

Agnieszka Fornalczyk

*Uniwersytet Wrocławski, Instytut Psychologii*

## Psychological Aspects of Responding to Feedback in the Coaching Process

**ABSTRACT:** The article discusses ways in which individuals respond to feedback received in the coaching process. In the first part, the author discusses different response styles to feedback and their consequences. She focuses especially on the defensive, dominating, manipulative, and improvement-oriented behaviors of the coached. In the second part, she addresses psychological determinants of effective feedback reception by the coaching participants, including their dispositional determinants. The author concludes emphasizing that for the coached to correct their behavior, the provision of feedback by coaches must be founded on the knowledge of the mechanisms and the dispositional determinants of human functioning.

**KEYWORDS:** coaching, feedback

Kontakt:	Agnieszka Fornalczyk <a href="mailto:a.fornalczyk@psychologia.uni.wroc.pl">a.fornalczyk@psychologia.uni.wroc.pl</a>
Jak cytować:	Fornalczyk, A. (2013). Psychological aspects of responding to feedback in the coaching proces. <i>Forum Oświatowe</i> , 2(49), 57-72. Pobrano z: <a href="http://forumoswiatowe.pl/index.php/czasopismo/article/view/74">http://forumoswiatowe.pl/index.php/czasopismo/article/view/74</a>
How to cite:	Fornalczyk, A. (2013). Psychological aspects of responding to feedback in the coaching proces. <i>Forum Oświatowe</i> , 2(49), 57-72. Retrieved from: <a href="http://forumoswiatowe.pl/index.php/czasopismo/article/view/74">http://forumoswiatowe.pl/index.php/czasopismo/article/view/74</a>

Coaching is steadily growing in popularity as a method of enhancing employees' potential. Used by various organizations more and more commonly and frequently, the individual coaching programs have created a market worth over 33 million zloty over the last two years, according to the estimates of the Polska Izba Firm Szkoleniowych (Polish Chamber of Training Companies). Currently, nearly 15% of Poland's companies declare interest in coaching, and as an upward tendency is anticipated. The demand for coaching is expected to reach levels of 40%–75%, approximating the European Union figures. Since coaching is clearly becoming a prevalent method of improving and developing competencies, its quality and effectiveness should be comprehensively addressed in research. The determinants of success in coaching are complex and numerous, including both situational determinants pertaining to the organization or the coach as well as crucial personal determinants concerning features and predispositions of the coaching participants.

The aim of coaching in companies is to furnish individuals with knowledge, skills and tools critical for effective job performance and development. In this process, the coached develop awareness and learn specific skills in the context of a personal relationship with the coach. One of the crucial dispositional determinants in learning through coaching is the participant's attitude and capacity to receive feedback (Douglas & Morley, 2000; Peltier, 2005). Sometimes, fostering the ability to provide and receive feedback is what coaching targets in the first place. The central role which the effective reception of feedback plays in learning and enhancing an individual's and/or an organization's performance is highlighted by many researchers, including Kolb (1984), Senge (2012), Parsloe and Wray (2002) and Łaguna (2004). Obstacles to the proper feedback reception more often than not result in ineffective, sometimes merely spurious coaching, which obviously does not move the coached towards the expected behavioral change. In this article, I will discuss the psychological determinants of responding to feedback received in the coaching process and their implications.

#### **RESPONDING TO FEEDBACK RECEIVED IN THE COACHING PROCESS**

The regular provision of feedback throughout the coaching process promotes the organization members' learning and achievement. It is particularly important to convey precise information about effectiveness, performance quality, achievements,

and expectations concerning future task execution or desired competencies (Bracken, Timmerck & Church, 2001). Research on changes in the individuals' behavior reports such recurrent patterns as increased self-awareness in 90% of the coaching participants, partial modification of behavior in 70% of the coaching participants and incisive behavior change in about 20% of the research population (Conger, 1992; Baird & Bolton, 1999).

