

# Digital Coaching vs. Face-to-Face Coaching



For over a year now, we have been working predominantly in home office. Everything has been taking place virtually – from team meetings to birthday parties. We are now dependent, more than ever, on digital means. This was unthinkable for a long time, especially in the area of coachings. The common view was – *You must be sitting across from each other to conduct a coaching!*

But we do not believe so!

Digital coaching is very flexible, travel is unnecessary and coachings can take place late evening or early morning. As long as both sides are willing and get involved fully, there is no significant difference to Face2Face Coaching.

Firstly, the coach should ask themselves the questions, *do I even want to work digitally? Can I fully engage myself?* If you answer yes to these questions, you should still plan for possible obstacles. Be prepared for these and ask yourself: *Which obstacles may come my way and how will I deal with them?*

If you have answered these fundamental questions for yourself, then there is nothing to stand in the way of digital coaching!

Here are a few tips on how to create an optimal atmosphere:

**Create the sense of being in a room.** To create a secure environment, adapt your background. Either you are really in a room and can show it or you could use a background image (which shows a room). It is important that edges and corners are visible so that it appears like a room. It is also advisable to be mindful of the room lighting - the room should not be too bright or too dark. You could use indirect lighting.

**Create Privacy.** It is important that the coaching does not take place in an open space office. The room should be free of interference. Create a secure atmosphere. Coachees often feel more secure when the coaching takes place in their home office, as they are already in a secure room. This increases the willingness to be more open and honest.

**Technical responsibility.** To make sure the coaching runs flawlessly, you should pay attention to some technical points in advance. Come to an arrangement about who will call who if the connection is interrupted. In case the internet is not working well, you can connect via your phone. If these issues are cleared up in advance, then no-one will be under pressure and valuable coaching time will not be wasted.

Another tip is to use two monitors while coaching. If, for example, a debriefing is on the agenda and you need to share your screen with the coachee, you could use one screen for the participant and one for the necessary documents, e.g. the Human Synergistics Circumplex Profile. In this way you have a better view of the coachee's reaction and you can act appropriately.

**Adapt your own language.** Pay attention to how you communicate with your participants. Use *We will meet in my virtual room* instead of *We will work together via Zoom*. Language influences the participants' attitude. If we are positive, this will transfer to the participants.

Of course there are limitations to coaching digitally. Exercises that require physical presence (e.g. horse-based coaching, holistic exercises) cannot take place virtually. But there are no limits to creativity. With Face2Face coaching, you could work with different chairs to create a change in perspective. Or you could ask the coachee at home to wear a different colour T-Shirt to provide a visual support. Let your creativity run wild!