

# Future Work Self and the Customer Landscape at GoCoach



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Vanderbilt University

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## Executive Summary

This study sought to strengthen GoCoach's understanding of its customer experience. Customers select their coach by engaging in a series of touchpoints with the organization. Coaches represent a central resource of the organization and a vital member of our study's stakeholder pool because they engage with clients during individualized coaching sessions. GoCoach wants to evolve from a start-up to a leader in the coaching marketplace by offering its customers robust talent development, learning experiences, and pathways to desirable performance outcomes. As a start-up, GoCoach placed initial efforts into product development and sales with minimal attention to customer engagement. As the organization transitions from its initial start-up phase, the leadership team hopes to understand their clients' overall customer experience.

To better understand our problem of practice, we focused our literature review on four interconnected themes: *future work self*, *engagement*, *customer feedback*, and *customer journey*. In addition to reviewing the literature, we held a series of information gathering sessions with GoCoach leadership. This process led to the development of two project questions:

**Project Question 1:** In what ways does a client's representation of future work self impact their level of engagement, if any?

**Project Question 2:** In what ways does GoCoach's customer experience influence individual client engagement, if any?

Next, we analyzed GoCoach's quantitative data and interviewed six clients. Our mixed methods approach led us to four findings. The first two findings address the first project question. Our first finding indicated that participants with higher responses to future work self salience questions also used more coaching sessions. Our second finding revealed that participants' future work self salience levels align with their future orientation. The subsequent two findings link to the second project question. The third finding showed that interview participants described sessions as client-focused. The fourth finding demonstrated that participants indicated satisfaction with current touchpoints.

Our inquiry generated four recommendations. These recommendations seek to address the problem of practice of strengthening GoCoach's understanding of its customer experience. Leveraging our findings and literature review, we formulated the following steps to build a broader understanding of the customer experience through additional data points collected at various touchpoints. Our first recommendation is to refresh the GoCoach intake survey clients complete before selecting a coach. Our second recommendation proposes the implementation of a post-coaching survey. Our third recommendation advises GoCoach to reimagine its coach selection process by adding a short video of the potential coaches offering additional insight into their backgrounds, areas of expertise, and coaching style. For our final recommendation, we put forth GoCoach using a Net Promotor Score, allowing for a customer feedback tool at the end of their customer journey.

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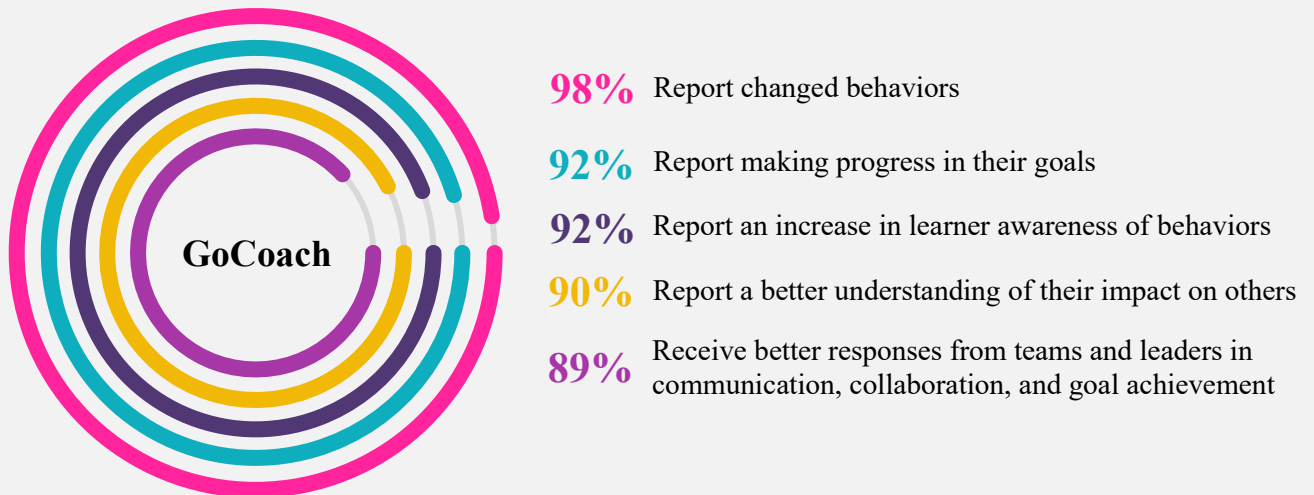
# 1 | Introduction

