

The Influence of the Life Coaching Process on Entrepreneurial Talents in Romania

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to show how life coaching can support the IT start-up entrepreneurs to train their talents.

In this research we aim to analyze how life coaching can help IT start-up entrepreneurs to train their talent by applying a qualitative experiment. The experiment covered 5 stages: development and learning strategies, talent, collaboration (life coach-entrepreneur-organization), how to solve problems in a creative way, and align with business and market needs. Selection criteria referred to: entrepreneurs that have not participated in life coaching sessions, years of entrepreneurial experience in IT field 1-3 years, and ages 25-28.

Through life coaching sessions, entrepreneurs have set out to expand their business and solve their personal life issues such as different states of emotions, thoughts and behaviors.

Life coaching improves the IT entrepreneurs' talent at start-up level, which increases the productivity of the work of the entrepreneurs.

Key words: entrepreneurs, life coaching, start up, IT, experiment

J.E.L. classification: I25, J24, J28, L21, L26, L29, M13

1. Introduction

Due to the dynamic nature of the environment, entrepreneurs need to learn to be flexible and adapt to customer and employee requirements to achieve results (Stone and Deadrick, 2015). In this context, life coaching is used as an active learning tool for entrepreneurs in order to improve their skills and increase their business (Lyons, 2009).

2. Theoretical background

Today, organizations have to face a series of economic, political and social challenges. Organizations need talented entrepreneurs to achieve valuable results and develop a leadership culture. Developing a knowledge-based economy has led to increased demand for talented entrepreneurs, as they are a factor of competitiveness.

Practically, value is in the unique set of behaviors, knowledge, capabilities, contributions, engagements, skills and abilities that are in the possession of an organization's talent (Sparrow and Makram, 2015).

Which means that talent is an essential asset for companies (Maqueira et al., 2019). Thus, talent for entrepreneurs is defined as a sum of abilities (innate gifts), skills, knowledge, experiences, intelligence, beliefs, attitudes, personality and entrepreneurship, as well as learning and self-improvement skills (Michaels et al., 2001).

As far as life coaching is concerned, it is a process of human resource development through questions that support talented entrepreneurs to achieve personal and professional performance.

Therefore, the life coaching process is useful for entrepreneurial talents because it facilitates reflective learning, provides feedback and provides support to entrepreneurs, and addresses questions that will take them out of the comfort zone (Lyons, 2009).

3. Research methodology

The purpose of this research is to show how life coaching can support the IT start-up entrepreneurs to train their talents.

In this research, we aim to analyze how life coaching can help IT start-up entrepreneurs to train their talent by applying a qualitative experiment. The experiment was applied to 6 entrepreneurs (all 6 male) between September 2018 and March 2019.

The experiment covered 5 stages: development and learning strategies, talent, collaboration (life coach-entrepreneur-organization), how to solve problems in a creative way, and align with business and market needs.

In this sense, we applied the experiment to entrepreneurs who did not have such sessions, but in which they felt motivated to test the life coaching process. The entrepreneurs who were part of the experiment were picked up via Facebook Ads on September 3-10, 2018.

Selection criteria referred to: Entrepreneurs have not participated in life coaching sessions, years of entrepreneurial experience in IT field 1-3 years, and ages 25-28.

The life coaching sessions were held with each of the entrepreneurs. In this context was 5 meetings, every 2 weeks.

Then there was a 3-month implementation pause of the action plan and a final progress monitoring meeting.

Entrepreneurs have been assured of confidentiality of information and data because this is component part of the life coaching process and contributes to ensuring success in these sessions.

4. Findings

In terms of presenting the results, we aim to highlight only the most important questions that were addressed in the life coaching sessions. The questions that marked the entrepreneurs to take a break in thinking and reflect on them.

For the part of **development and learning strategies**, to the question: What is the highest professional goal for you in terms of your business?

Entrepreneurs have said that (1) *I want to take my business to another level in terms of turnover and gross profit (...)*, (2) *I want to increase our work productivity (...)*.

(3) *We want to increase our turnover and gross profit to reinvest money to new products and services*, (4) *we want to improve our selection, recruitment, development and rewarding processes*, (5) *we aim to improve our work productivity and work more efficiently and effectively in a our team* or (6) *we want to improve our communication skills and make decisions as easy as possible*.

With regard to **talent**, the question: What do you propose to change in your behavior regarding your business?, The entrepreneurs replied that (1) (...) *I do not want to stress myself anymore and make myself angry so soon (...)*, (2) *I want to get the balance in my personal and professional life*, (3) (...) *to have more confidence in me*, (4) (...) *to delegate responsibilities*, (5) *to make quicker decisions* and (6) *to have more freedom for other activities to inspire me and to have time to think about new investments*.

As far as the **life coach-entrepreneur-organization collaborative part**, to the question: What would be the worst thing that could happen if you do not do what you proposed?, The entrepreneurs said that (1) *I would feel exhausted and I could not concentrate on what I have to do*, (2) *I think I would not be happy and fulfilled*, (3) *I suppose I would feel stressed and disappointed at the fact that I did not manage to carry out my plan*, (4) *I would feel depressed because I did not achieve my intended purpose*, (5) *I do not have enough free time so I can dedicate myself to the activities of my personal and professional life*, and (6) *I would feel disappointed because I wish very much to be a close and united team on all the projects worked together*.

Regarding the way **to solve the problems in a creative way**, the question: On a scale of 1 to 10, how much do you want to achieve this goal? Through this question, we wanted to find out if entrepreneurs feel motivated to work for what they have proposed in this phase of the experiment.

