



AGENDA

An agenda is a focus for a discussion. Traditionally, agendas are simple lists of discussion items offered by discussion participants. The best facilitators further evaluate these lists against factors such as relevancy and time to focus on the most important agenda items. In coaching, we often add to traditional approaches by including a focus on desired outcomes for a session. That is, a coaching agenda includes the answer to the question, “what would you like to be coached on?” as well as to the question “What would you like to get out of this discussion?”

The agenda, in coaching, is the “property” of the client. That is, the client is empowered to focus on topics that feel personally relevant and interesting. The coach does not insert new or irrelevant topics for the coaching. However, the coach is never without goals of her own. She wants to serve the client well; she wants to perform professionally and competently; she wants to be compensated for the service. Even in specific moments within the session, she might have goals such as “show the client what he is overlooking” or “teach the client that he is more resourceful than he realizes.”

One example of this can be seen in the example of solutions focus coaching. This powerful and effective approach to coaching preferences a focus on solutions over so-called problem talk. Coaches from this orientation generally do not invite clients to talk about problems, although they typically will not stop them if they do. Instead, these coaches gently veer into discussions of desirable outcomes, past successes, and positive “what-ifs.”

There is one other way that agendas can conflict. The coach must hold the client’s agenda for the current session, but good coaches also hold the larger agenda for the coaching relationship. If, for instance, the client seeks coaching to develop her leadership competency, then the coach should keep this in mind across all sessions. If the client wishes to discuss getting better sleep in one particular session, it is appropriate for the coach to tie sleep concerns with leadership effectiveness. In this way, coaches occasionally hold additional agendas, albeit agendas set forth by the client.



TO DO: List your personal goals for any given coaching session (e.g., I want to provoke new insights, I want to develop my own skills, I want the client to have fun). Reflect on the ways that even these well-intentioned goals might interfere with coaching effectiveness or the client's agenda.