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**The Relevance of Coaching for Front Line
Receptionists in the Hotel Industry
-A study of Scandic Rubinen**

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Abstract

In hotel organisations, managers use the yearly employee appraisals to give feedback and discuss the goals for future years with their employees. But, is this actually enough? Personnel development should occur on a continuous basis, and the employee appraisals can thus be connected to an overall coaching plan.

The main purpose of the study is to examine the relevance of coaching for front line receptionists in the hotel industry, by collecting empirical data from managers and employees at Scandic Rubinen. Theoretical results indicate that employee empowerment, employee motivation, and leadership are important for employees as well as a clear coaching leadership strategy in the hotel organisations. The empirical results signify that the perception of coaching differs between managers and employees, but both parts lift up the importance of supporting and motivating the employees.

It is essential for the management to understand that front line receptionists are the image of the hotel, and thus one of the most important resources. Therefore, my recommendation is that coaching leadership strategies should be implemented for front line receptionists at the hotels.

Keywords: empowerment, service guarantee, service quality, motivation, leadership, coaching

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**“It’s the little details that are vital.
Little things make big things happen”
- John Wooden, Coach**

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1 The relevance of coaching in the hotel industry

This chapter consists of a background to the relevance of coaching in the hotel industry. Concepts such as background of the thesis, problem analysis, research objectives, purpose and disposition of the study are presented.

1.1 Background of the thesis

The hospitality industry is nowadays a global industry, and is considered as an important employer in countries world-wide. It provides a contrast to the public and the private sector hence the work on motivation, empowerment and flexibility becomes important (Foley, Lennon & Maxwell, 1997). Ference (2001) emphasises that in service organisations, managers use the yearly employee appraisal to tell the employees what has been going well and not well. This is also about giving the employees feedback and discussing the goals for the future year, which is almost the only time when the managers give feedback to the employees. But, is this actually enough? Personnel development is an ongoing process, which could also be integrated into other responsibilities by making the employee appraisal as a part of an overall coaching plan. In a leadership situation, coaching might be useful to lift up another person's abilities.

To give people support can build up a competitive organisation, without being involved too much as a manager. Tenelius (2006) made a project some years ago with Frey's Hotel in Stockholm, where the manager (named Annika Tell) of the hotel decided that the employees should run the company by themselves. The manager was only working as a coach, who supported the employees in decisions and actions taken. Tenelius' role was to coach the group of employees, including the manager, to be more effective as a group, and to have an open communication with open questions in order to reach efficiency in the group (Tell, 2000; Tenelius, 2006). When reading Tell's book about coaching at Frey's hotel, I realised that it is vital for front line receptionists to feel a part of the hotel organisation and to get support from the management. Coaching might be a new way for front line receptionists to stay in the hotel for a longer time and to have the possibility to develop within the organisation. This was one of the reasons why the subject of coaching was selected and the first idea was to get into contact with Frey's Hotel, but due to a re-organisation at that moment it was not possible to make a study in the area of coaching in the hotel industry. The other reason was because of the great interest in developing the skills of front line receptionists in hotels. During several

positions as a front line receptionist at hotels during the past years, I have discovered that there seems to be a lack of motivation or encouragement from the management. The hotel industry is still seen as a hierarchical organisation, where it sometimes could be challenging to give front line receptionists authority and empowerment at work.

According to Eggers & Clark (2000), coaching is to understand another individual and help him or her in the personal development, where deep communication is one of the most important tools. This in turn could further lead to increased empowerment at work. Good coaching also has an effect on the working environment in which people experience and receives positive regard. People build trust and they could be heard, honoured and hardly judged. The coach also tries to understand the individual in the eyes of the individual. The management of organisations have realised that in order to increase the productivity of their employees, the managers need to adapt a leadership style built on coaching, because it could lead to a change in the whole organisation culture (Whitmore, 2003). Eggers & Clark (2000) further discuss coaching as an important tool to obtain positive personal change, but since coaching is a quite new way of working with the employees, the cause-and-effect is not known yet.

He or she is not a leader with all the answers, but instead a team member who knows what questions will prompt partners or other team members to discover the answers themselves. Thus, coaching has become the next phase of employee empowerment (Eggers & Clark, 2000, p.67).

Bowen and Lawler (1992) see empowerment as a tool for sharing information, rewards, knowledge and power with frontline employees. Service organisations tend to show an increased interest concerning the employees' involvement and participation in order to gain greater commitment, generate greater involvement in service quality and decrease the labour turn-over in the service sector. If the employees feel good in their working place, the empowerment will of course increase (Whitmore, 2003). The importance of the service encounter and the employees as a key role in the service industry contributes an emergent need and empowerment has much to offer service organisations. Empowered employees will react to customers need and complaints and will find the service encounter as one of the most valuable way of gaining competitive advantage in the service industry (Bowen & Lawler, 1992).

In some ways coaching could be linked to empowerment, but are hotel managers aware of this subject? See the example below in order to have a glance of the concept of empowerment in the hotel industry:

A guest stays for one night in the hotel and he/she can not sleep because of disturbance from the reparation of the hotel. This person goes to the restaurant in the evening and eats a wonderful dinner, and is amazed by the breakfast. When the guest wants to check out in the morning, he/she is complaining about the disturbance and demands reduction of the price. What can the person working in the front office do? Can he/she reduce the price of the whole stay, including the restaurant, or only the room? Does the employee have enough empowerment to do this? (Room Division Manger, Radisson SAS Scandinavia, 2006)

One of the most important challenges in today's service organisations, and particularly in the tourism and hospitality sector, is to achieve improvements in customer service. The ideas of quality in tourism and hospitality organisations have changed in the past 25 years, and are now important in all areas. In many cases, service quality is connected to a marketing oriented concept while it has major implications for the quality of human resource. This is in particularly important for training and development activities. It is therefore of the essence to focus on this human resource dimension in the tourism and hospitality sector, specifically the behaviours that happen every day in a service environment (Garavan, 1997). The customer's perception of service quality, according to Chapman & Lovell (2006), lies within two dimensions:

Satisfaction with what was provided and the way in which this was delivered by the front line employees (p.79)

Zeithaml & Bitner (2002) mean that to provide service quality, the employees need continuous training and feedback in both technical skills, i.e. the booking system in a hotel, and interactive skills, i.e. training in allowing the employees to provide caring, responsive, and empathetic service. Successful companies invest much in educating their personnel, and make sure that the training fit the organisation's business goals and strategies. It is vital to notice that it is not only the front line employees that need this combination of service skills and continuous training, but also the support staff and managers need training as a tool for development.

1.2 Problem Analysis

Employee appraisals are used in organisations, and at Scandic Rubinen the concept of SMART (Specific; Measurable; Achievable; Realistic; Time-bound) is used in order to make a personal development plan (PDP) with the employees. Those appraisals are held ones a year, with just a few feedback discussions between the manager and the employee. But, is it actually enough to have employee appraisals only once a year? The feedback discussions are important to lift up in the hotel industry. The small employee discussions ones or twice a year might not be enough and discussions on a more regular basis may be the alternative, since the employees need to feel supported and motivated on a regular basis. This in turn will increase the interest to work from the employee's view, but also the involvement and the empowerment as an employee. To work as a hotel receptionist is, in today's hotel organisations, still seen as a work with bad working conditions such as stress and so on. Coaching should not be seen as a subject in isolation, since it is a combination of several aspects. Coaching is to support and motivate the employees, but also to give them the authority, i.e. empowerment, in certain important decisions. Well-motivated employees are something that each service organisation aims for, and the productivity of the employees might increase by implementing leadership through coaching for front line receptionists in the hotel industry. In some cases, coaching is used by managers, but only to a certain extent.

Gåserud (2001), working as a consultant in the field of coaching, discusses that during successful moments, a persons life moves towards a positive direction – in workplaces, private life or school. In most cases another person had to do with that success, for example when parents encourage their children and tell them when they do something right or wrong. It could also be a colleague or manager giving a challenging task and the employee succeeded in solving it. This is what coaching is all about, to support, challenge, inspire and help the employee so he or she develops faster and gets on the right track. According to Kets de Vries (2005) coaching can also be done in groups in order to create high performing teams. Further, coaching is important for the reasons that it could give empowerment to the employees, because of the privilege to have responsibility. It could also increase the motivation to change, and it facilitates cooperation between the employees (Kruzela, 2000).

Front line receptionists are one of the most valuable resources for a hotel, and therefore it is vital to use coaching in service organisations. For guests arriving to the hotel, the receptionists will have a large influence of the guest's whole hotel experience. If the receptionist is not

motivated to behave towards the guest in a certain way or does not treat the guests in a service-minded manner, it will be difficult for them to fit into the hotel industry. Therefore, training and individual development of service employees are vital for the management to value. This thesis will examine the relevance of coaching for front line receptionists of a hotel and the manager's view of coaching. In a hotel, there are many different departments and coaching is something that each department should take care of and work with, but due to time and resources, this thesis will only focus on coaching for front line receptionists at Scandic Rubinen.

1.3 Research questions and purpose

Front line receptionists are of great importance for the image making of the hotel, because they are often the first impression for the guest arriving to a hotel. An example is if the guest has to wait for a long time to check-in or is not met in a nice way, the whole stay could be a disaster because the employees do not have enough knowledge and training skills. Therefore, it is of great importance to apply coaching into the hotel industry.

One way of implementing coaching strategies is to make it as a part of the yearly employee appraisals, but in some cases this could be time consuming and also create high costs for the hotels. The focus of this thesis will not be on executive coaching, but more to bring up the concept of coaching as a leadership style. This leads to the question in what way coaching can be connected to different leadership styles in hotel organisations, and if coaching can increase the motivation of the employees as well.

Nevertheless, the earlier discussion about the importance of coaching in the hotel industry has lead to the main research question which is:

What relevance does coaching have for front line receptionists in the hotel industry?

The purpose of the thesis is to examine the relevance of coaching for front line receptionists in the hotel industry, by making a field study of the hotel Scandic Rubinen situated in Gothenburg, Sweden. In order to fulfil the purpose, primary and secondary data have been collected such as hotel information, and theoretical documents in the fields of HRM in the front line industry, motivation, leadership, and coaching. Further, personal interviews were

made with the managers and front line receptionists at Scandic Rubinen, but also expert interviews with people working out on the field with coaching in the service industry.

1.4 Disposition of the thesis

The second chapter consists of the literature review where the human resource management (HRM) in the front line industry is presented, with concepts such as service quality, service encounter, and service guarantee. Further, motivation theories, leadership and the concept of coaching with its objectives, strategies and effects are presented. The third chapter presents the methodology with its linked theories. A qualitative methodology is used with a field study of Scandic Rubinen in order to examine the relevance of coaching for front line receptionists in the hotel industry. The fourth chapter consists of the results collected from both primary and secondary sources, by making expert interviews with people working out on the field with coaching, but also with the management and the front line employees at Scandic Rubinen. The fifth chapter describes the analysis of the thesis, with a focus on the relevance of coaching and how it could be linked to for example the yearly employee appraisals at hotels. The sixth chapter, and the last one, will conclude the thesis and give suggestions for Scandic Rubinen how they can use coaching as a leadership style. It will also discuss fields of future studies in the area of coaching for front line receptionists in the hotel industry.

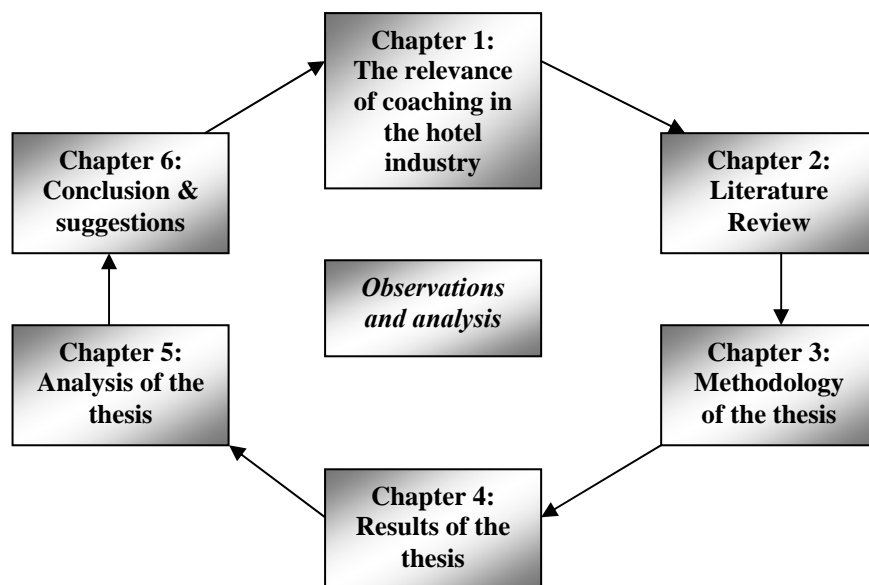


Figure 1: Disposition of the thesis (Stener, 2006)

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter consists of the literature review, where concepts such as HRM for front line employees; motivation; leadership and coaching are presented.

2.1 Human Resource Management (HRM) for front line employees

Front-line employees are referred to, according to Zeithaml and Bitner (2002), as the boundary spanners because they operate at the organisation's boundary. This means providing a link between the external customer and environment and the internal operations of the whole organisation. What type of people are these boundary spanners? In the hotel industry, these boundary spanners are the front-desk employees and in other industries they could be doctors or lawyers. In many cases these positions are characterized by high-stress jobs and require high levels of emotional labour and interpersonal vs. inter-organisational conflicts. (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2002) Garavan (1997) made a study in which the impact of an interpersonal training and development was evaluated for front office staff in a medium-sized hotel. The result showed that there is a positive relationship between social skills training and the quality of customer service within a hotel industry. The customers who participated in the survey could see that the overall quality of service improved in the hotels where the receptionist received social skills training. This means that social-skills training of front-line employees could lead to increased service quality.

The term front office is originally from the US, but is now used in the tourism industry worldwide. It is a term that describes the departments of the hotel as; reception, concierge, reservations, guest relations and switchboard. The front office may vary from different hotels, mainly because of the nature, size and definition. Hence, the fact that hotels are different, the front office department is in many ways the core of the hotel. One of the reasons is that the sale of rooms generates over 50 % of a hotel's revenue and profit, and therefore it is vital that the front office generate profit and maximise sales. The other reason why the front office is of great importance is that it is the first contact that the guests have with the hotel. In many city centre hotels, where guests arrive late in the night, checking in and depart early in the morning, the front office will be the only department they will have contact with. In these cases, the perception of the hotel from the guest's point of view will mainly be based on the level of service from the front office. There is a strong value of the front office for satisfied

customers. Even if the hotel rooms meet the guests' expectations, a negative experience from the front office might lead to the fact that the guests do not return or they will talk negative about the hotel. It is therefore vital to be aware of the fact that the front office will be seen as a strong marketing tool that generates business and satisfied customers to the hotel. The front office department could be seen as the centre for guest activity, but also the communication centre of the hotel. (Verginis & Wood, 1999)

The front office is maybe not in all cases the largest hotel department, in terms of size, but it is essential to organise it in an effective way in order to maximise the profit. Front office management, likewise any other form of management, is about organising and controlling people and other resources in order to reach the company's objectives and goals. Though the hotel has its own mission, the front office should have their own mission statement as well. It is particularly important for the front office employees to be aware of the objectives and goals of the organisation, so they can handle right in different situations. (Verginis & Wood, 1999)

2.1.1 Service Quality

Services are different than goods in four different ways which is important to be aware of. First, it is *heterogeneous*, i.e. a service is characterised as a performance which in turn means that standardisation and service quality are difficult to control. Organisations seek to deal with this issue by training their employees, but the service encounter can not fully be controlled and it will differ from organisation to organisation and from person to person. Second, services can not be stored, saved, resold or returned as physical goods and the customers generally have to be present and directly involved in the consumption process, i.e. services are *perishable*. Third, refers to services and its *intangibility*. As mentioned above, services are characterised as performances or actions that in turn means that they can not be tasted, touched, seen, or felt in the same way as with tangible goods. People can only evaluate the service after it has been consumed. Forth, services are produced at the same time that they are consumed, and there is a high customer involvement, i.e. *inseparable*. The service provider has an important role in customer satisfaction and the service encounter experience. (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2002; Deans & von Allmen, 2003)

Kandampully, (1997) states that there is a variety of aspects played by employees in quality service. The employees become the service performers and are central roles to service quality and of their management as well. These are:

- a) The quality of service performance varies from one service organisation to another;
- b) the quality of service performance varies from one service performer to another;
- c) the quality of service performance varies for the same performer from one occasion to another (Kandampully, 1997, p.6).

2.1.2 Service Encounter

A service encounter, also called moment of truth, is when a customer interacts with the service organisation and where the promises are kept or broken between the employee and the customer (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2002). In the tourism and hospitality industry, service encounters occur in everyday service of the front line employees. The success of the service encounter depends on the satisfaction of the customer needs, and further tourism and hospitality organisations depend on satisfied customers in order to survive. (Chapman & Lovell, 2006) An example linked to the hotel industry could be when a guest is checking into the hotel, goes up to the room, eats in the restaurant in the evening, requesting a wake-up call and finally checking out in the morning. All this could be links of different moments of truth as service encounters flow, because it is in all these moments where the guests have the opportunity to evaluate the organisation's service quality. From the organisation's point of view, the service encounters will guarantee the quality service and increase customer loyalty. (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2002) Kandampully (1999) discusses that the managers need to be aware of this service encounter and use it to build a competitive advantage. Service encounters are a form of human interaction or behaviour, which are characterized by its way of motivating the provider and allowing strangers to interact in a way that goes beyond the barriers of social status (Czepiel, Solomon & Surprenant, 1985).