## Organizational Context

As a start-up business based in New York, GoCoach leverages its proprietary GoCoach model to provide talent development solutions to its clients. Our partner organization serves mid-market and enterprise customers including Fortune 500 businesses. The organization offers coaching solutions for all career levels in industries such as pharmaceutical, financial services, and higher education. Three categories of clients exist, traditional, all-access, and up-skilling. Supervisors assign traditional clients coaching tracks. Coaching tracks address specific growth areas for clients, such as skills necessary to move into management. All-access clients select coaches and platform content independent of supervisor requirements. Clients in the upskilling category receive skill-specific coaching to assist them during a job search likely resulting from recent unemployment. The model leverages curated content, contextual understanding, on-demand learning, and continuous support to deliver a personalized coaching experience focused on upskilling soft skills. Soft skills include critical conversations, change management, presentation skills, and goal setting. The coaching model provides another level of

personalization by matching a client to a coach based on data analytics. A coach engages with their paired client virtually using GoCoach's online platform.

**Figure 1: Impact of Coaching on Clients**



Source: J. Reid, personal communication, May 13, 2022

The GoCoach leadership team includes a Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operations Officer, Chief Product Officer, and a group of advisors. A small technical support team directly assists the leadership team and clients. Nearly 400 certified coaches provide one-to-one individualized online coaching sessions to customers. Coaches represent a central resource of the organization and are a vital component of our study's stakeholder pool. Other stakeholders include the GoCoach leadership team. For this study, we label GoCoach clients as customers.

We aim to inform the organization's service offering decisions by analyzing their existing data complemented by data collected during customer interviews. After data analysis, our findings and recommendations become part of the final report to GoCoach.

## 2 | Problem of Practice

Our study focuses on engagement and customer experience. As a start-up, GoCoach placed initial efforts into product development and sales with minimal attention to customer engagement. As the organization transitions from its initial start-up phase, the leadership team needs to understand how feedback can improve client engagement and overall experience. This study seeks to strengthen GoCoach's understanding of its customer experience.



## 3 | Literature Review

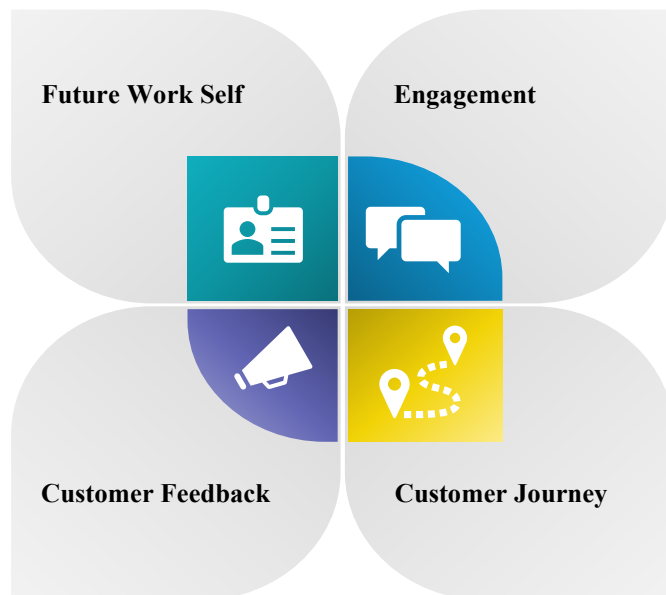
We used a scoping literature review process to clarify concepts and identify gaps in our knowledge concerning the customer experience problem of practice. We utilized a five-step methodological approach described by

Peterson et al. (2005):

1. Identify the research questions
2. Identify the relevant studies
3. Select the articles
4. Chart the relevant themes and topics
5. Collate and summarize selected themes and topics

We identified four themes, future work self, engagement, customer feedback, and

customer journey. Additionally, we explored the reference list of the selected research to identify additional research sources. Our literature review acts as a foundation for our findings and recommendations along with our qualitative and quantitative data.



