

CASE STUDY 19: A STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

**OLLIVER R. LLOYD, FINAL YEAR UNDERGRADUATE
STUDENT, WARWICK BUSINESS SCHOOL**

Before university, I had never studied coaching in a business context and the only coaching I had done previously was when I volunteered to help disabled swimmers in sixth-form. Naturally, I had associated the term 'coaching' with sport, with the stereotypical hard-nosed man that appears halfway through a movie to take the failing protagonist to glory. However, I was also aware of life coaches and how they help their clients find their way to a more fulfilling life. As I am no sportsman, it was this latter idea of coaching that drew my curiosity, as I felt it was more applicable to the business world. I wanted to learn to coach, or as Barney Stinson from *How I Met Your Mother* put it, to 'teach people how to live!'

So I enrolled for a coaching module at university, which explored the practice through different disciplines including music, drama and psychology. The greatest challenge was applying what I had learned in practice: coaching first-year students on their first exam experience at university. During that process, I realised the usefulness of the non-directive approach to coaching, as I was sure that some of my coachees were already better than me in certain subjects! Mentoring, therefore, or advising, would not help. My first coaching experience was not easy, perhaps because I could relate to what my coachees were going through.

The coaching module has certainly had the greatest impact on me. While many other modules involved discussing models created by observing academics rather than practising managers, I believe that the opportunity to study and practise coaching gave me much more insight into the practicalities and social dynamics of managing people. I had read that good leadership involves more horizontal management structures and two-way feedback, implying that a non-directive approach was more effective in today's working environment. However, it was not until I attempted practising coaching that I saw just how difficult it can be in reality. What I found very helpful was the opportunity to review my coaching practice in a reflective piece at the end of the module.

I am about to begin my first graduate-level job working for a small language-teaching company. Part of my role involves teaching English as a foreign language. While this is a directive approach, I still plan to apply what I have learned in coaching to help students work out new vocabulary and structures for themselves. Eventually I would like to become a language-coach alongside managing a languages company. The coaching role would involve giving clients the guidance and helping them find the confidence to learn any foreign language, and I strongly believe that if I apply what I have learned through studying coaching that I can become a competent manager.

As the value of university degrees in general continues to decline due to high tuition fees and increasing competition for the decreasing number of jobs, I believe that business schools need more practical approaches to teaching undergraduate-level business. Therefore, I believe coaching should be a core module in undergraduate business education.