Furthermore it is of great importance that the front line employees (FLEs) know what to provide to the customer and in what way to behave in order to get a satisfied customer. Hence, the success of the service encounter depends mostly of aware, service oriented, competent employees who understand the importance of working in this particular way. It is vital to understand the specific organisation's strategic objectives and culture. (Chapman & Lovell, 2006)

2.1.3 Service Guarantee

Since services are different than goods, it means that when making a purchase of a service, the risks are higher than when purchasing a good. Therefore many organisations use the service guarantee in order to promise the customer of service reliability, but it also means immediate customer feed-back, customer satisfaction, increased employee performance, a service-oriented culture and being competitive in the market. Organisations that use service guarantees need to plan and respond on the management level to changes more quickly than its competitors in order to be the first on the market place. It will in turn increase the number of satisfied customers. The service guarantee could lead to create a service run by customers, and the customers also seem to appreciate the guarantee, since the commitment shows trust to the organisation. Service guarantees furthermore set criteria for the organisation in what way it should train and develop their employees, by adding value to both the organisation and its customers (Kandampully, In Lee-Ross, 1999).

Erstad (1997) examines that each Radisson SAS hotel in Sweden have a brochure named *No Excuses* with 12 attributes of the room that must be in perfect condition or otherwise repaired within one hour. If the problem is not resolved or if the hotel is full, the customer has the right to not be charged for the room. Both the customers and the employees at Radisson SAS have the knowledge about the conditions in the 100 % Service guarantee programme and act accordingly.

2.1.4 The importance of selecting the right front line employees

Frenkel (2000) emphasises the importance to see that service work is people-centred, compared to good-producing activity, which means that it has several implications for work and human resource management relations. The symbolic behaviour of the service provider is important, such as the way the provider speaks, behaves dresses and carries him- or herself since it will affect the customer and employee relationship. This will therefore be vital when selecting, training and recruiting the employees in service organisations.

How well do first line supervisors carry out their roles? Do they understand the principles of staff supervision and are they competent in coaching and on-the-job training? What level of support do they receive from managers at higher levels?
(Chapman & Lovell, 2006, p.87)

As mentioned earlier, the front office is one of the most important visible departments of the hotel. The guests contact the front office personnel to answer their questions about the destination, suggest restaurants in the area and so on. It is thus obvious that the hotel relies heavily on its front office personnel in order to convince their guests about the service quality. This in turn will involve several key areas of activity presented below:

- Good personal and uniform appearance is the key to the first impression one gets when entering a hotel, for example hairstyle, fingernails and jewellery but also a clean uniform that is used with proper shoes.
- Facial expression, such as the first eye contact and a warm smile, will communicate willingness from the front office employee
- Good body language are important means of visual communication at all times, but particularly during the first service encounter, and must show the enthusiasm and willingness of the front office employee to attend the guest's needs
- The first moment the guest enters the hotel is essential, because of the welcome salutation and the positive attitude from the personnel
- The front office personnel should be able to deal with customer complaints, i.e. if the personnel are unable to help the guest with its problems, they should make up a new solution before the guest asks for it. (Verginis & Wood, 1999)

The key to provide good quality and service in the hotel industry is actually the personnel. The right personnel can make a significant difference in the quality of the service offered. In addition, proper and continuous training is also important in the front office department. This involves finding of the right personnel, because one major challenge in front office management is to keep the personnel turnover low. One way of succeeding with this is to keep the personnel motivated and to have suitable appraisal systems. Another way is to ensure the career development possibilities for all personnel in the front office. (Verginis & Wood, 1999) According to Gåserud (2001), working as a consultant in the field of coaching, the reason for the employee appraisals is to sum up the results and achieved goals during one year. This in order to plan and set up new goals, discuss the work tasks and the individual's development needs.

2.1.5 Team work in service organisations

Zeithaml & Bitner (2002) state that the character of service work indicates that customer satisfaction will be reached when front-line employees work as teams. Many service jobs are

normally stressed and challenging, and therefore it is important to build up a strong teamwork environment. Employees, who feel supported from others and feel that they are working as a team, will be much more enthusiastic of their work and hence provide service quality. One approach in building effective teams is to encourage the attitude that everyone has their own customer. If each employee could see that he or she has an important part of delivering quality to the final customer, teamwork will be enhanced. Service blueprints can be a useful tool for employees to understand their important role in delivering service quality to the final customer. Team goals and rewards do also support team work, because when people cooperate in order to reach the goals, team efforts and team spirit are encouraged.

According to Costa (2004), it is important to promote teamwork in service organisations. Through the development of teams, the organisation will aim towards an increased level of service while acting as nests of complimentary skills and competencies throughout the organisation. These teams will in turn distribute the best practises, by coaching programmes and using the power of the member's experiences.

2.1.6 Empowerment

The term empowerment refers to a form of employee involvement which was well-known already from the 1980s. During that time, the concept was focused on task-based involvement and change, and nowadays empowerment takes place within almost every organisation. It is about securing an enhanced employee involvement to the organisation (Wilkinson, 1998). Although it is seen as a new philosophy of management, it has a long history since it seeks out to deal with the problems in human resources management, i.e. the need to secure both the co-operation and commitment among employees, but also in what way the employees should be involved to take organisational decisions (Hales & Klidas, 1998).

According to Kandampully (In Lee-Ross, 1999) empowerment is:

...when an organisation encourages and commonly rewards its employees for exercising initiative in every aspect of their day-to-day work (p.39).

The concept of empowerment makes the organisation use its employees in an effective way, while giving benefits to both the customers and the organisation. Management literature describes two different models how to lead service organisations: the control-oriented model, which is the oldest one and often referred to as the top-down and bureaucratic management

style and the involvement-oriented model, which is described as the involvement-oriented empowerment approach to service. The core with the latter model is that it encourages every member in an organisation to think, coordinate and control their own working environment. Tourism and hospitality organisations need to attract, take care of and develop their employees through selection and recruitment processes but also through appropriate training and development of the capacity and skills. Empowerment will be the next step beyond simply training the employees, because it will further encourage and reward the employees in their success and failures (Kandampully *In* Lee-Ross, 1999). Erstad (1997) brings up the importance of knowledge in the hotel industry, and empowerment can thus be seen as a tool to gain competitive advantage in the organisation. Bowen and Lawler (1995), experts in the field of empowerment, suggest that firms should use a contingency view of empowerment. This means that empowerment has many benefits, but it should be seen under certain circumstances. Additionally, they recommend an empowerment approach with a production line approach for managing services. It could further be explained that an empowered organisation is characterised by flexibility, and that authority is given to front-line employees, while a production-line organisation is characterised by standardization and less authority for the employees. Both models can be used under certain circumstances, and they suggest that organisations well suited to empowerment strategies are the ones in which:

- 1) The business strategy is one of differentiation and customization, 2) customers are long-term relationship customers, 3) technology is non routine and complex, 4) the business environment is unpredictable, and 5) managers and employees have high growth and social needs and strong interpersonal skills (Bowen & Lawler, 1995, p.333).

The service organisations that do not have these characteristics will use the production line approach. Further, according to Zeithaml & Bitner (2002), research has shown that there are several benefits with empowerment in service organisations, but in some cases it could have the opposite effect. Lashley (1999) explains that empowerment can be used to describe different initiatives taken by employees and managers which could even be good in a win-win situation for the above parts. Many service organisations have discovered that front-line employees need to be empowered and be able to recover when things go wrong, in order to respond to customer needs. Zeithaml and Bitner (2002) describe empowerment as giving employees the desire, skills, tools, and authority to meet the customer needs and expectations. Employees need the specific knowledge and tools to be able to make certain decisions, and

they need motivation that encourages them to do the right things. Zeithaml & Bitner (2002) state that organisations will not succeed with empowerment of their employees if the focus is on: Now you have the authority to do whatever it takes for you to satisfy a customer! First, the employees often do not believe in this, mainly because some organisations are still working in a hierarchical way. Secondly the employees will not have the knowledge about what it means to do whatever it takes without any proper training and tools.

According to Bowen & Lawler (1992) there are certain costs and benefits with empowerment in organisations which are shown in the table below:

<u>Benefits of empowerment</u>	<u>Costs of empowerment</u>
➤ <i>Quicker online responses to customer needs during service quality:</i> employees who are willing and allowed to make decisions in front of the customer will make the decisions quickly, with not always asking an immediate supervisor	➤ <i>A potentially greater monetary investment in selection and training:</i> to find employees who work well in an empowered environment requires more costly selection procedures, including extensive training
➤ <i>Quicker online responses to not satisfied customers during service recovery:</i> Empowered employees will be able to recover customers complaints quickly, which can turn dissatisfied customers into satisfied and loyal ones	➤ <i>Higher labour costs:</i> the organisation might reduce its number of part-time employees, and the employees with more responsibility will demand higher salaries
➤ <i>Employees feel better about their jobs and themselves:</i> when employees have the authority to make decisions themselves, they will feel responsible and makes them more satisfied at work. This in turn will lead to lower turnover	➤ <i>Potentially slower or inconsistent service delivery:</i> empowered employees do spend more time with the customers, which could annoy the ones who are waiting. Empowered employees need to satisfy each customer in the right way
➤ <i>Employees will interact with customers with more warmth and enthusiasm:</i> when employees feel better about themselves at work, these feelings will in turn spill over to the customers	➤ <i>May violate customers' perceptions of fair play:</i> customers think that each one is worth equal service, and therefore it is vital to give service to each customer
➤ <i>Empowered employees are a great source of service ideas:</i> when employees feel empowered, they will feel responsible for the service outcome and have ideas about how to be effective	➤ <i>Employees may give away the store or make bad decisions:</i> many people have a fear that empowered employees will make costly decisions that the organisation can not afford.
➤ <i>Great word-of-mouth advertising from customers:</i> empowered employees do special and unique things that the guest will spread to their family, friends and others about	

Table 1: Benefits and costs of empowerment (Bowen & Lawler, 1992 In Zeithaml & Bitner, 2002, p.334)

Lashley (1999) says that employee empowerment takes into account different definitions taken by the management. The different managerial meanings will be shaped through the perceptions and needs of the certain operation. This is focused on questions about the nature of the problem for the managers, for example is the concern to gain greater commitment or to encourage more participation in the service encounter? Whatever the intentions are from the management's point of view, the effects of empowerment will be shown by the feelings and experiences from the empowered employee.

2.2 Motivation

According to Ference (2001), today's employees are motivated differently compared with some decades ago, and organisational research has shown that people entering a new work, set a high priority on learning new things. Motivation is the core of an individual's behaviour, and therefore it is important that people understand their own motivations and further on that the managers in an organisation understand the motivation of others. Motivated employees are an important element of successful organisations, and it is the management's work to create this environment. Christensen Hughes (1999) states that:

Perhaps nowhere is understanding employee motivation more important than in customer service oriented businesses, such as the hospitality industry, where front-line employees have an immediate impact on customer satisfaction (p.67).

This means that hospitality managers need to be educated and skilled at creating a working environment where the employees feel motivated to provide customer satisfaction. Additionally, motivation is the mental process where individuals choose the desired outcomes, for example goals, and then go for them through the appropriate behaviour. The interpersonal skills become important in this context. (Clark, 1995) Kanfer (1992, in Christensen Hughes, 1999) has divided motivation into two different categories, distal and proximal constructs. Distal constructs mean factors that have an indirect impact on an individual's behaviour and performance. It also includes individual characteristics, such as personality, motives, attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, skills and abilities, as well as cultural background and values. Proximal constructs, on the other hand, interact directly with contextual factors (i.e. the character of the task) and have an impact on the motivation through their influence on cognitive choices and meanings.

2.2.1 Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs is one of the most well-known theories of motivation and is also linked to the distal constructs, mentioned in earlier part. According to his theory, there are five principle levels of needs which are illustrated in a pyramid. The idea of the pyramid came to his mind when he was visiting the Great Pyramids of Egypt. (Quick Seek Encyclopaedia, 2006) These levels start with the basic physical needs. As one level of need is satisfied it is possible to move on to the next level and the layer above becomes the main motivator. (Grazier, 1998)

The first four layers are called by Maslow *deficiency needs* or *D-needs*, which mean that they need to be fulfilled in order for a person to not feel anxiety. On the other hand when they are filled, you feel nothing. To continue, the needs above the D-needs are called *growth needs* or *B-needs*. This means that when they are fulfilled, they will not go away, rather they continue to motivate. Maslow stated examples of those B-needs as beauty, meaning, truth, justice, richness, etc. Finally, the people who have reached the self-actualization will sometimes experience something called transcendence, where the people become aware of their full potential of their own and of human beings. (Maslow, 1954; Quick Seek Encyclopaedia, 2006)

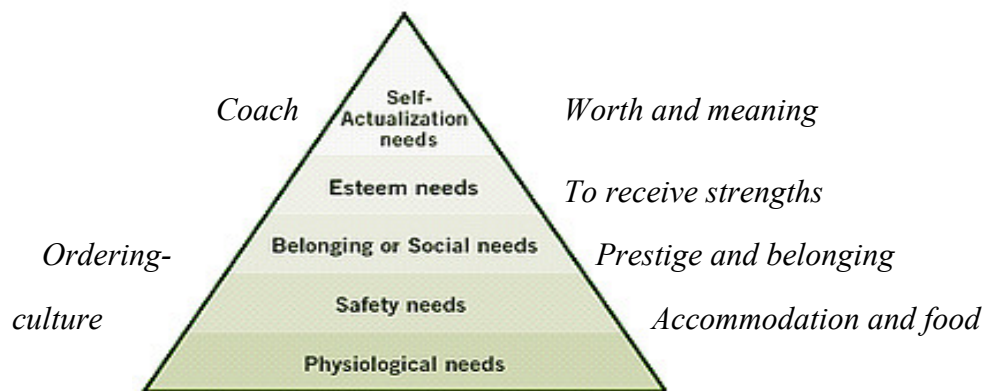


Figure 2: Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Quick Seek Encyclopaedia, 2006; Whitmore, 2003, p.108-109)

Whitmore (2003), as a coaching consultant, explains that the highest step in Maslow's hierarchy is about to reach the goals and meaning in life, for example to create a certain value to a job. In this stage, one could also find the performance appraisals. The self-actualization needs are built up through the ability to come to a decision, meaning to have the authority and the possibility to make own decisions and show what kind of abilities one person has. However, Whitmore (2003) means that this is the core of coaching.

2.2.2 Team motivation

Grazier (1998) means that for a team to fulfil its goals, the terms of participation and motivation are important to be aware of. Successful teams that sustain motivation have missions that align with the needs and wants of the members. Members are motivated because participation in the team meets important human needs.

In order to explain team motivation, Grazier (1998) has further developed Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The physiological needs, explains that work provides individuals with salary which is a basic need that enables the satisfaction of the first needs of Maslow's hierarchy. It could be explained because team participation normally happens when people are working. The safety needs refer to the membership on a team which can contribute to a sense of safety and security in that the individual group members are not alone in task performance. The belonging or social needs are completed when participating in teams, because members can fulfil part of their needs of belonging by interaction with other team members. The esteem needs could be completed by participating in teams, because individual members can fulfil their needs of recognition, gain attention, and enhance individual member's reputation. This will in turn, support self-confidence, and feelings of self-worth. On the top of the pyramid, the self-actualization needs are found where participation in a high performing team can lead to personal growth and learning from others on the team. Individuals who are high performer will increase their creativity and their job satisfaction in cooperation. Thereby their need for self-fulfilment will be satisfied.

Although Maslow is one of the most well-known persons linked with the theory of motivation, there are other motivation theories as well more concerned with identifying a core set of basic personality dimensions and exploring these dimensions linked with motivation and team performance. McClelland makes a distinction between three types of individual needs; achievement, affiliation and power. First, a person who has a high degree of achievement shows long-term involvement in different projects. Secondly, people that aim for a high degree of affiliation are found to establish close personal relationships with other members, like friendship and the membership community. Thirdly, people with a high need of power take actions that affect the other team members. (Hellriegel, Slocum, & Woodman *in* Christensen Hughes, 1999)

2.2.3 ALERT motivational model

Christensen Hughes (1999) has made a summary of research models of motivation where common themes could be identified. It is called the ALERT motivational model and is explained by the first letter of the model. First, managers need to be *aware* of their employees' different needs, which could be achieved by different tools, such as surveys, observations or conversations with the employees. Secondly, managers need to *listen* to their employees, in order to identify the needs and organisational barriers to need satisfaction in organisations. It is also important to listen to your employees to get them involved in the organisation. Further, managers need to make their *expectations* well known for their employees, for example through involving them with establishing goals or expectations for the organisation. This will make the employees more committed and through feedback, it could increase the employees' motivation. Thus, managers need to offer their employees both intrinsic and extrinsic *rewards*, which should be equitable, linked to task performance, be valued and sufficient. The extrinsic rewards should be linked to appropriate compensation systems, while the intrinsic rewards should be linked to job design, empowerment and employee recognition programmes. Managers also need to assist with the right *tools* and *training*. This is extremely important because without training and feedback the employees will lose the connection between effort and performance, and the employees could lose their effort to work. Motivation is something of great importance that influences the working in teams, which in turn will differ between individuals and team members. Clark (1995) argues that motivation also goes hand in hand with leadership, since leadership is basically about motivating people to do things what you want them to do. Leadership is presented in the next chapter of the thesis.

2.3 Leadership

In accordance with Ference (2001) leadership is used to be defined as the ability to get people to do what you want them to do, but this has changed in today's society. Nowadays, leadership is referred to the ability to make the most out of the available resources, or to establish a learning organisational culture. Northouse (2004) defines leadership as:

a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (p. 3)

Furthermore, the author brings up the issues of formal and informal leadership, which is also known as assigned and emergent leadership. Assigned leadership is when a person in the organisation is appointed leader due to his or her position within the organisation. Emergent leadership is when a person is the most influential group member, regardless of his or her position in the organisation. (Northouse, 2004) Research has shown that leadership development is something each organisation should have knowledge about. According to Burke & Collins (2005), the term leadership development refers to:

a process whereby facilitators lead participants through a series of activities or mental exercises, encouraging them to reflect on learning experiences in order to promote transfer of knowledge and skills to work contexts...such programmes focus on self-awareness, changing attitudes, building teams and improving interpersonal interactions (p. 975).