Similar findings have been consistently obtained also by other scholars (cf. Peterson, 1996), which implies that the impact that coaching may exert is indeed considerable. Its fundamental tool, i.e., feedback, certainly contributes to the efficacy of coaching. To do so, however, it must be effectively used, which is predicated upon the concurrence of the coach's high feedback competence and the coachee's communication skills and readiness to openly exchange information. The effective reaction to and reception of feedback prove challenging to the coaching participants, which may hinder their learning (Peltier, 2005). As Kolb argues (1984), the subject who avoids or obstructs the reception of feedback is incapable of reflective observation or abstract conceptualization, which precludes experiential and analytical learning. Inability to receive feedback considerably impedes both individual and collective learning founded on honest dialogue between the participants and on the efficient information flow (Senge, 2012). Parsloe and Wray (2002) claim that feedback is the precondition of important stages of learning, in which an individual realizes the need to change their modes of action and assumes personal responsibility for the transformation. Ineffective responses to feedback, therein avoiding or ignoring it, reduce the opportunity of obtaining individually and collectively relevant messages and positive stimuli (Seligman, 1994; Łaguna, 2004). If the employee does not know how his/her task performance is evaluated and what the organization expects of him/her, she/he may perform less effectively, especially in situations involving multilateral collaboration. Additionally, the provision of feedback throughout coaching aims not only to supply the coached with information, but also to positively reinforce their desired behaviors and motivate their further work efforts (Dembo, 1997).

Irrespective of the objectives of feedback, individuals tend to manifest an array of reactions to information about their features, skills and performance (Bohner & Wanke, 2004). Depending on its content, delivery and the predispositions of the coached, the provision of feedback can both trigger their anxiety, passivity, resistance, aggression, anger or desire for domination as well as prompt openness, information-seeking or desire for change (Bracken et al., 2001). The impact of feedback on individuals' behavior has been addressed in a number of psychological frameworks and researched in several studies underpinned, among others, by theories of learning (Kolb, 1984; Bandura, 2000), information processing (Kahneman, 2011) or management (Bracken et al., 2001; Griffin, 2005). Given the diversity of conceptions and empirical results concerning the reception of feedback in coaching, it seems advisable to systematize the available knowledge, classifying the behaviors it describes in a few basic categories. The categories of reactions to feedback can be distinguished on the basis of two crucial dimensions: self-orientation vs. other-orientation and ori-

entation toward change vs. orientation toward avoidance of change in one's behavior (London, 2007; Fornalczyk, 2011). Both dimensions are paramount to the effective feedback-based interaction, whose aim is to change the attitudes, i.e., emotions, cognition and behavior, of the coached (Bohner & Wanke, 2004).

The most desired category of response to feedback is the coaching participants' orientation toward *improvement* (correction). Feedback is received in this way usually by people who are open to change and opportunely combine a pinch of sound egocentrism with a genuine interest in other people, their situation and their needs. In turn, a pronounced self-orientation combined with an orientation toward behavior change is conducive to displaying *domination*, the second category of response to feedback. Such coaching participants may try to seize control, push their own position and pursue solely self-approved uncompromising changes. A self-orientation combined with avoidance of change may produce *defensive* reactions (the third response category), while an orientation toward avoidance of change combined with an other-orientation may activate *manipulative* behaviors, which make up the fourth and last category of response to feedback (London, 2007; Fornalczyk, 2011). The behaviors classified in particular response categories are described in Table 1 below.

