

**EPONA COACHING &  
MEDIATION INTERNATIONAL**



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# **LEADERHIP-COACHING A BIT DIFFERENT**

***...but effective!***

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**The Method that really works for you**

by  
**Dr Alexandra Sitch**

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## **Preface**

The craft of consultancy has gradually developed in the last few years to highly specialised field and focusses mostly on the measurable matters; how much we produce, how long does it take, what does it cost, how do I increase my production, etc. And then you start cutting economically to be able to boost your margins and profits. In doing so, we have almost forgotten that certain essential elements in a labour process cannot be expressed in figures and are therefore lost considerable importance.

As an entrepreneur, you constantly feel the pressure - on all sides, and especially in the production and labour costs: and because the pressure is constantly increasing, the (indirect) labour costs are also getting higher due to, for example, increasing sick leaves of employees...

Being a senior advisor for C-level management myself, I have regularly been confronted with this phenomenon and I always do advise my clients to be critical of their company culture, instead of working with the newest gadgets, benchmarking exercises, the latest software upgrades. or organising once in a while a paintball away-day for your colleagues. It is the overall synergy that matters of the entire organization.

This method, which Alexandra Sitch is describing here and is implemented with her clients, has been more than an impressive experience for me, being a thoroughly critical advisor with a heavy controlling management background, and that it is also extremely effective in such short a time! In my view, this precisely why it has a great potential to become a part of a true leadership programme that creates added value to enterprises.

I therefore surely and more than wholeheartedly recommend it to you to experience such a coaching yourself, and you will certainly find it not only an awe-inspiring search but also becoming enthusiastic!

***Michael Srba***  
*Senior Advisor,*  
*Flow4Biz,*  
*Vienna, Austria*

## **The current situation within consultancy**

Nowadays, we do have more than enough coaches and consultants around, and in principle they always offer — or at least promise you — a solution: either assertiveness-training, new communication techniques, or to find your own balance.

Of course there are surely competent management trainers or yoga gurus among them, who bring an improvement, but unfortunately too much has been done or only helps for a small part, so that people still miss something elsewhere.

As a modern manager, your work environment has become increasingly complicated, especially in our digitalised global, world we are faced with more and more demands: more than ever before.

Have you just implemented Lean Six-Sigma, you are required to be more agile, train your teams scrum techniques and in the meantime, also go through the budget, just now when your financial man is off sick at home with a burn-out. That was not unknown some odd 40 years ago, and nowadays it is quite a demanding task to keep your company under control on all fronts and to keep their head above water. It is not only unpleasant for you, but ultimately also for your employees. Several studies also show that 60% of your employees are not motivated. There certainly must be a better way to go about it?!

## **My own experience with consultancy**

As a consultant myself, with an initial start in international marketing, I immediately noticed that small cultural differences in processes became bottlenecks in business-processes; often just small trivial human misunderstandings, but still...

This resulted in me to focus on intercultural coaching and mediation; to remove or better; to prevent these kinds of misunderstandings and to bring more mutual understanding. Certainly an environment where there is still a lot to do, especially since our world has become more global.

Nevertheless, even though understanding in Case A or B has been solved, sooner or later C or D occurs, where one wonders, why one does not deal with conflicts in a more structured manner and does not always end up in the same pattern thinking that each problem is a separate issue – and not related. This phenomenon lingered at the back of my mind for quite a while.

By sheer coincidence, I once stumbled upon and visited out of pure curiosity a conference in the Netherlands on life-coaching with horses – or “equine assisted coaching”. Since I am a passionate horse-rider too, and always have had a close bond with my 4 horses, it aroused my interest. What was shown, discussed and demonstrated there I found extremely impressive and so I came to the decision to have me trained in this technique.