This means that the objectives are focused on team-working and communication, which are the key competencies to organisational performance and productivity. What characterise a good leader? Many people agree that a leader is a person who reaches the results from a group. There is a distinction between two different types of leaders: transactional and transformational leaders (Brush, 1997, In Foley, Lennon & Maxwell, 1997). Transactional leaders watch and search for variation and actions and they assume the role of being a boss. Transformational leaders, on the other hand, tend to communicate high expectations, intelligence, and to encourage problem solving. These are the people who can call themselves coach or mentor. The first leader focus on the end result, while the latter on process or means. Each of these two leaders might reach the organisation's result, but it is the transformational leader who can build effective teams and achieve the maximum results for the long term. (Brush, 1997, In Foley, Lennon & Maxwell, 1997)

2.3.1 Leadership through coaching

According to Ference (2001), successful service organisations build an environment of learning through asking employees how they would do to accomplish the target goal; informing them about different strategies to reach these goals; giving them time to recommend strategies; deciding on the specific strategy; and following up through evaluation of the results. Managers who are successful in these different steps are skilled to use the managerial role as a coaching role. Coaching is exactly about the different steps mentioned above; setting goals, encourage the performance and asking questions and finally to give

positive feedback. The most common mistake in coaching is to not allow sufficient thinking or response time for the employee.

Gåserud (2001), working as a coaching consultant, states that coaching is a form of leadership, which creates benefits for the individual's development and give benefits and good results to the organisation. In order to work as a good coach in an organisation it is vital to see what management consists of and thus Gåserud (2001) explains the leadership role as; administration, leadership and coaching.

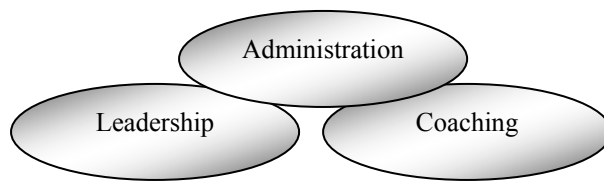


Figure 3: What does management consists of? (Gåserud, 2001)

As seen in the figure above, there are no clear borders between these three areas and the most important is to look at the relationship and cooperation between these. Leadership is an important part of being a leader, which means to look forward and work in a way so the organisation and the employees are aiming for the same goals. Administration is to work systematic to achieve the results that the organisation and department want to achieve from monthly to yearly plans. Coaching is to get the best out from your employees, but also to support the employees on a regular basis. (Gåserud, 2001)

Consciousness and responsibility are two important factors which are of decisive importance for the results in an organisation. To build up consciousness and responsibility is a central concept within all good coaching. Consciousness could increase if the leader pays special attention to the employees, which include to listen and see what happens in the workplace, but also to collect relevant information. In order to do this in an effective way, the leader need to have the abilities of understanding the relationship between objects and people, system, dynamism but also a bit of psychology. Consciousness will further lead to increased skills, and according to Whitmore (1997) it is easier to understand by drawing a comparison to the sport industry. One of the most effective ways to increase the consciousness is to increase the individual's physical ability through coaching. (Whitmore, 1997)

The other concept, responsibility, is also of great importance. To illustrate this, one can think of a situation where there are certain choices for responsibility. To ask someone to take responsibility does not make that person responsible, i.e. he or she does not feel responsible for the task. The employee could feel a fear and guilty to not succeed, but it is not the same

thing as to feel responsible for a certain task. The feeling of responsibility does only occur if there is a choice which in turn is built up by certain questions. (Whitmore, 1997) According to Hart, Heskett and Sasser (1990), to give responsibility are to empower the employees because it goes one step further. Responsibility refers to the obligation to act, meaning that the employees have the access to the resources and the decisions they are allowed to take. According to Whitmore (1997), the model below shows a summary of leadership through coaching:

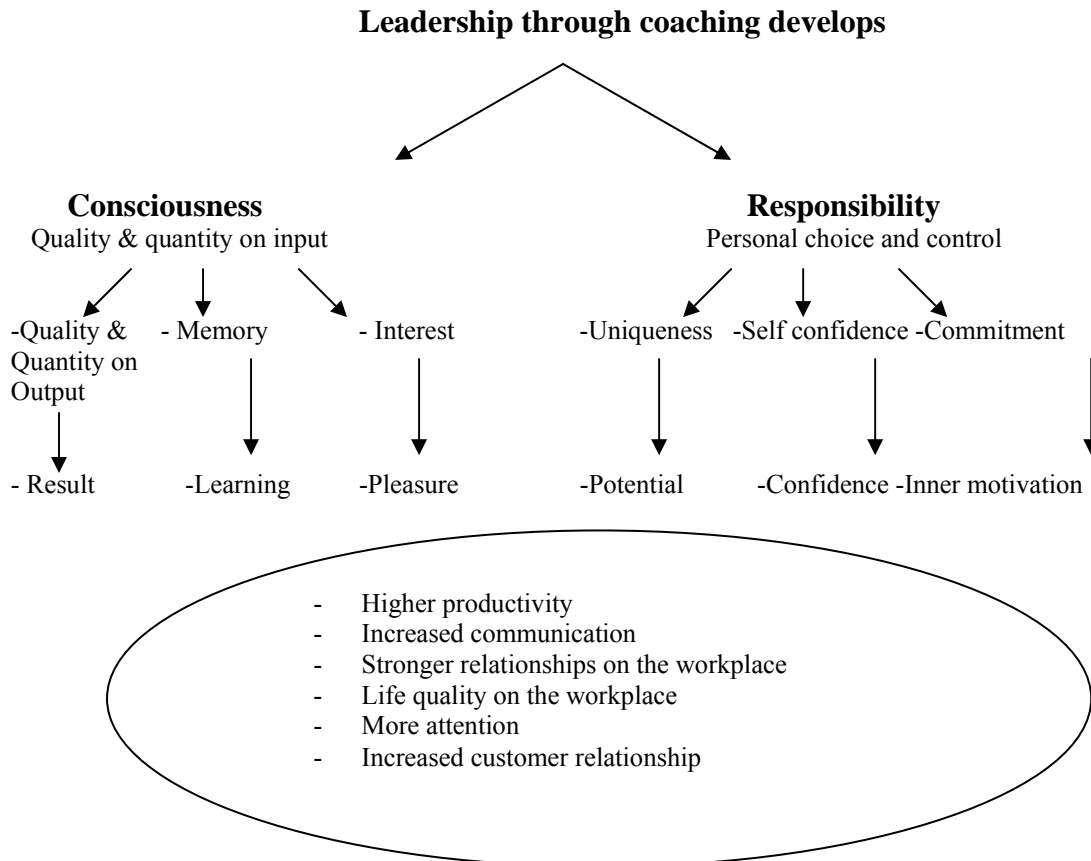


Figure 4: Leadership through coaching (Whitmore, p.172, 1997)

2.4 Coaching

Jarvis (2004) presents coaching as a concept discussed in today's organisations, and it is seen as an ongoing trend. The reason for this might be that coaching is a part of the new performance-led culture, rather than the traditional employment model. Research has shown that coaching is an effective way to encourage learning; it could have an impact on the organisations bottom line and it delivers benefits for both the organisation and the individuals.

2.4.1 History of coaching

Although the term coaching is relatively new, and is referred to many activities, research has speculated that the idea of one-to-one consultation on developing a person's individual needs has been used for many decades. The activities of personal effectiveness programmes and the 360 degree feedback have all focused on making the employees more aware of their personal styles and the activities worth to develop. The main difference in coaching is that the earlier activities were not providing the means for the individuals to actually make the changes. Organisations have seen that it is not enough to bring up the actual changes of an individual, without support the ongoing development. Thus, coaching becomes an important concept. (Jarvis, 2004)

Gåserud (2001) discusses coaching in the eyes of the athletics, and means that people working as a coach in organisations use many concepts from the sports. It is to make use of the potentials each human being has, through support and inspiration from the coach or leader. When it comes to team work, working places has many things to learn through sports, but it also generates huge differences. A working place is often much more complex than in sport situations, and the need of achievement for employees are often seen in a short run. For example, people exercise sport to get good results in a competition and thus need to exercise during a long period of time. On the other hand, people at the workplace do not have time for extra training and need to train during their time at work.

Coaching can not be seen as a new discipline, since it has been used during many years. However, it is only in the last decades that the word coaching has been used in many organisations and also as a consultant area. Coaching has been natural parts of life for people everywhere in the world and in most families coaching could be found in the way parents try to raise their children. The term coaching has many definitions and could refer to many different activities. It started as a profession in the United States in the late 1980's (Results

coaching systems, 2004) Coaching was seen earlier in the business world in another way than today, i.e. the employees were coached because they were underperforming or their behaviour was not good enough (Jarvis, 2004). Nowadays, it is used by many business leaders who want to develop their personnel, by motivating, challenging, supporting them and believing in their positive and negative abilities. (Results coaching systems, 2004)

2.4.2 Definition of coaching

There are several definitions about coaching and sometimes it could be some confusing, between coaching and other tools of helping behaviours, such as mentoring or counselling (Jarvis, 2004). According to Jarvis, (2004), the definition of coaching is:

Developing a person's skills and knowledge so that their job performance improves, hopefully leading to the achievement of organisational objectives. It targets high performance and improvement at work, although it may also have an impact on an individual's private life. It usually lasts for a short period and focuses on specific skills and goals. (p.19)

Coaching is also extremely rewarding and productive, for, if nothing else, it fulfils a deep inner need all human beings have – the desire to be heard and understood without judgment (Eggers & Clark, 2000, p. 70)

Gåserud (2001) defines coaching as a form of leadership – where the leader's aim is to support and guide the employees towards their development. Further on, coaching consists of the leader that support, inspire, challenge, train, teach, guide and confront the employees towards its own development. Coaching is so much more than only working with the yearly employee appraisals or to give support sometimes; as a coach one need to have the will and motivation to support the employees in the daily work. Good coaches observe the employees; estimate the situation; have coaching sessions; and give/receive feedback. Research has shown that there is a lack of agreement about the definition of coaching, and therefore Jarvis (2004) made a summary about the core characteristics of coaching activities that are agreed on by most coaching professionals:

It consists of one-to-one developmental discussions; it provides people with feedback on their strengths and weaknesses; it is aimed at specific issues/areas; it is a relatively short-term activity, except in executive coaching, which tends to have a longer timeframe; it is essentially a non-directive form of development; it focuses on improving performance and developing/enhancing individuals' skills; coaching activities have both organisational and individual goals; it is time-bounded and a

skilled activity; it works on the premise that clients are self-aware, or can achieve self-awareness (p. 18).

2.4.2.1 Coaching vs. mentoring

Mentoring has been used for many years, and there are several similarities between coaching and mentoring. Both involve a one-to-one relationship that provides an opportunity for the individuals to develop, reflect and learn. The term mentoring has its origin from Greek mythology, when Odysseus told his friend, Mentor, to take care of the education of his son. Odysseus told Mentor to “tell his son all he knows about everything” (Jarvis, 2004, p.19). In practice, this means that coaching has in many cases been used interchangeably with the term mentoring. There are some differences between mentoring and coaching as well, for example mentoring is an ongoing relationship that last for a long period of time; coaching has a limited duration of the relationship, mentoring has the focus on career and personal development; coaching is used with focus on development/issues at work, an agenda is set by the person receiving mentorship where the mentor support guidance and support for their future roles; in coaching the agenda is focused on achieving specific and immediate goals. (Gjerde, 2004; Jarvis, 2004) Additionally, Gåserud (2001) describes mentorship as a way to support the employee, but the goals are more formulated than in coaching and are also linked to the career development of the employee.

2.4.2.2 Coaching vs. counselling

When it comes to similarities and differences between coaching and counselling, one of the most important things is that much of coaching’s models and techniques are inspired from psychology and associated therapies. Counselling need people with highly skills because the focus is on helping individuals to solve and support underlying psychological problems. In this case, counselling can be used if the employees are unable to resolve problems in their behaviour during the coaching sessions (Jarvis, 2004). Berg (2004) states that coaching is not the same as counselling, since counselling focus on the past and coaching focus more on the current and futuristic aspects.

2.4.3 The objectives of coaching

Homan & Miller (2006) argue that coaching contributes to four key results in an organisation: 1) maintaining top-performing employees, 2) creating a positive work environment, 3) increasing revenue, and 4) decrease erosion in customer revenue and satisfaction by keeping the personnel for a longer time.

According to Jarvis (2004), there are a number of different factors that have played a certain role in the increased popularity of coaching in today's organisations. Many organisations work under time pressure and dealing with change is nowadays an everyday challenge. The ability to learn and adapt is becoming important skills for employees. Thus, coaching has started to help individuals to regulate the major changes in the workplace. Further, the organisations are more flat, there are broader management roles and lower job security which also have been contributing factors to the growth of coaching. This in turn means that newly skilled individuals want more responsibilities and performance and coaching can hence support these individuals in achieving these changes. It is also a focus on lifelong learning and learning throughout one's life time is becoming increasingly vital in today's society. Coaching has the ability to support different learning styles which could support more employees than traditional training methods. The development needs of individuals can be diverse and in small organisations there are often not so many individuals with specific skills and development needs. Coaching can in this case offer a good approach for development, which can be focused on the individualised, just-in-time development.

As mentioned earlier, Jarvis (2004) means that there is an increasing trend in today's organisations of individual learning and development. If individuals take their responsibility, they also need support and advice where coaching can help to identify development needs, plan the activities and support personal problem-solving. Further, employees demand for different types of training and people are more motivated and learn best when the training is connected and relevant to their job. Therefore coaching fits in well because of its focus on work issues and improved job performance. In many cases, training activities is a waste of time if the personal development disappears afterwards. Coaching is a valuable way of providing support for the individuals' development plans. Gåserud (2001) states that the objectives with coaching are for example that the employees will perform better, which in turn will lead to increased results in the organisation; the employees will enjoy the work and get more motivated, which also leads to better results of the organisation; the leader itself has a more meaningful work and strengthens one's position which in turn will increase the benefits for the organisation and the competitive advantage will enhance as well.

Jarvis (2004) mentions that coaching impacts on both the individual and organisational performances as illustrated in the figure below:

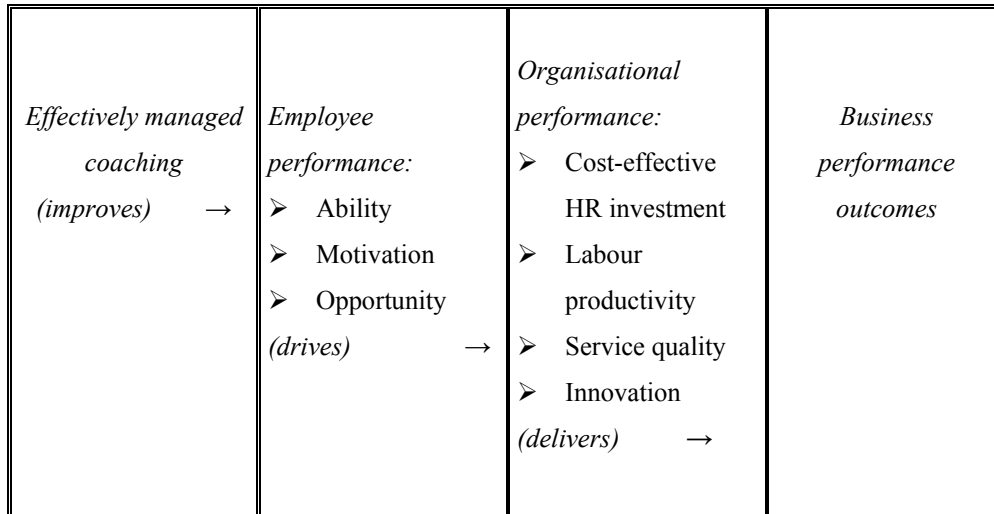


Table 2: In what way does coaching impact on business performance? (Jarvis, 2004, p.39)

Research has found that employee’s job performance is a function of their ability, their motivation to work, and their chance to organize their ideas, knowledge and abilities in an effective way. However, coaching contributes to this development by offering an opportunity to improve the motivation and skills of the employees, which in turn will increase their job performance. By improving the performance of the individuals, it will in turn drive the organisational performances through increased labour productivity, service quality and enhanced customer satisfaction. (Jarvis, 2004) Ference (2001) also discuss the importance of understanding that there is a strong need for employee motivation as well in a coaching process. When an employee is willing to increase his or her effort to meet goals and objectives, the manager needs to increase his or her effort to provide constructive feedback. For example when a manager sees a new, improved behaviour with an employee, it is important to praise it. On the other hand, if the manager would notice an improper behaviour, it should be discussed as an area of improvement. A manager or a coach in this case, should ask questions regarding how to handle the situation better and afterwards analyse the response and determine the reasons why. It might have been because of a lack of information concerning the expectations, a lack of understanding about how to do the job, or a lack of motivation from the employees. Coaching could be used to keep employees working towards goals that meet the organisation’s performance needs and the employee’s learning needs.

