

# THE END OF AN UNEXPLAINABLE DIFFERENCE

THE GERMAN ASSOCIATION FOR SUPERVISION  
 (REGISTERED ASSOCIATION – DGSv e.V.) COMMENTS ON  
 THE DISCUSSION ABOUT THE TERMS SUPERVISION AND  
 COACHING

## STARTING POSITION

Consultancy clients, principals and even consultancy experts call for an evident distinction between Supervision and Coaching. In the following, the German Association for Supervision (registered association – DGSv e.V.) gives its view to this question.

Supervision and  
Coaching –  
Is there a difference?

## BACKGROUND

First it has to be put on record, that some well-known authors who consider the question of the difference between supervision and coaching professionally, tend to talk increasingly about a “closeness” of the fields, processes, functions or objectives, which are discussed in the course of supervision and coaching (Buer 2005: 278ff.; Kühl 2008: 15f.; Tafertshofer 2008: 201; Schreyögg 2010: 393); others).

Authors turn their attention to the importance elaborating specifics could gain (Tonhäuser 2010: 61; Fietze 2011: 27); Haubl (2011: 18) after all, highlights the differences in the conceptions and – at the same time – draws attention to their fuzziness in practice.

*Professionally*, the question of the difference between supervision and coaching is not decided yet; an evaluation of previous debates potentially suggests that seeking a distinction may be an impossible undertaking of answering an “in principle undecidable question” (Heinz von Foerster). Eventually, it has also to be stated, that an answer to the given question of differentiation is impeded extraordinarily by the fact that the term coaching is to a great extend boundary dissolved by its uncontrolled use. Every attempt to confine yet can result into the risk of devaluation of reliable and professional consulting services- both with regards to coaching and to supervision.

Differentiation bears the  
risk of devaluation

## POSITIONS

The DGSv considers an ongoing discussion about the difference between supervision and coaching not to be of any benefit and rather declares the following:

### 1

People and organisations, who deal actively by themselves with the challenges of the working world and want to be supported by advice, nowadays request supervision and coaching likewise as sophisticated professional advisory services. The members of DGSv offer these services. Elementary objective of their range of advisory services is to support people, organisations/companies to deal with the challenges of the working world.

Coaching: A case for  
members of the DGSv

### 2

Due to their excellent qualification, their broad experience in organisations and companies as well as their ambitious specialist discourse and their vital self-organisation, DGSv's members dispose of a distinctive expert knowledge about developmental topics in work and profession.

Professional  
Background

They have a detailed knowledge of the working world and its manifold facets. They are engaged in the changes of the working world through vocational training, practice and research. Their advisory services support people and organisations in their individual develop-

ment. DGSv is their professional association bundling their commitment for a responsibly shaped working world.

### 3

DGSv's members offer advisory services with the following characteristics:

- topics and the process of a consultancy are meaningful to them in equal measure
- those seeking advice are regarded as partners at eye level
- confidentiality in personal issues are connected with directness in factual matters
- to perceive different point of views (e. g. personal, intersubjective, organisational), to utilise and integrate them – where appropriate – into the consulting process, is their outstanding capability
- for them, there is no contradiction in target-oriented behaviour on the one hand and openness to results on the other hand
- a code of ethics and the proven and verifiable quality of their advisory services establish the basis for their activities
- they perceive every consulting process as unique and one of a kind; they do not understand advisory patterns as a professional service
- their consultancy joins the view on people with the view on systems and context
- their perspective from the "system boundary" delivers new findings.

Essentials

### 4

The members of DGSv apply their skills in supervision und coaching depending on occasion and purpose

- for the immersed comprehension of practice (reflection)
- for the differentiated acquirement of new skills (knowledge, capability , attitude)
- for accompanying changed practice (transfer)

Objectives

*The board of directors*

## SOURCES

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