Entrepreneurs from both groups were very receptive and said they feel very motivated to achieve their goal, mainly when it comes to their business where they invested time and money.

For the **alignment to business and market needs**, to the question: How would the success of achieving the goal show?, entrepreneurs reported that (1) (...) *I believe that through this life coaching process I would get out of the comfort zone, I would regain my confidence and be a much better leader for the people I'm leading.*

(2) (...) *I hope that the life coaching process will help me better manage my time and emotions and learn to provide feedback in a constructive way (...).*

(3) (...) *I would have a new front view my people and my business and I would delegate from the tasks and give consistency feedback (...).*

(4) (...) *I would manage my personal and professional life more efficiently and effectively (...).*

(5) *I plan to implement a life coaching integration and implementation strategy that is in line with the organization's overall strategy and goals to support talent in my organization.*

(6) *Success in achieving my goal would help me better understand how the market is reacting to our new products and services. In addition, I would create some scenarios with the life coaching process that would help me visualize their needs more clearly and concisely, and I would not fail.*

For the **progress monitoring side**, to the question: How did you reach your target? The entrepreneurs stated that (1) *I have slightly increased my turnover and gross profit, and if there are any significant increases in the two indicators, to invest in a new product on the market and I am firmly convinced that we will succeed because we have analyzed in detail the needs of the market.*

(2) *I learned to trust more in my people, and we have noted an increase in labor productivity both I and my employees, especially since we have integrated life coaching into all processes of human resources, (...) new learning and development opportunities have emerged within the organization.*

(3) *Given the relatively short time since started this process of life coaching, I found that there were slight improvements in the selection, recruitment, development and reward processes. I will continue to apply what I have learned in order to achieve the desired results.*

(4) *I have begun to see improvements in me and in my team on feedback, communication skills and decision-making.*

(5) *I feel much better with me because I have improved my work productivity and I have a leadership strategy that I want to apply into my organization and which I hope will work.*

(6) *I felt encouraged and supported in this process, so I've been thinking about creating a life coaching culture that I hope will be long-term and work for my employees, considering that we have already made progress in balancing personal and professional lives, confidence in our own strengths and delegation of tasks.*

5. Discussions

Phenomenological research allows us to understand the entrepreneurs' experiences at the start-up level of the IT field and their natural setting (Creswell, 2003, p.15). In this sense, the life coaching process assists IT start-up entrepreneurs to train their talents so that they get remarkable results related to the company's financial performance, such as turnover and gross profit. The life coaching process helps experienced entrepreneurs focus on an objective and pursue it in such a manner as to make every effort to change their behavior. This is an indicator of action for entrepreneurs (Popescu, 2017).

Life coaching improves the IT entrepreneurs' talent at start-up level, which increases the productivity of the work of the entrepreneurs and identifies new opportunities for their learning and development.

Through the life coaching process, start-up IT entrepreneurs have learned to manage their talents in the organization through selection, recruitment, development, and rewards.

Start-up IT entrepreneurs have called for life coaching sessions because they wanted to improve their communication skills, make decisions, learn to work in teams, improve their productivity, and develop a strategy leadership.

In addition, the life coaching process helps to develop and maintain employees and increase their performance. In this sense, organizations focus on the knowledge and skills of staff and on their preservation, whose skills are irreplaceable (Stone and Deadrick, 2015). Therefore, life coaching has the effect of improving work quality, developing autonomy and supporting talented employees who contribute with the skills, knowledge and experiences that exceed the job requirements (Lyons, 2009).

Also, following the life coaching sessions, start-up IT entrepreneurs have created a long-term life coaching culture in which they aim at developing a strategy for integrating and implementing life coaching - aligned with the overall strategy and goals of the organization and integrated life coaching into all human resource processes.

Finally, life coaching strengthens entrepreneurs' learning, provides moral support, access to innovation, and helps entrepreneurs develop their creativity to come up with solutions to their own problems (Lyons, 2009).

6. Conclusions

As we have seen, IT entrepreneurs often face stress-related problems, leisure time management, work-life balance, emotional states management, self-confidence, the ability to make decisions in a way ease and delegation of tasks.

Through life coaching process, entrepreneurs gain a new vision, different from the past, because the needle is associated with a series of constructive emotions and is based on effective action.

As can be seen, life coaching sessions help entrepreneurs to visualize in the future how to react to the market in terms of their product or service, based on tools and scenarios built with life coach- and these sessions can also help entrepreneurs to establish a concrete action plan (Popescul, 2017).

The role of life coach was to support entrepreneurs with the help of questions to generate a range of options, to encourage them and to support them in the actions they will take.

The life coaching process focuses on the behaviors and actions of entrepreneurs and helps them become aware of their impediments to professional life.

As far as validity is concerned, it has been realized from a phenomenological perspective.

In addition, in order to be sure of the validity and reliability of the experiment, we conducted a pre-test of the interview guide (Cook et al., 2000) in order to test and improve the questions. Before implementing the interview guide, a pilot survey of 5 coaching specialists from different organizations was applied.

Coaches participants in the pilot study that provided comments and suggestions were not accounted for in the final survey.

Finally, we noticed that there were no changes, and the tool was approved by all those who participated in the field study.

Study boundaries include the fact that the data are not generalizable due to the small number of entrepreneurs participating in the experiment and because it has not been applied over a longer period of time.

We propose a longitudinal study to apply the life coaching process as an experiment to a larger number of entrepreneurs (20 entrepreneurs) and over a longer period of time such as 1-2 years.

7. References

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