In workplace learning, the individual coaching, mentoring and work groups related play an important role. Research shows that there are several possibilities for using coaching as a

management tool and it should be a part of the management process. The skills development in the workplace enables employees to achieve their maximum which could lead to increased employee satisfaction. (Phillips, 1996; Bloch, 1995 In Teare, 1997) Jarvis (2004) has further divided the benefits of coaching into the categories of the individual and the organisation, which could be seen in the table below:

Benefits for the individual	Benefits for the organisation
➤ Learn to solve own problems	➤ Improved productivity, quality, customer service and shareholder value
➤ Improve managerial and interpersonal skills	➤ Can gain increased employee commitment and satisfaction, which can lead to improved retention
➤ Have better relationships with colleagues	➤ Demonstrate to employees that an organisation is committed to developing its staff and helping them improve their skills
➤ Learn how to identify and act on development needs	➤ Support employees who've been promoted to cope with new responsibilities
➤ Have greater confidence	➤ Help employees to sort out personal issues that might otherwise affect performance at work
➤ Become more effective, assertive in dealing with people	➤ Gain a satisfactory process for self-development
➤ Have a positive impact on performance	➤ Support other training and development initiatives e.g. reduce leakage from training courses
➤ Have greater self-awareness and gain of new perspectives	
➤ Acquire new skills and abilities	
➤ Develop greater adaptability to change	
➤ Improve work-life balance	
➤ Reduce stress levels	

Table 3: Individual and organisational benefits of coaching (Jarvis, 2004, p. 41)

In order for coaching to be successful, the organisational culture and climate should be loyal to learning and development of the employees. However, Jarvis (2004) mentions that there are some particular organisational situations where coaching can be a suitable development tool. In these situations, coaching could be seen as the best development tool, but the first step would be to identify the learning or development need, either by the individual themselves, their division manager or someone from the human resources department. When this has been identified, the next step is for the manager and the employee to decide when is the best time to meet for a coaching session. Coaching is only one of several development tools in today's organisation, and it is of great importance to have in mind the employee's preferences as well. Coaching should only be used when it is seen as the best way of helping an individual to learn

and develop. (Jarvis, 2004) In the figure below one can see when coaching can be used as an appropriate tool:

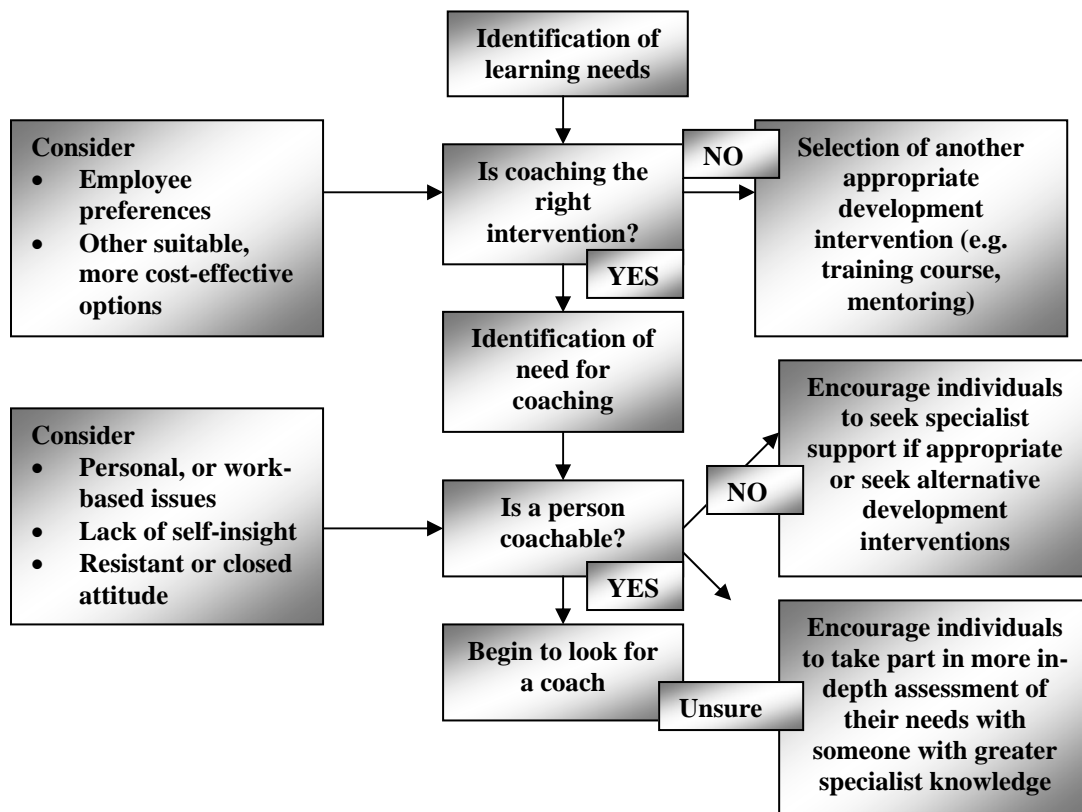


Figure 5: Decision tree: is coaching a good tool? (Jarvis, 2004, p.36)

There are a few questions to decide whether coaching is the most appropriate tool for employees, connected to the decision tree above:

- What are the developmental goals for the individual?
- What will happen if no coaching occurs?
- Are there any alternative learning interventions to consider?
- What is the impact the coaching is hoped to deliver?
- Are there any other development options that will deliver the same results?

(Jarvis, 2004, p.35)

2.4.4 Strategies in coaching

The quality of coaching and its results depends very much on the selected strategy and in what way it is implemented. Nevertheless, there are several alternatives that can be used in order to succeed with the coaching activity and therefore it is vital to determine how the process should be structured. It is furthermore important to select the coaching styles that are most appropriate and the most appropriate tools and techniques. (Jarvis, 2004)

2.4.4.1 Coaching as a process

According to Parsloe & Wray (2000) the coaching process consists of four different stages. The first stage will be to analyse for awareness because the employee first need to become aware of the need to improve their performance, and the coach's role will only be to help the employee to find this. Some people say that one can bring the horse to the water, but cannot force it to drink. This could also be applicable to coaching since one cannot coach anyone without that person's will to participate. There are several ways for an employee to develop his awareness, but the most appropriate way is to analyse the current situation as performance and compare it to the degree the employee wants to change. In this stage, it is furthermore important to think about the learning style preferences of both the employee and the coach.

Gåserud (2001) also suggests that the coach need to identify areas with the employee where coaching is needed by observing, getting advice from others or by receiving ideas from the employee.

Secondly, the only way for effective learning and development to take place is that the individual takes personal responsibility for the outcome. In this stage it is time for the individual to build up a plan and take his or her own responsibility for development. In many cases, this case is ignored because the coach or employee wants to get on in the process, which could lead to that the coaching becomes ad hoc. This means that the coaching becomes unstructured and fails to focus on the issues. Besides, the employees need to take personal responsibility for the outcome in order for the learning and development to take place. The individual should be activated in a Personal Development Plan (PDP) which answers the following questions: What is to be achieved? How will it be done? Where will it be done? When will it start and end? Who will be involved? Who needs to agree to the plan? In order for the PDP plan to be effective it should focus on one or two particular development goals within a short timeframe. All the goals set within a coaching program should be SMART: Specific; Measurable; Achievable; Relevant; and Time-framed. (Parsloe & Wray, 2000; Whitmore, 2003) Gåserud (2001) states that the goal setting is an integral factor to succeed with the coaching process, and tangible goals facilitate the process of planning. In addition, a coaching plan is a good way to make sure both the coach and the employee will have a certain time frame to work with.

Further, there are different implementation styles and techniques that a coach can choose among, but it is vital to think before choosing the most appropriate so it fits with that specific

situation. Coaching can occur in many different situations and some people believe that there is no need for formal planning and that the best coaching occurs in an informal, i.e. asking questions and giving feedback right away. Unfortunately, this could lead to no coaching at all. Therefore it is vital to use a formal approach for coaching, where the time has already been set aside for the employee. Parsloe and Wray (2000) discuss that these two approaches should be used in combination in order to succeed with coaching. Gåserud (2001) considers implementation as an important part of the coaching process, and mentions that in some cases the goals might be changed or the plan will be corrected.

Finally it is vital to evaluate for success and according to Parsloe and Wray (2000) there is confusion about evaluation and monitoring. Monitoring is linked to the regular checking of the personal development plan (PDP), while evaluation is an activity that is made after the PDP has been completed. The evaluation is a one-time activity that will involve both the employee and the coach. When evaluating there are several key questions need to be answered, for example linked to the development goals. Gåserud (2001) further argues that it is crucial to evaluate what the coach and the coached individual have received from the coaching. It is the time to answer questions and to discuss what could have been done better or in another way.

4.4.4.2 Coaching Styles

Parsloe and Wray (2000) define the coaching styles as the way in which the coaching takes place. The different coaching styles differ in the way the individual is totally inexperienced or where individuals are very experience. When working with an inexperienced individual the style is called hands-on style, while the hands-off style is used for experienced individuals. The latter could be used with Olympic athlete or a chief executive, where the coaching relies mainly on questioning and feedback. It is suggested that the faster a person being coached could change from a hands-on to a hands-off style, the improvement of performance will occur faster.

Burnett (1991) states than an effective manager should be able to coach in two different ways: a directive approach and a reflective approach. The directive approach has a power base and is linked to formal authority and the job, whereas the reflective approach stimulates empowerment and plays a vital role where the coaching discussion is based on agreement and

teamwork. Nevertheless, it is essential to balance the directive coaching with a reflective approach, especially in working environments where empowerment is promoted.

4.4.4.3 Coaching techniques

There are several coaching techniques useful when applying coaching to an organisation. Parsloe and Wray (2000) suggest a four step model where it is important for the coach to follow each step carefully before moving on. This technique has been found to be the most appropriate when coaching inexperienced learners. The model starts with an explanation and demonstration stage where the coach will be able to summarize what is important to explain for the new learner. It is also crucial that the coach is emphasising the reason why it is important and explain how it will be done. The demonstration should be done in a logical order, so the coach can summarize and give feedback to why it is important. There should also be time for questions to see if the new employee understood what was aimed to communicate. The next step consists of reflecting on the learning, where the most important thing is to reflect on the previous learning and is more about allowing the learner a few minutes to think, analyse and reflect over the situation. The focus of the third stage is to draw conclusions about the progress that has been made so far, and the coach's role is to remind the learner about the goals that want to be succeeded by using formulated questions. This in turn, could help the learner to simplify any misunderstandings during the progress. The final stage includes planning to practice one more time. This opportunity to practice will give the learner the opportunity to see if the competences have been achieved and it is suggested that the coach should provide the learner with three different practice sessions: *Risk free opportunities*: the learner should operate in an environment where mistakes can be made and without any damage taken to the organisation; *Close-observation opportunities*: the learner can practice in real-life situations with the coach in close presence, in order to be able to give constructive feedback and to build confidence to the learner; *Spot-check opportunities*: the learner should be free to operate in a real life situation, but it is important to have some spot-checked sessions from the coach to offer feedback and increased motivation. To conclude, as the learners improve their performance they will move upwards in something called the spiral effect, i.e. the learner will move from risk-free to spot-check or from a totally hands-on style to hands-off style. (Parsloe and Wray, 2000)

Another coaching technique that is widely used in today's organisations is the GROW-technique that has its origin from sport coaches. It has been influenced by Tim Gallwey's book *Tennis –the inner game* (Parsloe & Wray, 2000). The word inner was used to describe what the tennis player had in its inner feeling, i.e. the person who is in his head is always much more dangerous than the one on the other side of the net in a tennis game (Whitmore, 1997). This technique is built on questioning and a clear structure. The first question focuses on the goals (G) that the client wants to achieve with the coaching sessions. Secondly, the focus is on the reality (R) that the client is operating in. Further on, the coach asks questions about the practical options (O) that the client can choose to achieve the goals that he or she wants to reach. The final step is to focus on the will (W) to actually reach one or several of the previously identified options. The GROW-technique is good if the client already has the knowledge and expertise in the subject, which is often true in sport occasions. In many cases it is difficult to use this technique on workplaces, and it often takes too long time as well.

Whitmore (2003) has examined a certain questions of great importance for working with the GROW-technique as a coach which could be summarized as:

Set up the goal (G): what kind of questions or problems would you like to work with? What are the results connected to these coaching meetings? How is your goal connected in the long term to this question? What is your time frame?

Observe the reality (R): how does your current situation looks like in detail? What is it that makes you feel worried about this situation? Is there anyone else than you who will be influenced by this question? How much can you decide on the result? What hinders you do more? What kind of resources do you have (time, enthusiasm, money, support, etc)? What other resources will you need and how will you get them?

Consider all options (O): what are the options to choose among to get closer to the results of this question? Make a list of what you can do to solve it, big and small ones. What more can you do? What would you do if you had more time, a larger budget or if you were your own manager? What would you have done if you could have started from the beginning on a new theme, a new chapter in life? What are the pros and cons with this? Which one would give the best result?

Confirm the will to act (W): which one or ones of the alternatives do you choose? What criteria and measurement of success do you have? When exactly are you going to start and end each measure? What could happen that will hinder you from

succeeding with these measures or fulfil the goals? What personal resistance do you have? What are you going to do to eliminate the internal and external factors? What kind of support do you need and from who? What can I, as a coach, do to support you? (Whitmore, 2003, p.173-174; own translation)

2.4.5 Characteristics of a coach

There are certain tasks a coach is working with and thus it is vital to understand and be aware of the different skills needed for this certain task. One example is the observations. As a coach, you need to observe your colleagues and spend the time with them in order to understand their behaviour. Additionally, you have to coach them depending on what kind of background they have. The most important coaching tools are a) to give your colleagues a challenge, so they can develop and learn from their experiences, b) keeping on the same track, but continuing on a good basis, and c) the coach also needs to take into consideration the employees who have some problems that the coach will help to change. A coach also needs to have individual coaching discussions with the employees, and this is one of the most important parts in coaching. The last task is about following up and give feedback, which could mean training, learning or something else that helps to achieve the individual's goal, but it is not performed by the coach itself. The coach only has contact with the employees and helps him/her to reach the goal. (Gåserud, 2001)

In accordance with Eggers & Clark (2000) there is a focus on the special relationship between the coach and its participant, and it is vital to see how this could motivate the people to reach personal achievement. To be able to succeed with coaching, there are common features and characteristics to keep in mind. A successful coach needs knowledge in some sort of underlying theory, which is normally rooted in humanistic psychology or philosophy.

Tenelius (2006) describes the importance of working as a coach and means that as a coach it is vital to see people's potential and hidden possibilities, and to always relate to the invisible coaching sessions. The purpose behind these coaching sessions is to lift up the hidden capacity and abilities of the employees. It is not about telling the employees what to do, it is more about giving them feedback and support to accomplish their tasks. Jarvis (2004) emphasise that coaching in some cases can be challenging and sometimes lonely activity if one works as an external coach, or as a consultant and therefore the coach also needs opportunities to develop their skills. This could be done in one to one or in groups. These

opportunities could help the coach to develop their skills as well as giving support. It could also be an important quality activity for organisations and a tool of organisational learning.

In order to be able to work as a coach there are different skills a coach has to acquire (Gåserud, 2001; Tenelius, 2006; own translation). First it is important to have active listening skills, because the method with a coaching session is to ask questions, listen to the answers and ask new questions on the basis of the first question. Tenelius (2006) means that the key with coaching is to listen, not only to what the person says but also to listen behind the scene, i.e. to understand what lies behind the person's answers. It is really important in order to listen and to have a dialogue between the coach and employee. The 80/20 law (Pareto's law) is important in coaching, because 80 % of the time consists of listening and the rest (20 %) consists of talking (Gåserud, 2001). It is further important to have curiosity skills and Gåserud (2001) means that the first thing the coach need is the wish to be working as a coach, i.e. since without any motivation from the coach it will never work. It is essential to mention that the coach has the responsibility for the coaching sessions, while the person being coached has the responsibility for his/her life, choices, the project and its relationships with others (Tenelius, 2006).

In addition, the coach has to work with open questions, such as when, where, how or who. A coach has to work with the method "learning-by-doing", where the motivation, empowerment and participation are important key words according to Gåserud (2001). Communication skills are something that a good coach needs, because coaching is an opportunity to see who you really are as a person and to give feedback. This could in some cases be challenging because people communicate in different ways. (Tenelius, 2006) The intuition skills refer to the fact that the coach needs to go through the process of accessing and trusting one's inner knowing which is a nonlinear and a non-rational process. This is where the trust is built between the coach and the employee. Trust is nonetheless a key word in coaching and important to have in mind. The coach has to show empathy to another person's life and to be able to understand that every person is unique and has its own problems or challenges in life. (Tenelius, 2006) Gåserud (2001) furthermore discusses that to be able to work as a good coach you need to have the ability to understand other people's situations and how they think and feel and it is about to take some risks, because when the coach tries to know another person, he/she will be involved into that person's life.