Table 1  
*Types of responses to feedback received in the coaching process*

	RESPONSE TO FEEDBACK	TYPICAL BEHAVIORS	POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES
IMPROVEMENT	(displaying readiness to implement real behavior change; learning goal orientation; maintaining balance between satisfying one's own and others' needs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• listening actively to the provided feedback,</li> <li>• inquiring about details about one's behavior, shortcomings and their causes, and the suggested improvements,</li> <li>• requesting information about others' opinions and needs,</li> <li>• opening up, revealing one's feelings, thoughts and doubts,</li> <li>• discussing and analyzing one's behavior openly with view to implementing changes and solutions,</li> <li>• expressing an interest in and concern with one's development,</li> <li>• sharing ideas,</li> <li>• taking responsibility for one's development and change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• effort invested in gaining information, learning and correcting one's behavior,</li> <li>• learning—developing competencies, acquiring knowledge and experience</li> <li>• growth of self-awareness,</li> <li>• developing openness to change,</li> <li>• opportunity to use one's own and others' knowledge and experience,</li> <li>• realization of self-development needs,</li> <li>• increased chance for achievement,</li> <li>• growth of self-esteem, sense of control and self-efficacy</li> </ul>

	RESPONSE TO FEEDBACK	TYPICAL BEHAVIORS	POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES
DOMINATION	(behavior intended to underscore one's own importance and authority; tendency to take over control of the situation, subordinate others, demonstrate one's own power and dominance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• speaking rather than listening to the other party; communication focused on expressing one's own stance only and demonstrating one's strength,</li> <li>• interrupting the other party, not referring to their utterances, pushing one's opinion, articulating dislike of the interlocutor and rejection of his/her views,</li> <li>• posing demands, commanding and threatening, asking hostile questions that imply the other party's or people's culpability, criticizing,</li> <li>• resorting to scorn, sarcasm and derisive jokes in conversation,</li> <li>• ignoring needs or requests signaled by the interlocutor,</li> <li>• attributing unexpressed thoughts, intentions and feelings to the interlocutor,</li> <li>• concealing one's thoughts and emotions, avoiding talking about one's weaknesses</li> <li>• imposing one's viewpoints and solutions without discussing them with the interlocutor,</li> <li>• disowning responsibility for one's own development and change; refusing to cooperate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• incurring effort involved in sustaining domination,</li> <li>• limited possibility of learning, developing competencies and acquiring knowledge and experience,</li> <li>• reinforcement of separation and distance from the environment,</li> <li>• lack of opportunity to gain important information, collaborate, and benefit from others' opinions, knowledge and experience,</li> <li>• reduced possibility to receive others' support,</li> <li>• lowered chance for effective performance,</li> <li>• increased risk of insecurity, isolation and poor self-esteem</li> </ul>

	RESPONSE TO FEEDBACK	TYPICAL BEHAVIORS	POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES
MANIPULATION	(orientation toward either avoidance of change or modification of behavior in keeping with one's own interest only combined with misleading others that change is being implemented as recommended; faking dedication to development and improvement)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• using manipulation techniques to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• create a good impression (self-presentation techniques),</li> <li>• raise the other party's self-esteem and win his/her favor (e.g., complimenting the partner, self-deprecation, denigrating one's own solutions, conformism—emphasizing similarity and community in agreeing about the content of the provided feedback),</li> </ul> </li> <li>• open self-criticism, admitting to mistakes, promising improvement,</li> <li>• declaring cooperation and the need and readiness to change,</li> <li>• selective listening—in order to gain knowledge about relations, the organization's politics, benefits to be derived from particular behaviors, one's own influence and others' opinions,</li> <li>• feigning interest in one's own development, and the organizations' and coworkers' needs,</li> <li>• talking about remedial plans in very general terms, avoiding talks about particulars of actions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• incurring effort to play a „game” of concealing one's intentions and needs and maintaining the illusion of communication and contrived self-image,</li> <li>• focus on self-presentation at the cost of genuine learning (developing proper competencies and acquiring knowledge and skills),</li> <li>• reduced opportunity of self-insight (knowledge about one's weak and strong point) and of adequate behavior correction,</li> <li>• limited possibility to collaborate caused by incomplete exchange of information,</li> <li>• reduced possibility to receive others' support,</li> <li>• lowered chance for effective performance</li> </ul>