## Future Work Self

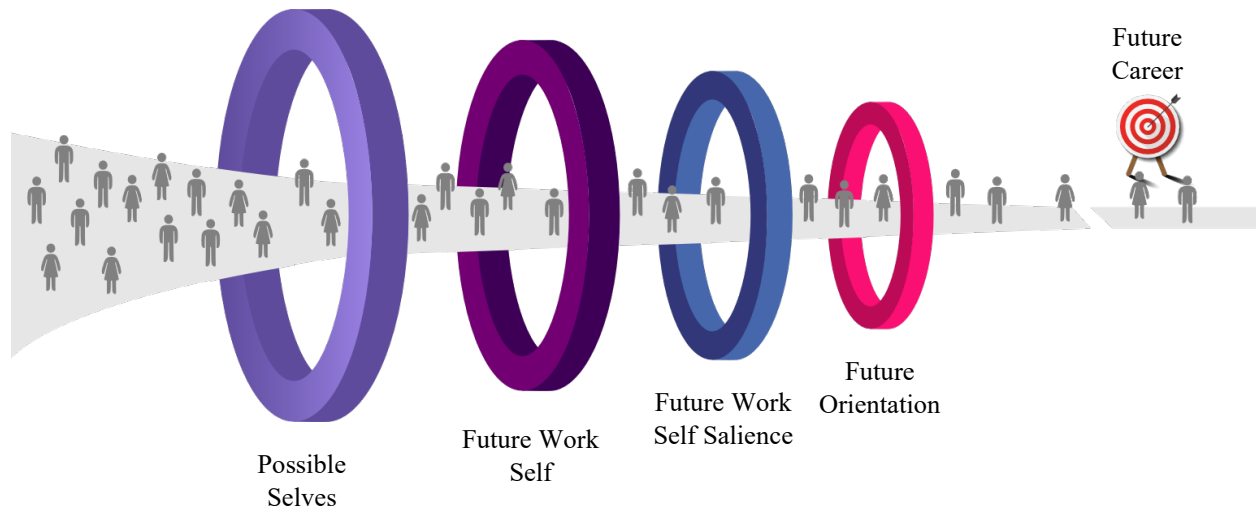
Organizations continue to struggle to address the challenges of the future of work, especially attracting, training, and retaining talent. COVID provided additional pressure on organizations in these areas. A recent Upwork (2022) study found that 60% of employers found finding quality talent to fill positions challenging. David (n.d.) estimated that 23% of the workforce plans to quit their current jobs within 12 months. Positive news exists for organizations, with 94% of employees indicating they would stay with their employer longer if it invested in their career development (LinkedIn, 2018).

As a result of the future of work and COVID, career and skills development opportunities took on greater emphasis for employees and organizations. The Society for Human Resource Management (Bergeron, 2022) found that 52% of employees felt easily replaceable, 41% feared losing their job, and 40% believed their work skills would become outdated due to technology (e.g., robots, artificial intelligence, etc.). With a greater emphasis on personal career management, efforts emerged to understand proactive career behaviors and the tendencies of individuals to engage in those behaviors (Strauss et al., 2012).

Strauss et al. (2012) used the term future work self (FWS) to define the concept and to seek an understanding of proactive career behaviors. FWS is defined "as representations of the self in the future that encapsulate individually significant hopes and aspirations in relation to work" (Strauss et al., 2012, p. 581). It draws on research from Markus & Nurius (1986), who suggested possible selves incentivize an individual's future behaviors and reference points for reviewing their current self-view. Strauss and colleagues (2012) focused on future positive selves within the possible selves concept. Their specificity applied to an individual's work context and

concentrated on stretching hopes and expanding ideas about future possibilities by preparing them to shape their career proactively.

**Figure 2: Future Work Self**



Since most individuals can construct possible selves when instructed (King & Raspin, 2004; King & Smith, 2004), this applies to future work self construction (Strauss et al., 2012). Salience is a critical characteristic of FWS, since most individuals hold a future work self, but not all are motivational resources. Salience differentiates future work self from the possible selves because it offers a motivational resource for individuals to take proactive career behaviors. An active salient identity facilitates the organization and the invigoration of an individual's behaviors targeted at their future identity (Leondardi et al., 1998). An individual's future identity becomes more easily accessible once active and frequently retrieved. Future work self salience (FWSS) evolves as individuals think about their goals, observe mentors, and fantasize about their future roles (Ibarra, 1999). Additionally, Lin et al. (2016) highlighted the influence FWSS could have on employee engagement, which coaching amplifies.

Strauss and colleagues (2012) drew upon two additional perspectives to demonstrate the motivational role of FWSS. Individuals create a discrepancy when comparing their current selves to future aspirations. Self-regulation theory suggests the gap motivates individuals to take steps toward achieving their future vision (Bandura, 2001). Strauss and colleagues (2012) indicated that FWS enables individuals to shape their careers based on their values and priorities.

The second perspective examined how positive possible selves enable recognition of future state requirements by actively engaging thought processes of the preferred future vision (Kosslyn, 1987). Individuals who compare present skills and abilities with likely future needs identify gaps (Strauss et al. 2012). Individuals focused on future orientation identify the gaps as motivational forces to direct future behaviors. Proactive behaviors include skill development, skill and knowledge acquisition, and pursuing feedback. Seeking coaching is an example of individuals taking proactive career behaviors (Lin et al., 2016).