2.5 Summary of the literature review

Concepts such as service guarantee, service quality, empowerment, motivation, leadership and coaching have a certain connection to each other. By implementing a leadership style through coaching for front line receptionists in the hotel industry, the high employee turnover will decrease as well, because well-motivated and empowered employees do not leave their work, or? This model explains my ideas of the analysis of the literature review:

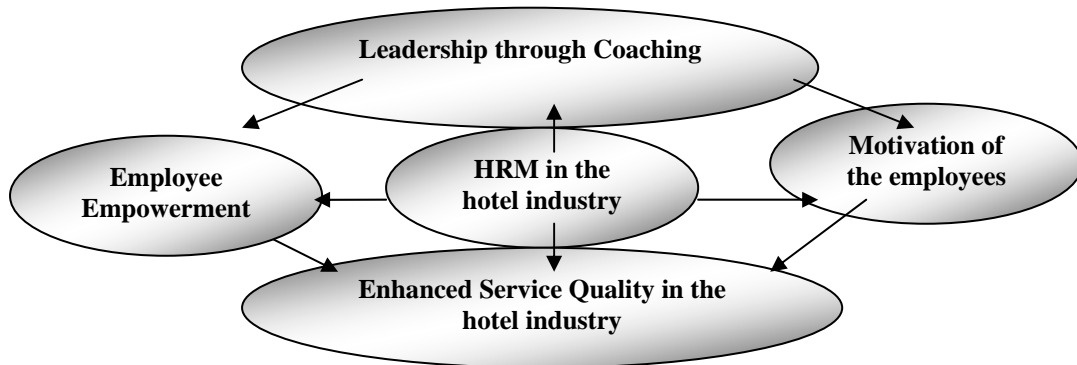


Figure 6: Analysis model of the literature (Stener, 2006)

This model will be explained with the ALERT motivational model by Christensen Hughes (1999) which I believe is closely linked to coaching. As Christensen Hughes (1999) mentions, it is important that managers is *aware* of the employee's needs. Ference (2001) discusses the importance to understand that there is a strong need for employee motivation in a coaching process. When an employee is willing to increase his or her effort to meet goals and objectives, the manager needs to increase his or her effort to provide constructive feedback. Further, managers need to *listen* to the employees, which is one of the most important characteristics as a coach. Christensen Hughes (1999) means that hospitality managers need to be educated and skilled at creating a good working environment for the employees, and the hotel industry is one of the important industries where the employees meet the guests on stage. An earlier discussion mentions the importance of motivating the employees and it could be done in different ways. My belief is that it is not only about giving the employees performance appraisals, but it is rather to motivate and support the employees on a daily basis. The managers also need to share their *expectations* with the employees, by involving them in the goals and expectations for the organisations. This in turn will increase both the motivation to work and the employee empowerment for dealing with customer complaints. Finally, it is vital to give *rewards* and appropriate *training* which can be done through using a leadership through coaching style for front line employees.

3 METHODOLOGY

This chapter consists of the methodology, where the qualitative field study design, the research purpose, the research approach, data collection and the trustworthiness of the thesis are presented.

3.1 Field study design

A field study is a study in which the researcher studies a research place by observing and asking questions, but does not change anything in the organisation (Research Glossary, 2007). This thesis is conducted as a field study, since I have been out on the field working as a front line receptionist at Scandic Rubinen for about six months, both full and part-time. Therefore, it was a possibility for me to make observations on a regular basis and analyse the relevance of coaching for front line receptionists in hotel organisations. For me, this has also been an advantage when making the qualitative interviews with both the managers and the employees at Scandic Rubinen, since I already had a good personal relationship with the interviewees. This was also one of the main reasons why the subject was selected for this study. Further, this field study can be linked to a qualitative approach. Patel & Davidson (2003) means that it is known that qualitative researchers do often work in the analysis with a method called thick descriptions, i.e. descriptions to make the reader an understanding of the interpreted fact. This is important as well when making field-studies, which was something in my mind when making the analysis of the data collected from the interviews. Further, this field study is examined in order to answer the research question about the relevance of coaching for front line receptionists, but also in order to make a comparison between how the management and the employees at Scandic Rubinen perceive coaching as a tool for management for front line receptionists in the hotel industry.

3.2 Research Purpose

The purpose of the thesis is to find out the relevance of coaching for front line receptionists in the hotel industry, which is seen as a normative purpose. Further, Yin (2003), states that the purpose of an academic study can be descriptive, exploratory or explanatory. Descriptive studies are the best purpose if one wants to describe phenomenon such as events, a process or situations. It could also be used when the problem is clearly structured, but the reason for conducting the research is not to find out a connection between causes and symptoms like the case in an exploratory study. (Ericsson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 2001) The research purpose of

this thesis is mainly descriptive since the research purpose is clearly structured and there is a need to describe a certain process of using coaching in the hotel industry. A descriptive study is similar to an exploratory study, and it is often used in situations where a theory of how variables are related is already in place, but specific values are needed for those specific cases (Research Glossary, 2007). According to Hair, Bush & Ortinau (2003) an exploratory design:

is undertaken when the research objectives focus on gaining background information and clarifying management's and/or the redefined research problems to create hypotheses, define terms, and/or establish research priorities (p. 210)

Further, exploratory studies are useful if one wants to illuminate the understanding of a problem and it focuses on collecting either secondary or primary data, but is also used by decision makers who want to monitor the market in their company or industry (Hair, Bush, & Ortinau, 2003). This thesis is thus also exploratory since it provides a better understanding how coaching could be used as a management philosophy in the hotel industry, and what is the relevance of using leadership through coaching for front line receptionists.

3.3 Research Approach

A qualitative approach has been used for this thesis to collect primary data, since personal interviews were made with the employees and the management at Scandic Rubinen. The qualitative method is chosen in order to find out how people on the managerial level and in the front desk perceive the concept and relevance of coaching in the hotel industry and at Scandic Rubinen. Silverman (2001) suggests that if the concern is to explore people's life histories or everyday behaviour, the qualitative method will be the best suitable research tool. The purpose for the thesis is to generate descriptions in order to make an analysis and give suggestions to Scandic Rubinen about coaching, where the qualitative method was the best suited one.

Patel and Davidson (2003) refer to the qualitative research as a study where the collection of data is focused on soft data, i.e. by using qualitative interviews and interpreted analyses. The questions used in a qualitative method are for example; what is this? What are the patterns in this behaviour? This is more about understanding and interpreting someone's behaviour and the reasons why people react in one way or another. Bell (1995) has a definition of qualitative research, which refers to the fact that researchers using this kind of perspective are interested of knowing how people experience their world. Their aim is to have insight or knowledge

instead of statistical analysis. This thesis has mainly focused on the relevance and need of coaching for front line receptionists and in what way it can be implemented into the hotel industry. According to Hair, Bush & Ortinau (2003) a qualitative research focuses most on the collection of detailed primary data from relatively small samples by asking questions or observing behaviour. By observations, I was evaluating the behaviours of the front line receptionists and reasons and motives why people reacted in certain ways.

3.3.1 Different methods used in a qualitative research

Methods	Qualitative methodology
➤ Observation	➤ Observations at Scandic Rubinen during six months
➤ Textual analysis	➤ Small number of texts and documents were analysed
➤ Interviews	➤ Small number of interviews were made, with open-ended questions
➤ Audio and video recording	➤ Audio recording were used in the personal interviews

Table 4: The use of different methods in a qualitative research (Silverman, 2001; revised by Stener, 2006)

Backman (1998), states that a qualitative methodology has a focus on individuals and their interest in the real life. The meaning of the study, the context and the processes are crucial concepts to discuss when using a qualitative methodology. The meaning of the study is linked to the researcher's interest in how individuals experience and analyse the reality in relation to prior experiences. For me, it was interesting to study the impact of coaching in the hotel industry, mainly because I was already inside the hotel organisation and could make observations. Silverman (2001) argues that the aim of an observational study is to gather firsthand information about the processes in a real-life context. Backman (1998) further discusses the context of the study which means that the researcher mainly focuses on the individual in a real-life situation. The researcher, or the observer, is close to the studied subject and is sometimes a part of the methodology in a subject-subject-relationship. This has been the case for me, since the subject was coaching and I was close to this subject during a period of time.

In a qualitative research, the textual analysis consists of collecting a small number of texts and documents to analyse because of different purposes. The aim is more to understand the

participants of the study and to see how they are linked to concrete activities, for example by telling stories. By observing how the front line receptionists worked at Scandic Rubinen, it was interesting to see the differences and similarities in texts and documents about coaching. Since coaching is a quite new concept, there seems to be much more work to collect the most relevant data and to analyse it in a proper manner. In many cases, the consultant documents of coaching were the most appropriate ones, such as Jarvis (2004) and Whitmore (1997; 2003).

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the relevance of coaching for front line receptionists in the hotel industry, thus there is a need of making interviews. Interviews were made with the managers and the employees working in the front office of the hotel Scandic Rubinen. Silverman (2001) means that interviews are commonly used in qualitative methodology where the aim is to have a small sample with open-ended questions, and there is a great importance of audio recordings as well. According to Silverman (1993), interviews are common methods when one wants to understand the thoughts and feelings of the interviewees. I have chosen to include interviews in this thesis, because the purpose is to answer the how questions and therefore it is important to interview people about the subject. Since this thesis consists of interviews with people who had different experiences about the subject, the degree of flexibility in the interview method was vital to think about. Thus, Silverman (2001) further means that flexibility could make it more difficult to compare one interview with another. When making interviews there are different things one has to keep in mind. According to Patel & Davidson (2003) qualitative interviews are almost always having a low degree of standardisation, i.e. the questions that the interviewer wants to ask, make it easier for the interviewee to answer with their own words. Sometimes, the interviewer makes the questions in a logic order, which means that the interview has a high degree of standardisation. In other situations, the interviewer makes the questions in an order that fits with the special interviewee, which makes the standardisation lower. Nevertheless, the use of standardised questions with multiple-choice answers was not appropriate in this case. According to Lantz (1993) the purpose with making a qualitative interview is to discover and identify the characteristics of the discussed matter, for example someone's thoughts about a phenomenon. It was important for me when doing the research to have background fact about the specific knowledge that the interviewee had.

Compared to notes of observational data, recordings can increase the reliability of the research since researchers can go back and develop new hypotheses after the interview

(Silverman, 2001). Therefore audio recording was used when making the interviews with the managers and the front line receptionists at Scandic Rubinen.

3.3.2 Interviews

In a qualitative interview the different parts have different roles (Patel & Davidson, 2003). The first interview was made in the middle of October with Stenhammar, Room Division Manager at Radisson SAS Scandinavia, in the restaurant of Radisson SAS Scandinavia. The interview lasted for about two hours, and open-ended questions were used. The second face-to-face interview was made a few weeks later with Wigelius, Service Manager at Radisson SAS Scandinavia, at the same place as the interview before. Unfortunately, there was no possibility to include Radisson SAS Scandinavia in the thesis since it was difficult to find the time and interview the employees. Therefore, the decision was to make a field-study instead of Scandic Rubinen, since more information had been retrieved both from the management and the employees in that specific hotel. Still, the information retrieved from the interviews with the managers at Radisson SAS Scandinavia was useful when collecting background information for the thesis.

The third interview was made with Wehrle, the front desk manager at Scandic Rubinen and it lasted for about 2 hours (see appendix 3). Since I was already working as a front line receptionist, our relationship was good and it was easier to have a personal interview. This could in turn influence the reliability of the thesis, because in some way there is only a positive way of working with coaching but in reality it might not be. This is something that was in my mind, when making the analysis of the interviews. The fourth interview was with Ivekrans, the hotel manager at Scandic Rubinen which lasted for approximately the same time as the previous interview (see appendix 3). The interviews with the employees were made outside the hotels with 1,5 hours on each employee (see appendix 4). In some cases it was difficult to ask the employees from Scandic Rubinen, since we are colleagues and it could lead to unsure answers from the employees, i.e. they did not feel that they could open themselves in the same way as with a neutral interviewee. The empirical material has been retrieved from interviews, but the answers are presented anonymous in order to not link the answers to a specific employee. I believe there is certain things one need to keep in mind before making the interviews. According to Patel & Davidson (2003) it is a great advantage if the one making the qualitative interview do have some knowledge and is prepared to answer questions about the research area. For example, when making an interview with the managers

and front line receptionists at Scandic Rubinen it is of great importance to have some general knowledge about the business concepts of the hotels. For me, it was evident to have this knowledge since I was already inside the hotel organisation. In this case it was also important for me to have knowledge about coaching and empowerment as well as other important theories used in the thesis. A qualitative interview can generate information of different characteristics. Finally, I believe doing an interview in a professional way of dressing instead of just a simple dress will make the interview more reliable and make the respondent to feel that the thesis is something of value. I had this in mind when making the face-to-face interviews with the participants of the study.

3.3.3 Email interviews

In those cases where personal interviews were not possible, the alternative was to make email interviews. Although, it is not as effective as a personal interviews, the respondent will have time to think before answer the questions and thus the answers could be more trustworthy. I started my research by contacting Engström, working for the Human Resource Management department at Scandic Head Quarter in Stockholm. The first question was to know if coaching is used in Scandic at the hotel level, in order to gain a deeper knowledge about the subject. I also got in contact with Kruzela (International Certified Coach; member of the International Coach Federation, ICF) already in an earlier lecture held at the Gothenburg Business School, and for me the interest of using coaching in service organisations increased after her inspiring lecture. Therefore I decided to ask her to answer some few questions about the relevance of coaching in the hotel industry (see appendix 1). The most appropriate way in this case was to make an email interview. Therefore I sent some open-ended questions, and asked her to answer the questions in a few weeks time. In the results, the email interview with Kruzela is called expert interview.

3.3.4 Telephone interview

I got in contact with a person working for Hotell & Reseverket (a Swedish company recruiting employees to the tourism industry) through the internet, where I found out that they are working with coaching in the service industry. Gustafson works with recruiting people to the service industry in the southern part of Sweden. She has a 20 year background from the hotel and travel industry, and is now working as a recruiter in the service industry and is educating people in hotel organisations. Before, she has been working for Radisson SAS

Hotels with education, recruiting and development of the human capital in Sweden. This was some of the reasons why I decided to have a telephone interview with Gustafson, which was made an early morning for about 30 minutes (see appendix 2). The disadvantage with this method is that there is no chance to tape the interview, so I had to write down the answers on the same time as talking in the self phone, which was quite difficult. The advantage is that I got in contact with someone outside the hotel organisation, who is working with coaching in a professional way in service organisations. In the results, this telephone interview with Gustafson will be called expert interview as well.

3.4 Data collection

3.4.1 Primary data

According to Patel and Davidson (2003), primary sources are observations and any kind of first-hand information. Bell (2000) describes a primary source a bit different but the meaning is still the same. According to her, a primary source is a source that will come into existence during the research process. Hair, Bush, & Ortinau (2003) defines primary (or first-hand) data as:

...primary data are normally collected by a set of formalized procedures in which researchers ask selected individuals questions or observe and record their behaviour (p.210).

I consider primary sources to be any kind of first-hand information for this thesis. First, the observations of both the management and the front line receptionists at Scandic Rubinen made in the field study are important to consider, which is seen as field material. This has been an advantage for me when writing the thesis, but it was also quite challenging since the analysis of the material was only seen from my point of view. The primary data will further be the interviews. In most cases, personal interviews were made but in others telephone interviews or e-mail was the most efficient ones. From the results of the interviews, it was possible to draw conclusion to the literature and consultancy material. Further, I have used internal sources of primary data such as company brochures, magazines, and the Intranet. The information about the employee appraisals of SMART is an important internal source used frequently for this thesis. I had the possibility to use the Knowledge Portal, i.e. a technical platform that shows the results of SMART and helps the employee to develop within Scandic, which has been vital for this research as well. The homepages of Scandic has also been used frequently in order to gain a general understanding of the hotel organisation.

3.4.2 Secondary data

Secondary sources are everything that is not observations or first-hand information according to Patel and Davidson (2003). Bell (2000) refers to secondary sources as something that have been analysed and already taken place. Hair, Bush, & Ortinau (2003) define secondary data as:

...data not gathered for the immediate study at hand but for some other purpose
(p.96).

The ways I have looked upon secondary sources agree with Patel and Davidson (2000), but also with Hair, Bush, & Ortinau (2003). In order to collect the relevant secondary sources, I have used external secondary sources such as journal articles, books and electronic databases mainly from the library at the University of Gothenburg but also from the Internet. When searching for the secondary information, the use of words such as coaching, empowerment, HRM, hotel industry, motivation, leadership and so on have been used. What was challenging for me was to find written documents about the concept of coaching, since it is a new concept in the hotel industry. Jarvis (2004) consultancy report of coaching is used frequently in the thesis, mainly because I consider the information to be updated and relevant.

3.5 The trustworthiness of the study

Norén (1990) discusses the importance of the trustworthiness, where the researcher needs to answer some questions concerning the generality, validity and reliability. Generality explains that in what way the results of this study can be generalised to other organisations. One way could thus be to ask questions such as: in what way can the results of this thesis be applicable to other hotel organisations? Is it something that only Scandic can use, or could it be generalised to other hotels as well, such as Best Western or Radisson SAS? The results of this thesis could be applicable to other hotel chains as well, which will lift up the importance of well-motivated employees in the hotel industry. The reason is that hotels function in almost the same way, and the way of working with the front line receptionists will not differ much as in other hotels. The other question refers to how the researcher can make it believable that the results have a trust in the eyes of the reader, i.e. the validity of the thesis. The validity of this thesis is high, since it has been conducted as a field study where I have been working and observing the behaviour of the employees for more than six months. Validity is described, in accordance to Patel & Davidson (2003), as the qualitative method as the ambition of discover,

interpret, and understand the world or to describe a culture. The concept of validity in a qualitative study will refer to the whole research process, and not only to the collection of data as in a quantitative study (Patel & Davidson, 2003). Additionally, the focus was to collect, analyse new data and compare it to existing theories with the similarities and differences of the collected results. Thus, open-ended questions were the most relevant to reach the end result. In this case, a field study was made to examine the relevance of coaching for front line receptionists in the hotel industry. Nevertheless, Silverman (2001) argues that a qualitative research offers a deep understanding of the studied phenomenon, but the disadvantage is anecdotalism (i.e. validity) and the lack of space (i.e. reliability). Anecdotalism refers to how valid are the explanations it offers, which also questions the validity of qualitative research. Validity means shortly the word for truth, and sometimes there is a lack of validity of an explanation since the researcher has not dealt with contrary cases. The anecdotalism of this thesis is high, since observations were made during a longer period of time. When referring to the interviews, the validity is lower since the interviews were made in Swedish and afterwards translated into English. There is a lack of space in this study, because it was impossible for me due to time and resources to make a larger study of the relevance of coaching in the hotel industry. Therefore the reliability is lower, than when making a quantitative research.