DEFENSE	RESPONSE TO FEEDBACK	TYPICAL BEHAVIORS	POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES
	(self-defense-oriented behaviors, including escape, withdrawal, avoidance of the interlocutor, information and change, or, alternately, confrontational and aggressive behavior toward the feedback-providing party)	<p>Escape (withdrawal):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• unresponsiveness—waiting for the other party’s reaction; avoiding speaking, asking questions or talking with others,</li> <li>• avoiding conversation,</li> <li>• apologizing for mistakes, attributing blame to external conditions or one’s own shortcomings,</li> <li>• signaling discomfort, distress or depression in conversation, occasional weepiness,</li> <li>• speaking about the meaning of words or accuracy of terminology in order to divert attention from the core of the matter, suggesting red herrings in conversation,</li> <li>• resorting to humor or passive aggression</li> </ul> <p>Aggression:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• engaging in provocations—hostile comments and questions in conversation,</li> <li>• manifesting hostility and anger (yelling, threatening, criticizing, demanding, offensive language, physical violence),</li> <li>• not listening, interrupting the other party,</li> <li>• deprecating the provided information and its source, doubting in its accuracy and in the sense of the meeting/conversation,</li> <li>• attributing blame for the outcomes of one’s own actions to others</li> <li>• rivaling with others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• concentration on the ego-protecting behaviors at the cost of self-development and beneficial changes,</li> <li>• reduced opportunity to gain deeper knowledge of oneself and others,</li> <li>• learning possibility (developing competencies and acquiring knowledge and skills) limited by defensive reactions,</li> <li>• reinforcement of the defensive attitudes,</li> <li>• limited possibility to collaborate,</li> <li>• reduced possibility to receive others’ support</li> <li>• lowered effectiveness of change-oriented action,</li> <li>• increased risk of negative emotions, e.g., anger, regret, sadness, anxiety, insecurity, loneliness or miscomprehension</li> </ul>

Note. Based on London (2007) and Fornalczyk (2011).

Articulating readiness to *improve*—i.e., correct one's behavior—is the most desired as well as most effective reaction to feedback received in coaching. To demonstrate their genuine interest expressive of such readiness, the coached with dedication, analyze and discuss their behaviors and emotions as well as asks in-depth, detailed questions about the organization's and co-workers' needs, preferences and expectations (Table 1). Equally importantly, talking to the coach, the coachee formulates concrete remedial plans and weighs the opportunities and risks inherent in their application, considering therein both his/her individual position and the broader organizational framework. This leads to focusing on the essence of the matter, i.e., the change that the coachee is supposed to effectuate in targeted performance areas. Openness and readiness to improve help to understand the circumstances, other people, one's own opportunities and limitations, and cause-effect relationships as well as facilitate seeking out important information, which is central to designing a suitable behavioral change plan. Regrettably, the orientation of this kind is encountered merely in about 20% of cases, as research reports (London, 2007).

Far more frequently, the coached react to feedback assuming the *defensive* stance. Irrespective of whether it materializes in aggressive confrontation or in withdrawal (cf. Table 1), it aims, firstly, to evade the reception of information in general and criticism in particular, and, secondly, to avoid the implementation of corrective measures. Those responding to feedback defensively may indulge in passivity, withdraw, and avoid information, information-providers or coaching as such. Alternately, they may also behave confrontationally, resort to aggression, voice dissent, deprecate the other party and impetuously defend their status-quo (Peltier, 2005; Griffin, 2005; London, 2007). The defensive maneuvers aim essentially at shielding the ego jeopardized by the stimuli (feedback) which could impair self-esteem or produce a dissonance between the self-concept and others' impressions of the person. Paradoxically, attempting to protect themselves, the coaching participants may actually harm themselves by falling back on a repertoire of non-adaptive defense mechanisms, such as denial, suppression, isolation, rationalization, projection, rejection of help, passive aggression or even regression (Peltier, 2005). Regardless of their type and intensity, defensive reactions consume an individual's energy: the effort that could be productively invested in the absorption of information and attainment of change is squandered on mounting barriers to information and change. If the coached are unable or barely able to use negative, yet information-saturated feedback, they fail to learn and develop competencies. Consequently, their performance is not enhanced, which reinforces their original belief that the information received is useless or detrimental and entrenches the defensive response patterns.