## How does it work?

First of all, to clarify a huge misunderstanding; this is not a coaching for horse-back riders or for traumatized horses — as a so-called horse whisperer would do. It is really about coaching people and giving insight into their lives with what they are currently undergoing, privately or professionally — and this with the assistance of horses. Surprised? - the method is actually relatively simple:

Because of their long evolution, horses have developed their own non-verbal communication techniques to survive, so that the whole group is as effectively as possible protected against (potential) dangers – i.e. predators.

A horse is by definition a fugitive animal and reacts directly and extremely sensitive to changes in its environment. So it is absolutely no vague new-age theory or a magical supernatural phenomenon. To the contrary — it is purely like horses are in nature: the group is their only guarantee for survival – and a weakened or injured animal is immediately protected, supported and compensated by the others, because every vulnerability or flaw within the group (the system) indirectly means life-danger! Every horse with its own individual strengths and weaknesses is equally important for the whole group.

As soon as a person enters a group of horses, he / she is considered by the horses as part of the group. This person, if (s)he has something inside to grief about, is perhaps upset or

does not feel optimal, this 'energy' is unconsciously emitted, which the horses directly perceive it. This is immediately translated into signals – this can be, e.g. nervous nibbling on grass, rolling or lying down, frantically walking away or softly approaching, or even offering protection with a so called 'foal position'. Everything has its own meaning.

Such signals must be recognised by the coach and can thus be used to 'read' / interpret what is going on; By then asking questions (whether the participant recognises this perceived signal), the causes / essence is quickly found, why is why a person has a "blockage".

With every inner movement or expressing the feelings of the person, the horse reacts again; it could therefore be e.g. a colleague, or even the (grand)mother / father from the past, or something that happened at school that would be important in this present situation to acknowledge in order to regain a new balance.

And to reiterate the prejudice once more; it is clearly not about riding a horse, or pulling or pushing horses. Such coachings indeed do exist too, and although someone can sometimes rightly feel strengthened because of seemingly controlling a horse with a newly acquired 'authority' as a manager, but unfortunately, such a method does not address the essence and hardly scratches the surface.

By the way, if you prefer not to be too close to horses (be it because of fear, not being accustomed or allergic) you

can also stay behind a fence — the effect is therefore not limited by it.

So what the horses show is what is relevant in the present and what is relevant to resolve the situation or to optimise it — and most important of all: this without (pre)judgement!

This is a brief explanation of what we do and we call it "systemic coaching" - because people grow up from the beginning and interact in a system; whether from family, society, school, clubs, teams at work... all these systems have their implicit and complex "rules" and many things go — even non-verbally — differently than you would expect or want.

During the systemic coaching the situations are represented by the horses in a so-called "Tableau-vivant": the horses show the dynamics, either of the team or private. You will therefore also see (still) unconscious barriers within teams; e.g. a colleague who did not feel valued because at first it was uncertain. After a sick-leave she came back and was disappointed because her colleagues were too distant...

With this method one can ultimately improve the entire synergy and thus increase even productivity and creativity, which leads to increased motivation and thus their engagement and loyalty.

## **Some hands-on examples:**

### **Example 1 — Reflektive coaching**

A team-day with sales-managers from an IT company: young dynamic professionals with lots of ideas and enthusiastic about their new projects at the company. This day was devoted to cooperation and self-development.

We started off with a reflective coaching with horse for each participant separately to get to know each other better in his / her role. The first participants were the 'daredevils' of the group: result-oriented and direct.

Then came the somewhat timid employee: until now he was always something in the background. When entering entered the 'arena', the horse immediately walked towards him and stopped alongside. Being asked if he recognised something here in his life, he replied that people did indeed like to approach him, but as a manager he doubted his leadership style himself; a fear that one would not listen to him anyway.

We tried a small exercise, where the manager would walk around and one would see how the horse reacted. The horse walked gently with him and stopped every time as he stopped: the man realised that unknowingly he had much more influence on others and should do more with this.