The last question refers to how the results are dependent on the circumstances by collecting the empirical data and if there are any mistakes made when collecting the data, i.e. the reliability. When making qualitative research, the reliability is lower than in quantitative research mainly because of the small sample in the interviews. The interviewees were asked open-ended questions, which has guided the subject at hand in the right direction. If a question is not reliable, it is also missing the degree of validity. According to Silverman (2001), the reliability of a study can, in most of the cases, be determined in the analysis and interpretation of the empirical data and literature review. This study was further focused on real-life contexts in one specific hotel, and therefore it was possible for me to see the characteristics of every-day life. To receive reliable information from the primary sources, the focus was to find interviewees with appropriate positions and knowledge to answer my research questions. Therefore, it was vital to receive relevant information about the area of coaching from the expert interviews. Silverman (2001) further argue that the issue in qualitative research is more about authenticity rather than reliability, because the aim will be to examine an authentic understanding of people's experiences. This is something that was in my mind during the research period.

4 RESULTS

This chapter consists of the results of the study, where Scandic; expert interviews in the field of coaching; managers at Scandic Rubinen; and front line receptionists at Scandic Rubinen are presented.

4.1 Scandic

According to internal material from Scandic, it is seen that Scandic's vision has roots that go deep into the Nordic heritage. The hotel concept is built up with the traditional Nordic *taking care of one another* attitude, which means that all decisions and beliefs taken in Scandic are based on Nordic common sense. Scandic will offer a service that is accessible, affordable and value for money in an easy way. The way Scandic work can be summed up with something that in Swedish is called *omtanke*, which means consideration for other people. This *omtanke* can be seen in hotel actions, from serving the guests to treating colleagues and partners. It is the Nordic common sense that guides the philosophy, which is to run a business that benefits everyone: the environment, the society and the employees. Scandic should be seen as an attractive place to work where leadership should be clear and give the employees opportunities for own initiatives, involvement and development. This could be done through good motivation and management strategies by clearly defined objectives. The Scandic's team member concept is important to have in mind which is:

We must offer a *secure and meaningful* job in a *developing environment*, where your efforts at work create *value* for you, the guests, the brand and Scandic.¹ (Scandic homepage, 2006; own translation)

Secure and meaningful means that the employees should work in a good, secure working environment, which gives confidence to open communication and long-term working relationships. It also means that everyone need to make efforts which are significant for the complete experience of our guests and customers. To work in a developing environment indicates that the goal is to always become more efficient within the various functions of the hotel, because a successful company depends upon how people learn from different successes and mistakes. (Scandic homepage 2006; own translation)

¹ ”Vi ska erbjuda ett tryggt och meningsfullt arbete i en utvecklande miljö, där arbetsinsatsen ger värde för dig, gästen och Scandic” (homepage of Scandic, 2006)

The values are related to every employee's efforts at work must be seen as stimulating and precious for the individual, the guests and for Scandic as a business. Every employee working for Scandic must be able to be proud of their work and of being a part of Scandic hotels. (Scandic homepage 2006; own translation)

Knowledge is of great significance today, because what was important a few years ago is now exchangeable with something of more value. The world is changing, and so do also Scandic and their team members. Therefore it is vital to develop the employees' skills through knowledge and courses that meet every person's demand. However, it is the team member who is responsible for his or her own development. (Scandic homepage, 2006; own translation)

To be competent means that you, as a team member have the knowledge which is required for your position and that you know how to use it in practice. It is further more important that you feel confident in your role as for example a receptionist or a front desk manager. The competence of Scandic's employees is thus a very important success factor. Scandic has gathered different programmes in the competence development area which is called the Scandic Business School and has courses from leadership to mentorship, meetings, seminars, etc. (Scandic homepage, 2006)

The Knowledge Portal is a technical platform that gives an overview of your development as an employee within Scandic. Every team member has their own personal log-in and can follow the path within the company. The courses and programmes are saved into the employee's personal Knowledge Portal system, which makes it a good tool for team members, managers and in fact the whole organisation to keep updated with the overall targets for Scandic.

The yearly employee appraisals², called Get SMART at Scandic, are also a part of this Knowledge Portal, thus the employees can follow their own path and development through this technical platform. It is a tool that will function as a compliment to the everyday dialogue between the employee and the manager. The goal with this method is to help the employee to reach their career goals within the Scandic hotels.

² Medarbetarsamtal (Swedish translation)

The process is called Get SMART, because Scandic use the principles of SMART to reach the goals and for development planning for their coaching sessions. These include the measurement of the goals and development plans:

- Specific (S): the goals and development plans should be clearly expressed, i.e. not vague.
- Measurable (M): each employee should be able to measure the goals and development plans, both quantitative and qualitative.
- Achievable (A): each employee should be able to reach the goals and development plans by the tools and knowledge provided for each employee.
- Realistic (R): the goals and development plans should not be too easy, i.e. it should be a challenge to reach the targets.
- Time-bound (T): the goals and development plans for each employee should be concluded before a specific date. (Scandic internal material, 2006)

According to Engström (2006), Scandic use the term coaching on the higher level of the organisation, i.e. line managers and future hotel managers, within a talent program which is called *Talent of Scandic*. A company, called Kenexa, has interviewed about 30 hotel managers within Scandic in order to try to measure which behaviour and skills are important for a good leadership within the hotels. Each year, about 12 Swedish talents got selected to the programme, and the criteria are that he or she should be a line manager or recommended by the hotel director. These 12 talents make five tests and together with their coach, they work for continuously improvement and development. The tests consist of one verbal, one numerous, two structured interviews (which measures the behaviour and skills) and an online test. The person interviewed makes a summary of the results and together with the employee there is a coaching session regarding what the person need to work with to be a good hotel director. Further on, every employee has their own mentor (or coach) that has been working for Scandic for several years and has an interest to develop and coach others.

4.1.1 Scandic Rubinen

Scandic Rubinen is a small, middle class hotel situated in the heart of Gothenburg. The hotel has 191 rooms, two main restaurants that serves Latin food and is classified as both a business and leisure hotel. The hotel also has conference facilities and offers three meeting rooms for up to 60 people. There are about ten employees working in the front desk, where some people are full-time employees and others only work as part-time. The employee turnover at Scandic Rubinen is measured to approximately 1 550 000 SEK per month, including vacation, social

fees, etc. There are 12 employees working as receptionists in the hotel, including the front desk manager, which are not that many compared to other departments. The housekeeping department consists of 38 employees, including the housekeeping manager. The restaurant and the kitchen have a total of 38 employees, including the F&B manager. The hotel has in total approximately 115 employees.

4.2 Expert interviews

According to Kruzela (2006) coaching is a relatively new phenomenon in Sweden in comparison with the US and England. Coaching is used in organisations, such as Astra Zeneca; Sony Ericsson; IBM and other international companies which have executive coaches, i.e. external coaches. In some cases, coaching can also be used in leadership education purposes. For Kruzela (2006), the concept of coaching means:

To get the people that I am coaching to grow and to make this person understand that he or she can have a large influence on both their private and working life. My tool is to ask questions in order to get that person involved in a way that he or she can experience the actions taken in life.

Through reflecting on both positive and negative consequences, the person will learn how to react and to get more involved in certain tasks in life. Organisations have a vision and it is important to motivate the employees to this specific vision. Coaching can help to increase the individual's specific competencies, which in turn can lead to increased competencies in the whole organisation. To stimulate the individuals in the organisation, to develop their strong abilities, but also to start develop their negative ones is important to illustrate that something negative could be changed to positive. This could contribute to a change of negative attitudes towards positive ones and also stimulate the total result of the organisation.

Coaching can stimulate the employees to increase their area of responsibility and by working with leadership through coaching it will increase the confidence in the relationship between the manager and the employees, which in turn will benefit the whole organisation. Motivation among employees is something that increases when they get involved into the organisation and enhances their inner motivation.
(Kruzela, 2006)

A manager who delegates the tools also delegates authorities, creates space for handling the tools, and is willing to leave new information necessary to see the task through. Coaching can be used as a profession for people who want to work as professional coaches, but it could also

be seen as a large part of leadership. Leadership through coaching is something of a delegating leadership, which is different compared to the traditional leadership styles. In the traditional leadership style, the manager takes all the decisions and gives order to the employees.

In those cases when coaching is a function of leadership, the decision making and responsibility also involve the employees. The manager does not work in the same way as in the previous case, but instead leave space so the employees can show their skills and knowledge as well. This could be connected to empowerment which is described according to Kruzela (2006) as:

Empowerment means that a manager is skilled enough to lead through the employees, i.e. to get the employees to feel that they are seen and that they have confidence from the manager to handle tools.

The manager should not give the right answers, but instead leave time for the employees to form and make their own answers and decisions. When handling new tools a coaching leader (or manager) helps the employees to make things that they would rarely make before and the involvement will increase as well. A coach should have a solid theoretical knowledge about coaching with several years working as a coach. Kruzela (2006) further means that it is impossible to get the competence to work as a coach through only reading literature about the field of coaching. The characteristics of a coach are to be able to listen, to be curious and ask the right and most powerful questions, to use more of ones intuition, to help the person being coached in order to be more focused, and to help setting up a plan in order to reach the individual's goals. Active listening skills is divided into three levels a) the coach should be able to listen to own thoughts and judgements, b) the coach should be able to focus on the content, looking for values, reasons, etc. and c) the coach should have an awareness of how the employee feels, i.e. an understanding of human behaviour. Further, the coach's tool is to give clear feedback, and balance between being an empathic listener by moving forward and stimulate the employee in order to handle the situation.

According to Kruzela (2006) the characteristics for coaching leadership are; leader and employee jointly decide, leader asks questions, listens to the employees' answers, and learning human being. The leaders are seen in the traditional leadership perspective as leaders that give orders, leaders who have the answers and manipulative human being. There are different skills needed to achieve successful leadership through coaching, and to work as a

coach is not exactly the same as to work with only leadership. Coaching is about supporting and supervising your employees in their development at work. It means that you as a coach take some of your time and engagement to change the most important resources in a working place, namely the employees. Communication becomes one of the most important tools in coaching.

Gustafson (2006) describes coaching as a way of mentorship, i.e. a way of guiding the employee towards the right direction. Coaching as a concept is not used in the hotel industry nowadays, but it could be a futuristic tool in this industry as well. She describes coaching as:

I sometimes explain coaching as a clock, where the coach asks the right questions and help to support the career planning of that specific employee.

There is no certain hierarchy in coaching, i.e. it is not the hotel manager's role to coach the receptionists in the front desk. It is further of great importance that the management is conscious about coaching in the different departments, so it goes from up-to-down but each department takes their own responsibility.

The coach will be there as a support for the employee on an ongoing process. A coach needs to be aware of what coaching is about, and the listening skills are of great importance as well. The consciousness to listen what the employees want to say and to lift up the personalities and abilities of each employee are vital for a coach to understand. Even though in some cases, an external coach could be better to meet the employees from an informal way, the best way is to use the department manager as a coach for the employees in hotel organisations.

Within the hotel industry, it is the department manager who is the coach and should work with the employees on an ongoing basis. It is a high demand to create the willingness to take responsibility for the managers and it is always difficult to create the roles with coaching, but in reality almost everyone can work as a coach.
(Gustafson, 2006)

The employee appraisals are the most important ones in hotel organisations in order to support and guide the employees towards the right direction. Unfortunately, these appraisals are only made ones a year, which according to Gustafson should be several times a year. The reason for this is often that the department managers do not have the appropriate time to have small "coaching sessions" with the employees, because they are working in an environment where the responsibility is on the daily work and processes in a hotel. Guest surveys have

showed that the personnel in a hotel are one of the most important sources, and also one of the reasons why guests are satisfied with their overnight stay.

One of the biggest costs in a hotel is actually the personnel, and it is strange that hotels are not investing more in their employees, says Gustafson (2006).

According to Gustafson (2006), the term empowerment is difficult to define. It is used in today's organisations as a term to define the authority or power of the employees to make decisions. For international hotel chains it could be difficult to use this term and also to use coaching in order to develop this. Scandic is operating in many countries and empowerment is used here in Scandinavia, but compared to Eastern Europe it is almost impossible for the employees to have the authority over certain decisions. The culture is crashing with this concept of empowerment.

To think global, act local is a concept that is widely used in hotel organisations and of great importance when thinking of coaching as well, concludes Gustafson (2006).

4.4 Managers at Scandic Rubinen

The hotel manager means that in the front desk, it is important that each employee feel safe and have the relevant competence to do a proper work. This is actually the first step, and it is therefore Scandic commit oneself to have a good introduction for new employees entering the hotel industry. In the second step, it is vital to have employee appraisals with the manager and through these appraisals the employee (with the help of the manager) should build up certain goals. It is also in this step, there is time to discuss about the individual's development plan, which in many cases could be really motivating and stimulating for the employees. Scandic have employee appraisals with the employees ones a year, with some small talks one or two times a year. The daily feed back is also important in the daily work in order to increase the importance of the employees. It is further important that each employee has the empowerment which is necessary to make a good work in the hotel industry. It is better that the employee makes something wrong ones, and that the managers afterwards have a discussion with the employee and talk about how it could have been solved in another way, because it is better to have a satisfied guest than missing an important customer. It is furthermore crucial to feel that the organisation gives the right to the employees to act right or even sometimes wrong.

Further, the hotel manager means that it is of great significance to build up the whole team and to see each person's strengths and weaknesses, to support each other and to feel safe in the working environment. The hotel manager (2006) describes coaching as:

Coaching is a way to work with leadership on the basis of a self-fulfilment perspective, i.e. where the leader works with the employees in order for them to develop. I can say that it is more or less like a supporting leadership, or a certain way in how people react to different things. I think, of course, that small talks with the employees should occur during the year, but it is nothing that is documented on the higher level at Scandic and will also not be followed up on the higher levels in the organisation.

Scandic works with leadership throughout their employees in order for them to develop. It is important to know that each employee has the chance to progress in their working development with individual competence development. (Hotel manager, 2006)

The hotel manager (2006) believes that a good coach is a mix between a listener and a talker. It should be a person who can act, but also to let other people handle; a person who listens and understands each person's individual demand of development. It is also vital that a coach have the will to create a dynamic organisation, where each person has the same possibility to develop, and where diversity should be encouraged in order to strengthen the whole team.

Coaching exists at Scandic Rubinen, but is more about each leader's certain way of working with their employees, for example the front desk manager's way of leading the front line receptionists. There is no demand from Scandic's side at the moment to work with coaching in their leadership styles. (Hotel manager, 2006)

The hotel manager also explains that the leadership style within the hotel industry has for many decades, been very demanding. It is a hierarchical industry, with many leaders on different levels. In Sweden, this has changed a bit during the past years and within Scandic there is a more flat organisation with different leadership styles, which the hotel manager thinks make the organisation more dynamic and developing.

For the front desk manager, it is important to be a clear leader when working as a coach, but also to be a reference person for the team or group so they could feel that there is always someone to lean on in all situations. Leadership is to work in a close relationship with your employees, to motivate, and to not only lead in a way from up-to-down, rather include the receptionist in the whole process. There are different characteristics of leaders as well, and in

some cases a good leader might not be a good manager. The front desk manager describes coaching as:

Coaching is a certain way of leadership style, i.e. in order to be able to work as a coach one needs certain characteristics but also certain leadership styles. This means that there are many different leaders working in today's hotel organisations. It is about motivating your employees on a regular basis, so they feel that they do a good job. Motivation is thus the key word.

The front desk manager means that Scandic Rubinen do not use the term coaching for their front line employees, but is working closely with its front line employees with employee appraisals in order to develop their interpersonal skills and communication. In order to be able to work as a coach one need to have certain characteristics, such as the skills of a good listener which is one of the most important characteristics for a coach, because without listening to your employees they will not feel a part of the team and motivated to do their best job. It is furthermore vital to have the will to work as a coach.

It is of great importance that the employees take their own initiative which in turn contributes to the development of their interpersonal skills and communication (Front desk manager, 2006)

The front desk manager states that from the company's view, i.e. Scandic Rubinen, coaching could be used as a tool to motivate the employees, so they in turn can help generating financial resources to the hotel. Although this is of great importance, there could be negative aspects of coaching as well. The hotel industry has a high personnel turnover, which in turn could lead to problems in making regular coaching sessions or employee appraisals. In some cases, the new employees might not be able to open themselves for the new manager, and therefore coaching sessions could lead to unsatisfied employees.

Reward systems are considered as a good motivation tool for the employees working in the front desk of Scandic Rubinen, and this is important to have on a regular basis as well (Front desk manager, 2006)

The front desk manager further discusses from the individual's view, the employee appraisals are one of the biggest benefits for the individual. It is important for the employees to have some reward systems as well in order to motivate the employees, so Scandic Rubinen tries to give each employee some feedback when doing something of value. To give the employees

empowerment can also be connected to coaching, since when employees feel empowered to do things it will generate in more motivation from the employee's point of view.

4.5 Front line receptionists at Scandic Rubinen

One employee believes that it is central for a front desk manager to work as a support for the employees, but also to encourage and motivate the employees. Even though this is quite difficult, it is for a front line receptionist important to always have someone behind the decisions taken and someone that support and motivate the employees. A leader should be able to motivate in a right and competent way, and it is not only about giving performance appraisals or to have certain reward systems. Scandic Rubinen is a small hotel which should be used as an advantage in taking care of the employees and to support them on a continuous basis. One employee describes coaching as:

Coaching is a tool for support, in which the coach or front desk manager should be enabling to encourage the work as a receptionist. It is important that someone is always here for supporting me as a receptionist and to support and encourage me if something goes well or bad.

Another employee means that unfortunately, the time is always a critical factor in the hotel industry and in many cases the managers do not have appropriate time to work with coaching with their employees. Hierarchy can sometimes be seen as a negative way when working with coaching. A manager should further on be involved with the working tasks in a hotel as well, thus trust among the employees are of great significance. Another employee describes coaching:

It is seen as an involvement and encouragement not just from the managers' point of view but also from the entire workplace in general. Within the hotel industry, I believe coaching needs to be a part of the hotel concept in order to work.

