear of how an employee will react to the coaching moment
		Mental Energy for Coaching	The mental energy that the manager needs to have in order to engage in a coaching conversation
	Available Time to Coach	Effort Required to Action Other Business Priorities	The personal effort that the manager needs to exert to action the various business priorities that they have been given
		Manager's Span of Control	The number of direct reports that the manager is responsible for.
<b>Coaching for Performance</b>	Tactical Guidance	Client Strategies	Coaching focused on overcoming obstacles with clients
		Task Guidance	Coaching focused on how to perform specific tasks to the role
		Technical Skill Development	Coaching focused on technical skills needed to perform the role
		Implementation of Choices	Coaching focused on the actions needed to implement the choices and decisions made to close the performance gap.
	Personal Development	Mindset, Self Confidence	Coaching focused on improving the individual's mindset and self-confidence
		Self-Development	Coaching focused on improving the individual's leadership and other personal characteristics
		Interpersonal Skills	Coaching focused on improving the individual's relationships with others