The Coach Reflection Day (CoReDay) 2015 at idealo – 3 ways to improve your coaching skills

ontheagilepath.net/2015/12/the-coach-reflection-day-coreday-2015-at-idealo-3-ways-to-improve-your-coaching-skills.html

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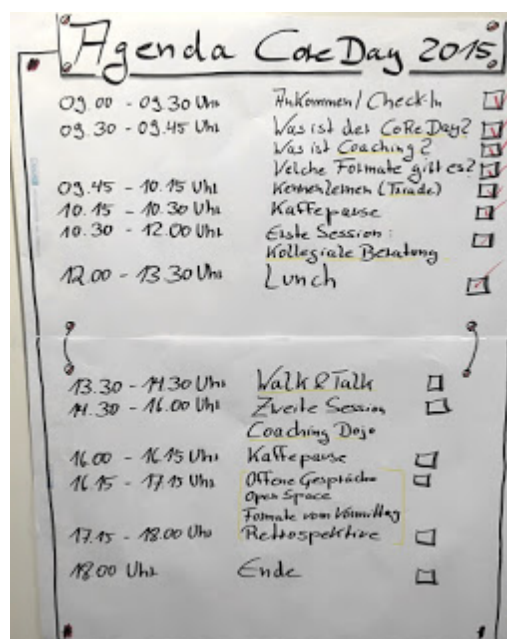Based on the initiative by Stefan Nowaczynski and with the important help by Gerald Fiesser we hosted our first Coach Reflection Day aka. *CoReDay* at idealo.

With this post I provide an overview on the format, share some of my learnings and hopefully inspire you to either join one of the next public sessions or host your own session too.

Lets first have a brief look on the definition of a CoReDay:

> A CoReDay is an organized and structured day, where (agile) coaches can help each other to solve current practical problems.

For our first CoReDay we followed this suggested agenda:

1. A brief overview on the agenda and CoReDay format
2. Get to know each other – using a triad
3. *1st supervision session* – we started with a ***cooperative case advise*** format
4. A longer lunch break followed by the *2nd format* – we used a ***Walk & Talk***
5. *3rd supervision session* – ***the coaching dojo***
6. A retrospective including a reflection on the used formats, key takeaways by every participant and wishes for improvements

Please have a look on the detailed agenda in the picture 😉
Lets have a look on the formats in more detail…

Triad – Get to know each other

A tiny format where groups of three – the triad – get together and everyone shortly introduces herself. When

finished they form new triads in a self organized way (sometimes leading to pairs or larger groups – but stabilizing in triads later on and with some reminders ;-).

A high engagement guaranteed, we used it as a fresh new way to get to know the participants.

Cooporative case advise

It is one of the formats we already use in our agile coach team but this time it was even more structured and followed 8 steps I'll briefly summarize.

At the beginning we formed groups of 5-7 members and provided one facilitator (tasks: briefly explain the format, time boxing, taking notes) for each group.

Part	What	Why
1 – 10′	Case selection	Usually one starts with a given case, thats why this step is only necessary for the CoReDay. We collected topics from the group, limited by the space of one flip chart 😉 Followed by a dot voting selection of the topic to apply the cooperative case advice for. The member who suggested the topic becomes the person in the hot seat – the case provider.
2 – 10′	Case introduction	The case provider describes the case in all detail. The facilitator helps to take notes and closes the 10′ by asking: Is there one important thing to add for this case? During this phase the group just listens.
3 – 10′	Questions by the group	Now it is the groups turn. They have to ask all the questions necessary to further understand the case and the case provider answers as best as possible. The facilitator asks the case provider and group to extract the main question for the case. The question should be visualized, best done by the case provider, to ensure it is her language and connection to the case.
4 – 10′	Hypotheses about the case	Ask the case provider to turn her back to the group – turn her to no eye contact and just listening mode (can be tough sometimes). The group builds hypotheses – proposals intended to explain certain facts or observations – about the case. The group (excluding the case provider) make assumptions about the case and what could be the underlying reason and circumstances. The facilitator ensures that all hypotheses are captured so that we can use them in further steps, either by taking notes himself or asking the group to do it (based on the groups experience we learned, that it is better when the facilitator takes notes. It ensures an equal level of engagement for all group members).

Part	What	Why
5 – 10′	Reflection on the hypotheses	Now it's time for the case provider to reflect on every hypothesis. The group just listens. (In case there are clarifications necessary short answers can be given)
6 – 10′	Options for actions	Using the input from the case provider the group now has the task to provide options for actions. What are answers to the given question? What can the case provider do next. Again time for the case provider to turn around, just listen and avoid eye contact. A really important step as there are the groups different perspectives used to solve the case providers problem. The facilitator (or a group member) ensures that all action options are captured.
7 – 10′	Reflection of the options for action	The case provider again joins the group and reflects on all actions for options. At the end of this reflection round the facilitator asks: "Do you have a sufficient answer to your question <phrase the original question>?"
8 – 10′	Group reflection	The group reflects on the cooperative case advise session. What worked? What was difficult? How did the case provider perceive the 60′ minute working with her case?