To listen and show empathy are characteristics that are considered most important when working as a coach, but also to support, motivate, and help the employees to find their own solutions and reach their own goals. Coaching is a way that each person working in the front line of a hotel should think of. It is not only from the management's view to work with coaching, i.e. it is a way to support the employees and to always be their when the employees has questions. One employee discussed that the employee appraisals of SMART should be done already in an early stage of employment in a hotel, which is supported by the other

employee as well, and it is important to have small discussions about the positive and negative aspects at work. This is vital since it is crucial for a new employee to feel a part of the organisation. Another employee means that in some cases SMART might not be useful, but instead a small feedback talk with the manager, because the employees need to know what is good or bad in the work and in what way they can improve. One employee states:

I think that a monthly talk with the front desk manager could be useful which could enhance the involvement in decision making and in the organisation as a whole. It is crucial for the employees to know that Scandic takes care of their employees and that the front line employees are one of the most important resources in the hotel.

It is vital to catch the employee's interest at work and to listen to the new employees in the front desk. This in turn leads to the importance of knowing the hotel's routines and to get several days of the introduction week to learn new routines and without going beside an employee and see other departments of the hotel from the beginning, it will be difficult to get into the hotel.

The first thing that the front desk manager should do with the new employees is to ask questions about; how do you feel at work? Did something happen last week? Do you feel motivated to do what you are achieved to do? What is your view on this subject? In what way do you want to develop within Scandic? Do you want to make a career within Scandic? What kind of goals do you have with your work as a front line receptionist? If these SMART appraisals or coaching discussions are not made in an early stage of the employment, it could lead to unmotivated employees and a lack of involvement in the organisation. (One employee, 2006)

In order to increase the involvement of the employees it is suggested by one employee to have weekly meetings, for example each Monday, with all front-desk employees to explain the plans for the week. For example if the aim is to get the hotel full, there should be some instructions and clear strategies for what the front line receptionists can do in order to succeed. It is further important that the management level become more involved in what the front line receptionists are doing, for example by giving more support and feedback.

I want to feel more informed about the background and reasons why some decisions are made, so I, in turn can explain this for the guests. It is not enough to present it on a paper for us front line receptionists, when there are no clear strategies how to make it or in what way to reach those goals. (Another employee, 2006)

Scandic Rubinen is a small hotel and the motivation would increase for the front line employees if there is an increased level of involvement for important decisions in the hotel. This in turn will lead to more proud employees and an increased feeling of being a part of Scandic Rubinen. It also shows that motivating the employees is one of the most vital things in the hotel industry, which will also build up high competitive teams in the front desk where everyone feels a part of the organisation. One employee discusses the importance of getting motivated at work as:

For me to get motivated, it is further important to receive performance appraisals, which I think Scandic Rubinen should think more of. I want to feel that I am important in the organisation and that I do have the opportunities to develop in the organisation.

To continue, one employee states that information and communication are important tools in order to increase the motivation. She further believes that the involvement with all employees is of great importance in order to increase and enhance the knowledge and motivation for front line employees. The hotel concept has a large influence in this involvement process and how often managers could have employee appraisals, which is nothing that one can change over some few days.

However, motivation is important for all employees in any organisation, it is important to connect the employee appraisals to motivation as well. To delegate responsibility is important, since it will increase the knowledge what the work consists of as a front line employee. To know which importance a well-motivated employee has to the organisation is crucial to communicate. (One employee, 2006)

Clear communication becomes relevant between the management and the front line receptionists, since they are in most cases the first ones to meet customer complaints. Communication is of great significance in empowerment, but also to have the courage to meet the customers, for example with customer complaints. In Scandic Rubinen there is a lack of responsibility and consciousness from the employees to do relevant solutions for the guests in the hotel, and thus there is no clear leadership through coaching, states one employee. Another employee means that it is further important that each employee has their own area of responsibility, in order to feel as a part of the company. This in turn will increase the empowerment for front line receptionists at work as well, and it could also be linked to motivation.

5 ANALYSIS

This chapter consists of the analysis of the data collected from both primary and secondary sources, where Scandic; expert interviews in the field of coaching; managers at Scandic Rubinen; and front line receptionists at Scandic Rubinen are presented.

5.1 Scandic

Coaching brings up the questions of different leadership styles that could be seen in the hotel industry. This thesis has examined that a coaching leadership style or leadership through coaching is something that will differ between several hotels, but the main contributor to its success is actually the employees. Scandic's vision of the Nordic common sense is about supporting the employees and to take care of one another, and this *omtanke* (*consideration for others*) should be seen in hotel actions. Consideration for others is something that can be increased if the employees feel supported and motivated from the management. Therefore, coaching as a way of leadership could be a useful tool to implement in the hotel's vision. It is not an easy job to work as a manager, but it is important to lift up the subject of coaching for front desk managers as well. According to Scandic's hotel concept, Scandic should be seen as an attractive place to work where leadership should be clear and give the employees opportunities for own initiatives, involvement and development. Further, it is stated that this is done through motivation and management strategies. The hotel manager (2006) mentions that coaching exists within Scandic, but there is no demand from Scandic's side to work with coaching in their leadership styles. One employee discussed that coaching could be a good tool, but if it is not demanded from the top of the management, or even from the hotel chain, it will be difficult for a front desk manager to use it for front line receptionists. The research in this study has shown that coaching could be a part of the leadership style and it is more up to each manager in the hotel organisation to decide which style will be most appropriate for that certain hotel.

There are different strategies in coaching and each strategy has its own implications for different industries. What is important is that coaching as a management perspective can be used in one way in the manufacturing industry but in another way in the hotel industry. Several coaching techniques are nevertheless useful when applying coaching to an organisation and the model by Parsloe and Wray (2000) is important to have in mind when recruiting new front line receptionists to the hotels. Unfortunately, it is often a lack of time for

introduction weeks with the new employees, even though it is recommended from the top management. According to the employees at Scandic Rubinen, there are no clear strategies for new front line receptionists even though the hotel manager and the front desk manager state that this is one of the most important issues when recruiting new employees. This shows that the communication between the management and the employee's at Scandic Rubinen is not clear. If an employee does not want to cooperate, the relationship between the manager and the employee will not lead anywhere, because coaching is also linked to the motivation from the employee's view.

Parsloe & Wray (2000) bring up the importance of the employees awareness to improve their performance. The coach does not tell the employees what to do, but instead helps the employee to find it. One of the most appropriate ways for the employees to be aware of the situation is to analyse the current situation, and a good way is to use the employee appraisals of SMART. Nevertheless, Gåserud (2001) emphasises the significance of identifying areas with the employee where coaching is needed by observing and receiving ideas from the employees. Coaching is a concept that is used at Scandic Rubinen, but it is imbedded into the employee appraisals and thus not discussed with the employees on a regular basis. Scandic use the term coaching on the higher level of the organisation, i.e. line managers and future hotel managers, within a talent program which is called *Talent of Scandic*. Front desk managers could thus be inspired of using coaching through leadership, but what can be a challenge is to implement the certain leadership style all the way down to the front line receptionists. Since the hotel industry is still seen as hierarchical, the communication from the top management to the bottom line is difficult, even though it is often the front line receptionists who need to be the front face of the hotel and meet the guests on stage.

5.2 Expert interviews

Kruzela (2006) defines coaching as a way for people to grow and to increase the individual's specific competencies, which has several impacts for both the individual and the organisation. This is linked to Jarvis (2004) way of discussing the benefits of coaching for both the individual and the organisation. What become the most important benefits with coaching for individuals working in the hotel industry are the will to learn to solve own problems, to improve the interpersonal skills, to have a better relationships with colleagues and to reduce the level of stress for front line receptionists. Kruzela further means that coaching can stimulate the individuals to develop there competences within the organisations, for example

by training to solve customer complaints in a professional way. Since front line receptionists often work in a team, it is crucial to have a good relationship with colleagues which can be encouraged through coaching sessions in teams as well. This is also supported by Kets de Vries (2005), who states that coaching can be done in teams in order to create high performing teams, but it can also give an increased empowerment to the employees because of the given responsibility to the employees. Whitmore (1997), states that consciousness and responsibility are two important factors to understand for the results in an organisation. To build up consciousness and responsibility is a central concept within all good coaching. Consciousness could increase if the leader pays special attention to the employees, which include to listen and see what happens in the workplace, but also to collect relevant information. What becomes important in the hotel industry is that coaching can reduce the level of stress for the front line receptionists. To work in the reception is in many cases challenging with a high level of stress, which can be decreased if the employees get support and coaching from the front desk manager.

Kruzela (2006) means that leadership through coaching is different compared to the traditional leadership style, i.e. the transactional leader described by Brush (1997). In the traditional leadership style, the manager takes all the decisions and gives order to the employees, while when coaching is a function of leadership, the manager has another role. The manager leaves space so the employees can show their skills and knowledge as well, and the decision making and responsibility also involve the employees. Leadership through coaching helps the employees to make things they would rarely make before, and Kruzela (2006) means that coaching can stimulate the employees to increase their area of responsibility. It could also increase the relationship between the manager and the employees, which in turn will benefit the whole organisation.

There are different skills needed to achieve successful leadership through coaching, and to work as a coach is not exactly the same as to work with only leadership. It means that you as a coach take some of your time and engagement to change the most important resources in a working place, namely the employees. What was interesting to see is that Kruzela mean that it is impossible to get the competence to work as a coach through only reading literature about the concept of coaching. This is something that managers at Scandic Rubinen might think of because if coaching should be a part of the leadership it is vital to give the managers both courses and real-life training. Kruzela (2006) emphasises that a coach wants to know the

employee through information gathering, open questions, and inquiry. The coach also encourages the employee to search and explore for new things, i.e. empowerment. Kruzela (2006) says that empowerment means that a manager has the ability to lead through the employees, i.e. to encourage the employees, to feel that they are seen and have confidence from the manager to handle different tools. Bowen & Lawler (1995) explains an empowered organisation as flexible, where authority is given to the employees. Kruzela further states that the motivation among employees is something that increases when they get involved into the organisation which also enhances their inner motivation. This is also supported by Kandampully (1999) who states that organisations using the involvement-oriented empowerment approach encourage the employees to think and control their own working environment. In order for employees to feel empowered in a hotel organisation, it is a need of motivation from the employee's view to develop within the organisation. Therefore, this study has found out that training and development is important because it creates a link between empowerment and how to encourage the employees. The self management skills mean that the coach should be able to manage in a way to ask permission, separate interpretations, and to take away disturbing signals during the coaching process. The action and learning skills focus about planning the coaching with the employee, where the communication is mainly about goal setting and brainstorming from the beginning. As time goes by, it is more about creating structures or symbols and encourages the employee during the whole process. The coach makes, in accordance with the employee, an individual development plan.

Gustafson (2006) defines coaching as a way of mentorship, i.e. a way of guiding the employee towards the right direction. This differs from Kruzela's definition which leads to the question: Is there any right definition of coaching or is it up to each manager to define what it is about? When interviewing experts in the subject of coaching (Kruzela and Gustafson) and drawing a comparison to the consultancy literature (for example Jarvis or Gåserud), there seems to be many different definitions and it is difficult to see which one is the right one. Coaching is a new concept within tourism and hospitality organisations, and maybe sometimes it is used in a wrong way. This is vital to think of if hotel organisations want to implement coaching for front line receptionists. Since Gustafson sees coaching as a way of mentorship, it differs from both the definition by Jarvis (2004) and Gåserud (2001) who make a difference between coaching and mentorship. Coaching is a way to support the employees, but in mentorship the goals are clearer and are linked to the career development of the employee.

Gustafson (2006) mentions that there is no hierarchy in coaching, i.e. it is not the hotel manager's role to coach the front line receptionists, it is more about each department manager but in reality almost anyone can work as a coach. This differs from Kruzela's definition of a coach, since she believes that a coach needs certain characteristics and it is not only to read about the subject in the literature. The daily comments at work, for example by encouraging someone that he or she did a really good work are one of the most vital aspects with coaching. Within the hotel industry it is actually the front desk manager who is the coach and should work with the employees on an ongoing basis. This in turn leads to the fact that leadership through coaching is a good way of leading the front line receptionists in their daily work. Unfortunately, these coaching sessions are only made ones a year mainly because the work of a front desk manager is so much more than only giving support and encourage the employees. They are working in an environment where there is a high responsibility on the daily work. According to Gåserud (2001) management and the leadership role consists of administration, leadership and coaching. The results of this study can thus point out that in many cases, coaching is forgotten mainly because of the time perspective, which is something that is vital to change in the hotel industry. It is suggested to give more attention to the front line receptionists as a front desk manager, and not to only focus on the administrative aspects of a hotel.

Gustafson's definition of empowerment as a term to define the authority or power of the employees to make decisions, agree with the definition by Bowen and Lawler (1995) defining two concepts within empowerment, i.e. empowerment approach and a production-line approach. This research has shown that the empowerment approach, characterised by an empowered organisation with flexibility and authority given to front-line employees, is the most important one for hotel organisations. Gustafson states that the concept of thinking global, act local is used in the international hotel industry and becomes of great importance as well when thinking of coaching. For example, here in Scandinavia it is possible that the front line employees take some decisions or have the authority to decide different aspects, compared to Eastern Europe where it is almost impossible to have authority over certain decisions. This is important to be aware of when working with coaching in the hotel industry.

5.3 Managers at Scandic Rubinen

Gåserud (2001) explains coaching as a form of leadership, where the leader's aim is to support and guide the employees towards their development. Coaching also consists of the

leader that support, inspire, train and confront the employees towards its own development. Both the hotel manager and the front desk manager (2006) describe coaching in a similar way as Gåserud (2001), i.e. coaching as a certain way of leadership which creates benefits for the individual's development and give benefits and positive results to the organisation. This study can thus be connected to the importance of defining a clear leadership style within the hotel industry, which in turn will generate a well-motivated human capital.

Can a coaching leadership style help the employees to get more empowered at work? Leadership through coaching will help the employees to feel more encouraged and motivated to work, and thus increase the empowerment at work as well. Empowerment is a concept of great relevance to front line receptionists working in the hotel, since they are the front face and image of the hotel organisation. Both the hotel manager (2006) and the front desk manager (2006) believe that coaching could be used as a way to increase the empowerment for front line receptionists in the hotel industry, but it will also generate more motivation to work from the employee's point of view. This further agree with Lashley (1999) and Zeithaml & Bitner (2002) since they believe that empowerment can be used to describe different initiatives taken by the managers in order to give the employees the desire, skills, tools and authority to meet customer needs.

It will also increase the motivation of the employees to work and it could be seen as a win-win situation for both the management and the employees working in the front office. The hotel manager (2006) believes that it is crucial that each employee has the empowerment and feel safe in their work, in order to make a good work in the hotel industry. This discussion leads to the question if coaching is accepted as a tool for increased empowerment for front line employees in the hotel industry? Front line receptionists often work in teams and Zeithaml & Bitner (2002) state that customer satisfaction will be reach when front line employees work as teams, because the employees will feel supported from others and the enthusiasm to work will increase. One approach is to encourage the attitude that everyone has their own customer, which will enhance the team work but also the empowerment of each employee. Further, Grazier (1998) also supports this idea that participation and motivation are important to be aware of when a team wants to fulfil its goals.

The front desk manager further mentions the importance of motivating and supporting the employees on a regular basis, where motivation is the key word. This leads to the fact that coaching can also be linked to motivation for front line receptionists, but it is defined in

another way when used in hotels, i.e. the employee appraisals of SMART. Scandic Rubinen use coaching in their employee appraisals of SMART, but it does not seem that anyone understands what the concept is about. According to Jarvis (2004) coaching is so much more than only working with the yearly employee appraisals or to give support sometimes; as a coach one need to have the will and motivation to support the employees in the daily work. This will be important for the front desk manager to have in mind, since motivation is the key word mentioned earlier.

Ference (2001) states that successful service organisations build an environment of learning through asking employees how they would do to accomplish the target goal; informing them about different strategies to reach these goals; giving them time to recommend strategies; deciding on the specific strategy; and following up through evaluation of the results. These are the people who can call themselves coach or mentor. The front desk manager (2006) sees leadership as a way for a manager to work in a close relationship with the employees, which means to not lead in a way from up-to-down, rather include the front line receptionists in the whole decision process. The front desk manager further believe that it is vital to understand that being a leader is not the same as being a manager, i.e. in order to work closely with the employees. According to the interviews made with the employees, the front desk manager can not be seen as a leader that encourage problem solving and communicate high expectations, and can call herself as a coach. It is more about lip-service, i.e. the manager talks about it but do not react in the correct way. Both employees believe that there is not a clear leadership for the front line receptionists at Scandic Rubinen. What becomes important for the employees is that the leader should be able to motivate and encourage the employees, and to always be one step behind the employees to support and give feedback. This is something that is lacking at Scandic Rubinen. This is not only to give criticism, but it is more to notice that the definition of leadership might differ between the management and the employees, which is usual when defining a new and not so well-known concept such as coaching in hotel organisations.

Wehrle (2006) also mentions the importance of involving the employees in the organisation which is seen in the same way by both managers and employees at Scandic Rubinen. This is supported by Christensen Hughes (1999) statement of getting the employees involved in the organisation i.e. to make their expectations well-known for their employees. In order to work as an effective manager, or a coach, there is some agreed characteristics worth to mention. These are further linked to employee motivation for front line receptionists. What could be

interesting is that listening as a coach is one of the most important characteristic. This could be quite obvious in many cases, but due to the time frame (always working towards the time!) in the hotel industry it is somehow forgotten. The ability to listen to the employees is an important characteristic for both the management and the employees at Scandic Rubinen, but sometimes it could be difficult since people are different and some do not want to speak about personal things. Therefore it is vital to build up a strong relationship already from the beginning between the front desk manager and the front line receptionists.