*Dominating behaviors* tend to be as hazardous to an individual as defensive reactions to feedback are (cf. Table 1). Engaging in them, a coaching participant may wish to seize control and power, consolidate his/her position, and underscore his/her attributes. Change is not ruled out, but it is to be implemented on the conditions dictated by the coachee, to which purpose the coachee strives to demonstrate strength and subdue the other party. The very act of feedback provision is in itself a poten-

tial problem for domineering people because it challenges them to behave in ways which contravene their convictions and response patterns. They are namely required to enter a symmetrical relation, in which they must countenance other people's views (including their opinions about themselves) and adjust or even somewhat submit to their environment. In the feedback situation, domination not infrequently entails aggressive reactions, i.e., vehement denial, inexorable imposition of opinions, and criticizing or threatening the partner. Such behaviors not only severely limit learning and development opportunities but also reduce chance for relation-building, collaboration and obtaining valuable knowledge as well as social support.

The fourth category of response to feedback is *manipulation* (Table 1). The coachee displays an array of behaviors, the chief—if not the sole—purpose of which is to lure others into believing that she/he is dedicated to development and recommended change while the opposite is actually the case: she/he is resolved to avoid change or to endorse only the change she/he views as personally profitable. Manipulation precludes open communication and honest collaboration, which in effect hinders improvement and development as the coached merely engage in games aiming to exploit others. The manipulation-oriented coaching participants predominantly strive to satisfy their own needs at the relatively minimum cost and the maximum benefit. Other people are for them figures in a political game whom they endeavor to confuse, relying on a repertoire of self-presentation techniques and ingratiating mechanisms so as to secure personal profits (Nawrat, 1989; Witkowski, 2004). One of the most popular manipulative responses to feedback is pretending to be interested in the information received and resolved to self-improve. That the interest and resolve are feigned can be typically indicated by the discrepancy between the individual's verbal and non-verbal communications and between his/her declarations and actual actions.

Although using them is fraught with negative outcomes, the incidence of manipulative, domineering or defensive behaviors in responding to feedback is, unfortunately, rather considerable. As already mentioned, constructive reactions are displayed merely by 15%-20% of the population (Conger, 1992; Baird & Bolton, 1999; London, 2007). A clear implication is, therefore, that if coaching is to attain its key goals, i.e., development and support, coaches must have knowledge and experience that exceed the expertise in enhancing the participants' competencies. Importantly, if not indeed crucially, they must instill attitudes favorable to effective learning, which is predicated on their ability to recognize, understand and suitably react to behaviors they observe as well as to anticipate various reactions and responses. This, in turn, requires knowledge about factors that determine particular behaviors of the coaching participants.

#### **DETERMINANTS OF RESPONSES TO FEEDBACK IN THE COACHING PROCESS**

How the coaching participants respond to feedback can be determined by numerous situational and personality factors (Figure 1). Situational determinants include organizational, individual and systemic dimensions (London, 2007; Fornalczyk, 2011).

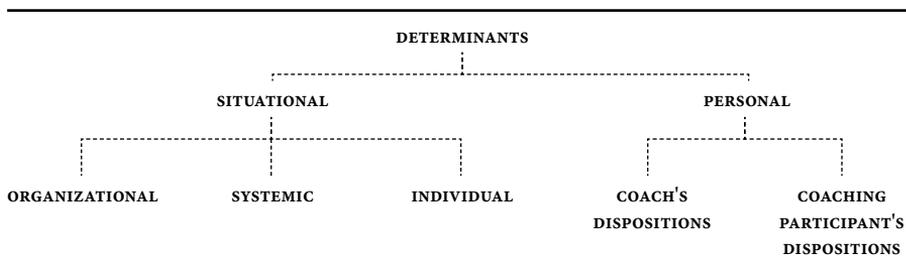


Figure 1. Determinants of responses to feedback in the coaching process.