Walk and Talk

After a longer lunch break we used the format of a walk and talk to **activate**, to **train active listening** and **get to know each other** better (and maybe even to get to know yourself better).
The group builds pairs, if possible 2 member that don't know that much about one another.
The pair goes for a walk.
During the walk, one member starts talking about herself – in a 20′ timeframe. As a guidance you can provide the following questions:

- What makes it a great Agile Coach?
- What I'm good at already? What is easy?
- Where is my potential? What is difficult?
- What are my next steps of development?

It's important to not go into a dialogue (beside the active listening reflection questions) but really listen and let the peer talk 20 minutes. If there is silence, welcome it.

After the 40′, the pairs reflect on the impression form the walk and talk and return to the group.

Coaching Dojo

Time for the next group coaching exercise. The coaching dojo.
Again one of the <u>formats we already use in our agile coach team</u>, but it got some additions that make this exercise even more interesting.

One can either reuse the groups already formed for the cooperative case advise or create new ones.
Using the previous groups can shorten the time to select the coaching topic – just select the 2nd rated topic. In addition the group members already know each other and there are fewer dynamics of new group building.
In our reflection round the participants recommended to form new groups but this could also be connected with the agile springer day format, as we use it to further exchange and networking.

How does it work

The group distributes the following roles:
- a facilitator and observer, keeping timeboxes
- 1 case provider – the coachee, who would like to solve a problem
- 2 or more coaches, who help the coachee to find a solution
- 2 or more observers, who intensively watch the coaching sessions

The provided case can be a real scenario or a fictive one.
As I learned, the aim of the coaching dojo is about learning how to coach and through this learning help the coachee finding a solution. But the solution does not have the focus.
During the coaching sessions the coaches may ask for a *Click* to enter a meta level. In the meta level they either get recommendations and opinions from the other coaches or

observers or ask for a rewind to start the session in a earlier point and time trying to take a different road for helping the coachee finding its solution.

The coaching dojo follows these steps:

| Part	What	Why
1 – 10′	Select roles	The group decides who acts in what role during the coaching dojo. It's recommended to have one experienced coach working as the coach to provide orientation for the other coaches.
2 – 5′	Coaching dojo explanation	The format of the coaching dojo and especially click and rewind are explained.
3 – 15′	Coaching session 1	The first coach works with the coachee. All observers take as much notes as they can for the session. They watch the type of questions and coaching techniques used, the rapport between coach and coachee, body language and all that could be helpful as feedback for further improving the coaching. The facilitator keeps the 15′ time box!
4 – 15′	Coaching session 2	see above
5 – 15′	Coaching session 3	see above – either a session with a 3rd coach or a session with 2 coaches in parallel in case there are just 2 coaches available
6 – 10′	Debriefing	The observers share their observations for all coaching sessions. This can either be done in a format where all observers talk to one another like having a cafe session or with direct feedback from observers to coaches. The facilitator takes notes, that can be shared in the whole session.

Closing with a retrospective

So far it has been an intense day – lets check for feedback and recommendations to improve it for the next time.

With this group size we used a simple format by asking 3 questions that everyone should answer with one note. We arranged a circle and every took a note of his answer on a sticky note. This way we ensured later usage of the feedback.

The 3 questions:

- What one key take away from the CoReDay?
- What is your feedback on the used session formats (triage, cooperative case advise, walk and talk and coaching dojo)?
- What would you like to change for the next get together?

In addition we arranged a feedback wall, that has been used during the day and we explicitly asked for feedback at the end of the day. Quite a positive outcome, isn't it 😉
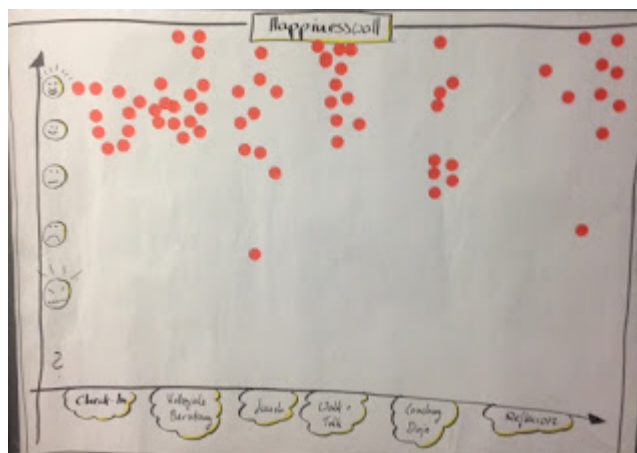
What a great experience. I can highly recommend joining one of our next sessions or just host a CoReDay yourself. It's a great way to share coaching experiences, apply learning by doing, network and have fun.
Formats like the cooperative case advise and walk and talk can be used in your daily work.
The coaching dojo is a great opportunity to get direct feedback on your coaching techniques, experiment with coaching and get inspired by your peers.
Special thanks again to Gerald Fiesser for helping us during our first CoReDay, to Stefan Nowaczynski for having the initial idea and organizing a great event, Lisbeth Ott for your great organization, facilitation and sporty welcome 😉

Further readings

Agile coaches connected – 7 ways we share knowledge and learn together
http://www.coachreflectionday.org
What a day, what a lovely day – Der CoReDay 2015 bei idealo (DE) by Stefan Nowaczynski