5.4 Front line receptionists at Scandic Rubinen

This study has focused on making a comparison between the employees' versus the management's views of the relevance of coaching for front line receptionists at Scandic Rubinen. Both employees (2006) define coaching as an involvement and support from the managers, through encouraging the front line receptionists on an ongoing basis, but also from the entire workplace in general. This view is also supported by Jarvis (2004) and her way of defining coaching as a tool to develop a person's skills and knowledge. This view of coaching means to make the person understand what influences his or her life. A coach should not work in a way to tell the employees what they should do, but instead he or she should always be there as a support and give feedback on a continuous basis.

One employee states that the concept of empowerment is not well explained at Scandic Rubinen. It is a lack of communication of the subject, and one solution could be small meetings to feel encouraged to do things and to have an own area of responsibility. The other employee also states that communication is of great significance in empowerment, and further that each employee has their own area of responsibility, in order to feel a part of the company. Whitmore (1997) consider that consciousness of employees will lead to quality and quantity on input and output, but also to increased learning and interest or pleasure from the employees. Although consciousness is important the other concept, responsibility, is also of great importance. The feeling of responsibility does only occur if there is a choice which in turn is built up by certain questions. The responsibility at work will also increase the empowerment at work, which is further linked to motivation, according to both employees. Both employees say that unfortunately there is often a lack of responsibility and consciousness to do relevant solutions for the guests at Scandic Rubinen which in turn can lead to decreased service quality. Jarvis (2004) means that newly skilled individuals want

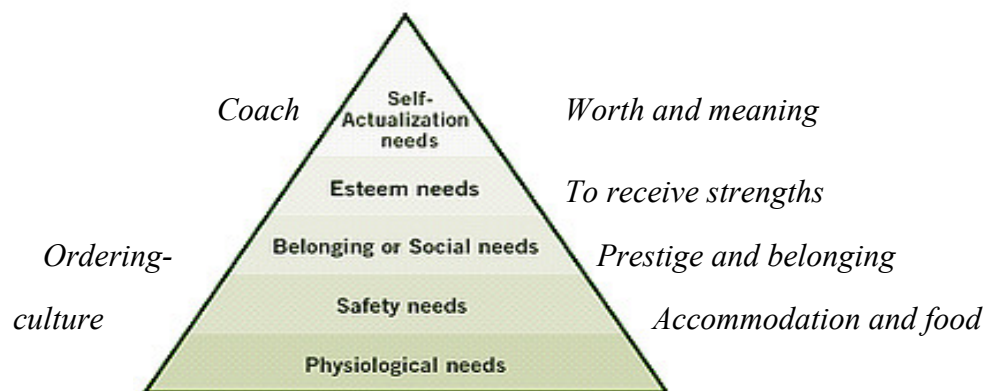
more responsibility and performance, hence coaching can support these individuals in achieving the changes. Coaching is also focused on a lifelong learning which becomes increasingly important in today's society.

Frenkel (2000) means that service work is people-centred, meaning that it has several implications for the human resource management relations, and thus the importance of hearing the employees view as well when working as a front line receptionist. This could be seen at Scandic Rubinen when one employee believes that clear communication becomes relevant between the management and the front line receptionists since the front line employees are in most cases the first ones to meet customer complaints. I believe that already in this stage it can be somehow confusing because if the relationship between the managers vs. employees is not built already from the beginning, it can happen that it will never work in a proper way. Another employee states the importance of the employees to have the courage to meet the customers, for example with customer complaints. This is also linked to clear communication strategies from the management, for example through weekly short meetings with each front line employee.

Involvement in decisions is something that the employees at Scandic Rubinen are lacking in the organisation, which can therefore lead to decreased commitment and also decreased motivation to work. As one employee states it is important that the management at Scandic Rubinen become more involved in what the front line employees are doing, by giving more support and feedback. Further, managers need to offer both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards, explained by Christensen Hughes (1999) for example rewards linked to job design, such as compensation systems but also empowerment. As discussed in the previous chapter, empowerment is something of great significance for front line receptionists in the hotel industry which is closely linked to employee motivation and coaching as well. This study has shown that motivation is rather seen in isolation, but it is more as a combination of leadership through coaching and other human resources areas.

In the tourism and hospitality industry, employee motivation is crucial since the employees are the key to a successful organisation and is linked to provide customer satisfaction. It is based on both research and this study that employee motivation is important, which was seen when making interviews with the employees at Scandic Rubinen. One employee states that motivation is a concept of great importance when working as a front line receptionist, but it will also build up high competitive teams where everyone will feel a part of the organisation.

This employee further explains the importance of getting involved with different decisions, which also the other employee thinks of, but also to receive certain performance appraisals. Further, the other employee states that motivation should be a part of the employee appraisals of SMART in the hotels and motivation is important for each employee. When working as a front line receptionist it also means being a part of a team, and if this team does not work in a good way, for example if there are too many different people, there would be some problems. People are motivated in different ways and participation in teams meets important human needs (Grazier, 1998), which is analysed with Maslow's hierarchy of needs.



Source: Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Quick Seek Encyclopaedia, 2006; Whitmore, 2003, p.108-109)

One employee states the importance of being seen in the organisation, as well as another employee states the importance of communicating the importance of well-motivated employees to the organisation. Communication is thus one of the most important tools when implementing a leadership through coaching into organisations. This will enhance the self-confidence for employees and thus lead to a fulfilment of the self-actualization needs. This is where people are striving for in today's organisations, by enhancing the personal growth and learn from others. According to Whitmore (2003) the self-actualization needs, is about creating a certain value to a job or to have the authority and the possibility to make own decisions, but it is also about worth and meaning in life. This thesis has shown that it is linked to empowerment as well, and therefore it is vital to build up the self-actualization needs for front line receptionists. It is also in this step where the performance appraisals could be found, which is something the hotels should think more of. Scandic Rubinen has performance appraisals, but it is according to the interviews of great interest as well as well-motivating for the employees to have something to struggle for. Whitmore (2003) believes that the self-actualization needs are the core of coaching.

5.5 The time and cost perspectives of using coaching in the hotel industry

Coaching can somehow be connected to the daily discussions and feedback with the employees, but it seems that the time is a difficult aspect in the hotel organisations. As Gustafson (2006) mentions the importance of the department manager to work as a coach for their front line employees, the most vital problem in the hotel industry is that coaching can be time consuming and therefore it is not seen as first priority in the hotel industry. Additionally, both the hotel manager and front desk manager mention the importance of the employee appraisals where the employees need to take their own initiatives in order to develop their interpersonal skills and knowledge. From the company's view, coaching could be used as a tool to motivate the employees, so they in turn generate increased financial resources to the hotel. As the employees state, the time is always the most critical factor in the hotel industry and the front desk manager does not have enough time for coaching sessions with their employees.

The results of this study has seen that the management tells the employees in what way and why things are done, but in some cases it is difficult to take the time and listen to what the employees want. It is a win-win situation, where both the management and the employees need to feel part of a project and in what way to deal with those issues. In this context, the motivation from the employee's view is also important to consider. It is not only the manager's role to give time for coaching sessions, but it is also the employees' responsibility to develop within the organisation. This thesis has explored that there is great importance to take into consideration the time factor, because front line receptionists are one of the most important resources. Hotel organisations do not need to use coaching through and in their employee appraisals, but this study has found that it is of great significance. Further, coaching does not need to create costs for the organisation, since this thesis has only explored the way of using coaching as a leadership style and as a tool for the management to work with the front line receptionists. If coaching is used as executive coaching it might create high costs for the hotel organisations, and in most of the cases there might not be the first priority. It is important to understand that not yesterday, nor tomorrow, but it is today when one is able to keep well-motivated and empowered employees in the hotel industry.

6 CONCLUSION AND FURTHER SUGGESTIONS

This last chapter will conclude the thesis by answering the research question and give suggestions for Scandic Rubinen. It also gives ideas for future research in the field of coaching in the hotel industry.

6.1 What relevance does coaching have for front line receptionists in the hotel industry?

Already from the beginning of my research, I got the possibility to have a small, revised employee appraisal (i.e. SMART) with my front desk manager. She pointed out the most relevant characteristics that I needed to work with as a front line receptionist, and acted like a coach for me during the whole research process. Even though, she did not have the time to work with me on a regular basis, these small discussions that I had with her has changed my ideas to look at myself when working as a front line receptionist. The first things that came into my mind was mainly that everyone working in the front face of the hotel, should have this possibility to talk to their manager. Even though my manager is not seen as a coach, I believe there are certain characteristics that make a person working as a manager and a coach. What is vital to think of in this content is that it is not only the manager's responsibility to make an appointment for a coaching discussions, it is also up to the individual him or herself. To work as a coach might not be the same as working only as a manager, and in some cases, coaching might not be the best alternative. A front line receptionist sometimes has a challenging work, mainly because of handling customer complaints, which happens quite many times in hotels. If the employees do not have the encouragement or feel empowered from the management to solve customer complaints on time, maybe the hotel will loose important customers. Further more this could lead to decreased service quality in the hotel industry. The field of human resource management for front line employees has been studied during many years, but the area of coaching is quite new in the hotel industry.

Coaching is something important as well in the hotel industry, but it is vital to be critical as well to the term of coaching. It is a popular concept in today's organisations, but it is not as well-known in the tourism and hospitality industry so far. The hotel industry has a high personnel turnover, and this might be a challenge for the front desk manager if coaching is used as a way of leadership. Coaching is something that involves both the manager and the employee, and therefore the concepts such as motivation, leadership and communication become relevant to understand. In some cases, it might be difficult for the employees to have

a clear communication with the manager, because of fear of doing something wrong or lack of motivation to learn new things and to develop as an employee. Coaching is something that can enhance the motivation for front line employees in the hotel industry, the employee empowerment and thus the service quality which could lead to a more productive hotel organisation. When discussing the importance of recruiting the right personnel to the hotel industry, Verginis & Wood (1999) state that the front office is one of the most visible departments of the hotel and the key to provide good quality and service in the hotel industry is actually the personnel. How many times has one checked into a hotel and the receptionist has not been service minded? It might have happened some times to everyone, but in general the person standing in the front office has a good personal appearance, good body language and also the ability to deal with customer complaints. Therefore it is important to motivate the employees to make a good work. These concepts are the most important ones for front line receptionists working in the hotel industry, and thus vital to think of from the management's perspective.

I believe coaching is something near to personnel development and to achieve maximum self-awareness, the highest step of Maslow's hierarchy, which I believe is one of several reasons why it has become more popular during the last years. A successful manager should understand the value of coaching, even in the hotel industry, because it is vital to be able to motivate, develop and form the teams and employees to both personal and organisational success. Through coaching, the employees could be inspired and empowered to reach their goals, where the organisation will benefit in the end.

6.2 My suggestions for Scandic Rubinen

At Scandic Rubinen, the employee appraisals of SMART are used for the employees to develop themselves and, in some cases, to continue on their career path. These appraisals are held ones a year, with a short feedback session about six months afterwards. The question that came into my mind several times, is if these SMART sessions are actually enough to have only once a year. What Scandic Rubinen can do is to implement a leadership style through coaching and focus more on the front line receptionists, by giving rewards and support on an ongoing basis. I believe that continuous feedback and support is important for front line receptionists in the hotel, thus it has different aspects. For example, a smaller hotel like Scandic Rubinen has lots of opportunities to take care of their personnel and to motivate and inspire them during their daily work. I have been working as a front line receptionist in hotels

during the past years, and I consider motivation and empowerment as something important when being the front face of the hotel. As the results of this study, there is a high demand of small coaching sessions with the front desk manager on an ongoing basis for the front line receptionists. This is something that should set high priority, since it will cost more for the hotel organisation to employ new employees than working with the existing ones.

It is further vital for the employees to feel involved in the organisation, and one suggestion might be to have small week meetings with the front line receptionists so each employee knows what will happen during that specific week. This will increase both the consciousness and the responsibility of the employees, and they will feel as a part of the organisation. It will also increase the employee's motivation to work. The management of Scandic Rubinen has weekly meetings, but in some cases it seems like a lack of communication between the management and the front line receptionists. The front line receptionists need to be more informed about the decisions taken at these meetings. This study has shown that it is important for the front line receptionists to have background information to the reason why things have changed, especially if it is something concerning the guests. In the hotel industry, a large part of the complete stay for a guest is the human resources. Further, I consider it important to see how the colleagues behave towards each other as well in order to succeed and build up a team spirit. Coaching is something that can increase the confidence of the employees, which makes it easier to build up a good team in the front office of a hotel. Despite of this, it is important to think that leadership through coaching is useful to implement in the hotel industry.

6.3 Future research

I believe future research can focus more on a comparison between different hotel organisations, which might increase the generalizability of the results of the thesis for other hotel chains. I believe that in the future, the concept of coaching will increase in tourism and hospitality organisations as well and the leadership might change to a more coaching perspective. It would further be interesting to make a study of Frey's Hotel in Stockholm, for example how the organisation has changed from a leadership through coaching perspective to a more traditional leadership style in the hotel industry.

6.4 To conclude

What I believe was interesting in this thesis, was to make a comparison of the employees versus the managements' point of view in the field of coaching. The results signify that the managers think that their message about motivation and support work in a good way, while the employees think there are several aspects lacking in order for the organisation to be successful. The purpose for this thesis was to examine the relevance of coaching for front line receptionists in the hotel industry, by making a field study of Scandic Rubinen. I believe this purpose has been fulfilled, even though I did not fulfil my first purpose of collecting primary data from the employees at Radisson SAS Scandinavia. I further believe that the research question has been answered in the problem discussion in the first part of this thesis. Finally, the thesis has also given me a greater knowledge about the concept of coaching, but also how concepts such as empowerment, service quality, service encounter, service guarantee, employee motivation, leadership and coaching are linked to each other in certain ways. To conclude, it is my belief that each hotel organisation and their management have these concepts in mind when working with front line receptionists in order to build up a strong coaching working culture.

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Appendix 1 Interview guide for Kruzela

Interview guide for Kruzela 2006-11-10

1. Coaching is a concept which is popular in today's organisations, but what does it mean for you?
2. How do you define coaching as a management tool?
3. Are there any special goals with coaching for the company versus the individuals?
4. What does motivation mean for you? How can coaching be linked to motivation for employees in hotel organisations?
5. Empowerment is a concept linked to HRM in the hotel industry. What does the concept mean to you? In what way can empowerment be connected to coaching?
6. In what way is leadership linked to coaching, according to your definition of coaching?
7. What characterises a person working as a coach, i.e. how is a good coach according to you?
8. When did the concept of coaching appear in Sweden? Are there any hotel chains using coaching as a management tool, or are there other service organisations that you are aware of using it?

Appendix 2 Interview guide for Gustafson

Interview guide for Gustafson 2006-11-01

1. Coaching is a concept which is popular in today's organisations, but what does it mean for you?
2. How do you define coaching as a management tool?
3. Are there any special goals with coaching for the company versus the individuals?
4. What does the concept of motivation mean for you? And in what way can it be linked to coaching for employees in the hotel industry?
5. Empowerment is a concept linked to HRM in the hotel industry. What does the concept mean to you? In what way can empowerment be connected to coaching?
6. In what way is leadership linked to coaching, according to your definition of coaching?
7. What characterises a person working as a coach, i.e. how is a good coach according to you?
8. In what way can the department manager of a hotel work with coaching with their employees?

Appendix 3 Interview guide for Ivekrans and Wehrle

Interview guide for Ivekrans and Wehrle at Scandic Rubinen

1. Human resource management in the hotel industry is vital for managers to understand, what does it mean to you?
2. Empowerment is a concept linked to HRM in the hotel industry. What does the concept mean to you? In what way can empowerment be connected to coaching?
3. What does motivation mean for you? And how do you motivate the front line receptionists in the hotels?
4. Coaching is a concept which is popular in today's organisations, but what does it mean for you?
5. How do you define coaching as a management tool?
6. Does the hotel have a goal with coaching for the company and the individual?
7. In many cases the word coaching is maybe not used, but can you name some occasions where you believe it is used in the hotel reception?
8. In what way is leadership linked to coaching, according to your definition of coaching?
9. Employee appraisals are something that in some cases can be connected to coaching, how often is it applied to the front line employees?

10. Do you believe there are other ways of coaching the front line receptionists, for example through small coaching discussions once or twice a month?

11. What characterises a person working as a coach, i.e. how is a good coach according to you?

Other information of interest about coaching in the hotel industry

APPENDIX 4 Interview guide for Wiholm and Larsson

Interview guide for Wiholm and Larsson at Scandic Rubinen

1. Human resource management in the hotel industry is vital to understand, but what does it mean to you?
2. Empowerment is a concept linked to HRM in the hotel industry. What does the concept mean to you? In what way can empowerment be connected to coaching?
3. What is motivation for you when working as a front line receptionist?
4. How do you get motivated working as a front line receptionist in the hotel?
5. In what way do you think coaching can be used to increase your motivation at work?
6. Coaching is a concept which is popular in today's organisations, but what does it mean for you?
7. How do you define coaching as a management tool?
8. Does the hotel have a goal with coaching for the company and the individual?
9. In many cases the word coaching is maybe not used, but can you name some occasions where you believe it is used in the hotel reception?

10. In what way is leadership linked to coaching, according to your definition of coaching?

11. Employee appraisals are something that in some cases can be connected to coaching, how often have you as a front line receptionist experienced this?

12. Do you believe there are other ways of coaching the front line receptionists, for example through small coaching discussions once or twice a month?

13. What do you think characterises a person working as a coach, i.e. how is a good coach according to you?

Other information of interest about coaching in the hotel industry