The *organizational* dimension is bound up with the planning and execution of coaching, including the venue, scheduling, the organization's current condition, content, materials, language, format and intelligibility and attractiveness to the recipients (Bracken et al., 2001; London, 2007). Undoubtedly, even excellent feedback can be received with disapproval or ignorance if it is provided hurriedly and/or in haphazard conditions involving a hostile atmosphere or the presence of third parties. The coached react to feedback in different manners, depending on what atmosphere permeates the organization and whether it prospers or goes through a crisis.

Effective response to feedback may also be conditioned by *individual* situational factors, including the psychophysical condition of the coached and developments in their private lives (Figure 1). If a coaching participant is successful, meets the company's standards and the coaching sessions aim to buttress the already existing potential, she/he is more likely to open up to feedback and correct his/her behavior. The experience of crises, failures and decreased performance, which causes participation in interventional coaching, triggers and fortifies defensive, domineering and manipulative reactions (Peltier, 2005).

The situational determinants intertwined with the *systemic solutions* the company relies on may also channel individual perception of and receptiveness to feedback (Figure 1). The organization's communication, motivation and assessment systems can indirectly contribute to filtering information given during coaching and, thus, entice the participants to respond in particular ways. For example, the employees in organizations with highly formalized communication may find it difficult to receive information unsupported by formal documentation. The coaching participants in companies with the pressure for high performance may be oversensitive to feedback on their achievements and avoid talking about weaknesses. Diverse organizational environments may stimulate various, sometimes hardly predictable behaviors ranging from the employees' full cooperation to their extreme resistance (Bracken et al., 2001; London, 2007). Usually resultants of the environmental influences, reactions to feedback in coaching tend to cohere with the individuals' other attitudes and actions. Situational determinants of effectiveness of the feedback reception make up a complex field, analyzing the totality of which definitely exceeds the size and aims of this

paper. Suffice it to say that the impact of these factors is usually multidimensional and interactional, which poses a considerable challenge to empirical research.

*Dispositions* of the parties participating in coaching are an important category of psychological determinants of feedback reception (Figure 1). As for the coach, attitudes, motivations, personality features, cognitive abilities and social skills seem to be essential. Crucially, the coach as a feedback-provider should be cooperation-oriented, open, moderately extrovert, low in neuroticism and proficient in communication skills (McCrae & Costa, 1999; Peltier, 2005). For feedback to be effectively provided, it must be part of a relationship founded on trust, in which the learner feels secure, motivated to act and stimulated to expand his/her awareness. The coach's displayed attitude, conduct, authority, familiarity with the other party and friendliness may significantly contribute to how the coachee responds to feedback. Again, this only cursorily indicates what impact the coach's competencies and behavior may have on the coached, since the complexity of the phenomenon deserves a separate study.

Though the coach's role should not be underestimated, the most important influence on the feedback response styles is exerted by the coaching beneficiaries themselves. *Personal predispositions* of the coached seem to have a decisive impact on how they receive information provided by the coach. The effective reception of feedback is possible only if an individual is both motivated to seek information as well as able to absorb it and draw conclusions accordingly. These prerequisites are by no means easy to fulfill because the coached tend to display a whole range of personality, cognitive and motivational deficits. Personality features are essential variables which may diversify in individuals' motivation to receive feedback and engage in developmental activities (McCrae & Costa, 1999; Smithem, London & Richmond, 2002; London, 2007).