In the following systemic coaching, later that day, that uncertainty would be further elaborated, to see where in his system this uncertainty came from, to avoid blind spots and to be able to optimally use his authentic natural leadership quality.

### **Example 2 — Systemic coaching**

One group consisted of ten therapists, who were working together; each therapist was responsible for a specific district of the city; communication was essential, but because people only had contact via the telephone and mail, they had little to none personal contact.

The group was asked to choose a place in the arena, and everyone took their place — quite far from each other: one could sense a certain distance, obviously. The idea behind this is that everyone has a place in (professional) life, but you also have to be able to take your own place.

Initially, the horses remained on the side and did not seek contact: they were enjoying themselves with small leaves from the adjacent willow tree, but simultaneously they did not pay any attention to the people or the beautiful fresh grass: the horses showed little interest in contact and that pointed to a certain lack or need for something: But how did the group experience this?

One person started talking about the protocols during work. Others talked about the pressure on the work.

At that very moment a horse from outside came into the group. And stopped near a person in the middle.

When asked what she thought the horse wanted to tell her, she remained silent first. After that, she told that everyone on the team only worked for themselves. A silence followed again.

The horse suddenly stood beside the person, between her and myself (the so-called "foal position" to protect her). There was a small sob first and the woman began to tell that she had been struggling with burnout for a while and that nobody ever showed any interest in her situation; they were occupied with only regulations protocols and were exerting more and more pressure. The group was a bit taken aback, and then after the question of whether they were aware of this, a dialogue suddenly started.

Then the horse went on to another person; an employee who had a lot to do with the first person: she too began to apologise and said she had not realized how much the woman would have felt alone at work...

The group came closer together and one was at one point in a close circle: the horses had opened up new opportunities for cooperation through a mutual dialogue!

### **Example 3 — Synergy with horse-power: composition of teams**

Horses can be used very well when putting teams together.

A group had to work out and organise various projects for the company. Which people would work best together while making optimum use of their individual strengths?

One horse was used for this: when the people stood side by side — hand in hand — the horse walked towards them and separated the group, as it were, in two. Then the horse walked to a person from one group and gently separated with its head the hand-holding between a colleague and the person next to her and gently guided the woman with its head towards the other group.

The other group led the horse a person to the other end of the group. Then the horse stopped and looked calmly at the two groups.

His work seemed finished and in fact it turned out that these groups could work together much more harmoniously in this changed constellation!

## **So...**

Wouldn't it be great if the employees began taking away the heavy burden off your shoulders as a manager, because they through getting to know each other better (and themselves) and build and strengthen each other's trust? By doing this, you can avoid even expensive colleagues' burnout and thus save unnecessary losses in your turnover, ... surely that would mean a huge benefit for your company?

## **Comparison to current coaching methods**

As you can see, this horse aided coaching is a totally different way of coaching and it has been proven in practice that it is working and effective in the shortest time possible. In this way you not only save time, but the costs are many times lower: in our corporate programme, where we go into details with preparatory briefings and analyses that only take a few hours or days, you get a complete solution. Compare that with the remuneration of an interim manager who works at least is around for 6-12 months in your company to be able to manage the change project.

Or where one spends two or more years sitting on the couch with a therapist until something comes out why one is who one is. Then you are talking about amounts of at least 5 digits.

And if you want it as a special team event for your employees, it is even an entertaining team away-day with a

sustainable optimisation bonus included. The clear added value of this coaching is not only extremely effective, but also sustainable for you: because it structurally creates a better framework for everyone!

Our coachings vary from luxury leadership weekends with workshops in Italy, France to individual sessions in perhaps your area; we can also individually organise something for you in your region, if desired.

## **Concluding**

It would therefore be my pleasure to guide you and your organisation to establish a good foundation for your company; Please contact me and we will make an appointment to discuss possibilities for a cooperation.

A step you will surely never regret!

Yours,

***Dr Alexandra Sitch***

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**Personal notes and *YOUR* sessions:**