For example, people who are high in neuroticism are inclined to respond defensively. It is so because neuroticism causes a greater propensity for negative emotions, including strong anxiety, which disturbs one's balance while receiving feedback (London, 2007). Withdrawal and avoidance of information about oneself can also ensue from the coachee's low self-assessment, impaired self-esteem and lack of self-assurance (Fedor, Rensvold & Adams, 1992). Individuals who are unconfident about their abilities and, at the same time, crave for others' approval may have considerable difficulties forming an accurate self-image (Yammarino & Atwater, 1997; London, 2007). Noticing a discrepancy between their self-assessment and other people's (usually more critical) evaluation of their performance, they may engage in withdrawal or confrontational behaviors instead of seeking improvement opportunities. The recourse to defensive strategies very often results from the coachee's learned helplessness caused by repeated experiences of failure. Long-lasting, recurring failure may profoundly modify and perpetuate the self-perceived self-inefficacy, vulnerability, and inability to exert any influence whatsoever in any field of activity.

The individuals with the external locus of control and a self-serving bias are also more susceptible to lenient self-assessment and use of ego-protecting mechanisms when confronting feedback (Ashford & Tsui, 1991). Exposed to criticism, other-directed and, at the same time, self-oriented individuals are highly likely to attribute

the blame for their failings to external conditions and avoid engaging in behavior-enhancement processes. The subject's degree of self-monitoring is also a variable likely to condition his/her reactions to feedback. Research reports that high levels of self-monitoring combined with low levels of self-esteem may elicit fear of criticism and inclination to avoid feedback, even when it is favorable (Snyder, 1987; London, 2007). By analogy, individuals who are high in self-monitoring and high in self-esteem are predisposed to effective, improvement-oriented responses.

Machiavellianism is another factor which potentially entices non-functional behaviors in the feedback situation (Skarżyńska, 1985; Nawrat, 1989). Machiavellian people who have well developed social skills tend to behave in deliberately calculated ways and use feedback as a tool in gaining control of the partner and acquiring valuable knowledge about the organization and co-workers. Rather than pursuing collective objectives, a Machiavellian interlocutor prioritizes his/her own goals, scrutinizing others unemotionally to fathom their needs and, thus, to remain in control. Far more determined to attain social success than less Machiavellian people are, she/he not infrequently uses manipulative techniques to accomplish this goal (Skarżyńska, 1985; Nawrat, 1989; London, 2007). The manipulative leanings of the Machiavellian coaching participants are usually revealed in situations which intensely engage their personal convictions. As an exchange of information concerning their features and behavior is one of them, Machiavellian people treat feedback situations as a contest with the coach. Winning it matters much more to them than upholding their actual beliefs or observing social norms.

Except for Machiavellian behaviors, the ineffective reactions to feedback in coaching also include the already mentioned domineering responses. The desire to get the upper hand and subordinate others is conditioned, among others, by the domination level of the coached (Ranschburg, 1980; London, 2007) or their authoritarian promptings (Korzeniowski, 2002). People who are high in domination are likely to exert power and influence, which rather frequently aligns with high aggression levels typical of the authoritarian personality. An authoritarian feedback-recipient tends to submit to the authority of the organization and his/her supervisor but, at the same time, to be aggressive toward the coach if she/he feels threatened and the established authority sanctions such reactions (Altemeyer, 2004). Assured that they are right and their behaviors legitimate, authoritarian people can react with fury to the coach's criticism or divergent opinions. The negative sensations and emotions may breed the coachee's resistance to any attempts at attaining behavior change; and the resistance often becomes confrontational.

The constructive, improvement-oriented responses to feedback proceed from an accurate self-perception founded on an individual's self-insight, recognition of personal assets and limitations, openness to experience and conscious need for change (Yammarino & Atwater, 1997; London, 2007). If they are receptive to new experiences, the coaching participants are curious about the world and tend to seek and valorize new experience, to learn and to develop their competencies.

Unlike introverts, extroverts have a propensity for relation-building and a capacity of self-expression, which facilitates their engagement in coaching and reception of feedback. The construction of coaching collaboration and effective communication may also be promoted by conciliatory attitudes. Agreeableness is a strong predictor of positive attitudes to others, trust, and readiness for concessions for other people's benefit, which consequently entails the effective reception of feedback on the desired behavior improvement (McCrae & Costa, 1999; London, 2007).

The effective use of feedback is also connected with an individual's conscientiousness. If motivated properly, a scrupulous individual is resolved to persist in analyzing the information received, planning and implementing developmental activities (London, 2007; Łaguna, 2012). The constructive reception of feedback is also supported by an individual's proper self-esteem, substantial self-monitoring (Snyder, 1987; London, 2007) and internal locus of control, i.e., attribution of responsibility for performance and its consequences to oneself rather than to others (Levy, 1991). During coaching, the sense of self-efficacy can foster cognitive involvement, generation of ideas and information-seeking, all of which contribute to the productive use of feedback and engagement in the remedial action (Wood, George-Flavy & Debowski, 2001). The learning-goal orientation, similarly, promotes positive attitudes to the feedback provided (Botwood, 2002), stimulating the coachee's motivation to seek information and use it to devise development plans.

In conclusion, it is worthwhile to add that irrespective of personality determinants involved in the feedback provision and reception, the feedback-recipient must first of all possess the sufficient cognitive apparatus to process the received information (Kahneman, 2011) and be motivated to listen and perform (London, 2007). Only when an individual genuinely needs to implement change is she/he likely to be motivated to seek feedback and cooperation during coaching. And only when an individual is positively motivated, can the feedback be effectively perceived, understood, analyzed and remembered.

## CONCLUSION

The efficient use of feedback largely determines the effectiveness of coaching. If adequate communication is lacking in the coach-coached relationship, the development goals cannot be attained, which makes coaching futile and redundant. The suitably provided and received feedback enables exchange of valuable information and real bilateral benefits. The feedback-receiving coachees have an opportunity to develop and broaden self-knowledge and to receive useful guidelines supporting their learning and behavior change in the targeted performance areas. Enhancing the coaching participants' effectiveness, the introduced improvements may increase their success chance and prompt positive evaluations which reinforce their self-efficacy and satisfaction. This self-propelling cause-effect mechanism can stimulate the coachees to improve further, which will be advantageous to them, their co-workers and, ultimately, the organization itself.

The feedback-providing coach has an opportunity to participate in an exchange of ideas, to understand the participants' viewpoints, to watch their reactions and to recognize their needs. Thereby, the coach can employ such knowledge to optimize the process of coaching. To use the feedback method effectively, however, the coach needs not only to possess the technical skills of feedback provision, but also to have knowledge about the situational and dispositional determinants of feedback reception. Importantly, the coach must be able to consciously customize the coaching process, adjusting it to the coachee's unique features and needs so as to guide his/her development on individual basis. Such a competence can be developed provided that the coach constantly perfects his/her knowledge, studying the psychological mechanisms and determinants of human functioning. Dispositional determinants of feedback reception should be emphatically addressed in designing and developing coach training programs. They also definitely deserve further empirical analyses and studies since individuals' behaviors in organizational settings are a complex and intriguing field, which has not been thoroughly and exhaustively researched yet.

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**PSYCHOLOGICZNE UWARUNKOWANIA SPOSOBÓW REAGOWANIA  
NA FEEDBACK W PROCESIE COACHINGU**

**ABSTRAKT:** Artykuł porusza zagadnienie reagowania jednostek na informacje zwrotne udzielane w procesie coachingu. W części pierwszej autorka omawia style reagowania uczestników coachingu na przekazywany feedback oraz ich konsekwencje. Szczególnie zwraca uwagę na obronne, dominujące, zorientowane na manipulowanie czy usprawnianie zachowanie coachowanych. Druga część opracowania przybliża zagadnienia psychologicznych, w tym dyspozycyjnych wyznaczników skutecznego przyjmowania informacji zwrotnych przez uczestników coachingu. W podsumowaniu zwrócono uwagę na konieczność wykorzystywania przez coachów wiedzy o mechanizmach i dyspozycyjnych wyznacznikach funkcjonowania ludzi w sytuacji udzielania feedbacku skutkującego pozytywnym korygowaniem zachowań przez coachowanych.

**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:** coaching, informacja zwrotna