## Engagement

Understanding the relationship between engagement and coaching is vital to our study. This prerequisite required careful consideration of how we define engagement during our data collection and analysis. Researchers define engagement differently; however, their terms share employee and work engagement in their definitions (Ladyshevsky & Taplin, 2018). The study of engagement requires observable behaviors, so we sought guidance from the literature on identifying engagement behaviors. Employees express themselves emotionally, physically, and mentally through their professional role, displayed by their drive, flexibility, and persistence in supporting organizational goals (Ladyshevsky & Taplin, 2018; Mone et al., 2011). Schaufeli et al. (2000) further characterize engagement through vigor, dedication, and absorption. Vigor displays high energy levels and perseverance with total commitment to one's work, including when faced with dilemmas. Possessing a sense of meaning, eagerness, creativity, and pride characterize dedication. Absorption requires deep concentration and total engagement in one's work such that time passes quickly. Schaufeli et al. (2000) note that "engaged employees have a sense of energetic and effective connection with their work activities and they see themselves as able to deal completely with the demands of their job" (p. 73).

We narrowed our examination of engagement by orienting it within coaching. Our review of the literature revealed many different definitions and types of coaching (Jones et al., 2016; Smith & Brummel, 2013). Our study used the description found in corporate coaching, rooted in competitive sports and music (Armson et al., 2019). Jones et al. (2016) consider workplace coaching and executive coaching as interchangeable terms. Smith & Brummel (2013) define executive coaching as a relationship between a client with administrative authority and a



consultant familiar with multiple tools to assist the client in achieving mutual goals benefiting both the client and their organization. GoCoach's model fits within the business coaching context. Experts define business coaching as a one-to-one goal-focused relationship between a coach and client to improve the client's job performance and obtain desirable professional outcomes (Smither, 2011; Jones et al., 2016; Hall et al., 1999).



## Customer Feedback

The relationship between the customer and the coach allows the customer to provide feedback. Businesses use customer feedback as a tool for continuous improvement. However, business leaders often misunderstand feedback dynamics. Vancouver & Day (2005) note typical misuses of the term feedback add to the confusion. The authors clarify that in its purest form, feedback refers to the part of the system output that returns to the input component. A closer examination of the feedback process reveals a complex system. Atkinson et al. (2021) note that feedback involves co-constructive interactions between the customer and the organization, not just a simple transaction between the two. Customer feedback consists of an organization's external and internal stakeholders. Customer feedback affects internal functions such as design and marketing. Understanding customers' satisfaction and dissatisfaction increases an organization's chances of success in a competitive marketplace (Fundin & Bergman, 2003).

A closer look at customer feedback reveals additional categorization. Ordenes et al. (2014) further categorize customer feedback as explicit or implicit, determined by whether the customer provides the feedback consciously or unconsciously. Advancements in technology changed customer feedback collection methods. Explicit feedback tools include surveys, e-mails, and online reviews (Nasr et al., 2018). Implicit feedback involves observing customer actions using eye tracking, the number of website clicks, and online reading time. For our research, we view the customer as the client in the business coaching relationship and consider how their satisfaction or dissatisfaction can affect coaching effectiveness. Organizations can measure customers' satisfaction, or lack of, with a commonly accepted tool, such as a Net Promoter Score (NPS), to enhance the feedback process by providing valuable metrics on customer experience

while offering predictive insights for business growth (Reichheld, 2003). Baehre et al. (2022) explain that the question "How likely is it that you would recommend [organization X] to a friend or colleague" serves as the single question to create an NPS. Respondents select a response on a scale of zero to ten. Answers fall into one of three categories: promoters (responses of nine or ten), passives (responses of seven or eight), and detractors (responses less than seven). To calculate the NPS, divide the difference between promoters and detractors by the total sample size.



## Customer Journey

When analyzing customer feedback, it is essential to consider the customers' journey or experiences. The process individuals experience while accessing an organization's product or services through a series of touchpoints creates the customer journey (Tueanrat et al., 2020). Touchpoints constitute interactions between the customer and service providers, such as in-person meetings, website usage, self-service machines, or telephone calls that influence a customer's opinion of the service and the service provider (Clatworthy, 2011). Touchpoints form the connective tissue between the customer and the organization leading to the co-creation of products and services. Our focus explores the co-creation theme and how it may inform GoCoach.

The co-creation theme recognizes customers as co-creators rather than just consumers, which plays a critical role in creating and shaping a service or product (Varnali, 2019). Intensive communication with customers serves as an impetus for the successful delivery of a service. (Gustafsson et al., 2012). Intensive communication through a series of touchpoints with the organization allows customers to evolve from passive participants simply responding to pre-determined questions to active co-creators providing novel opportunities for businesses to refine current services or create new ones (Witell et al., 2011).

## 4 | Project Questions

Two questions guided our study:



### Question 1

In what ways does a client's representation of future work self impact their level of engagement, if any?

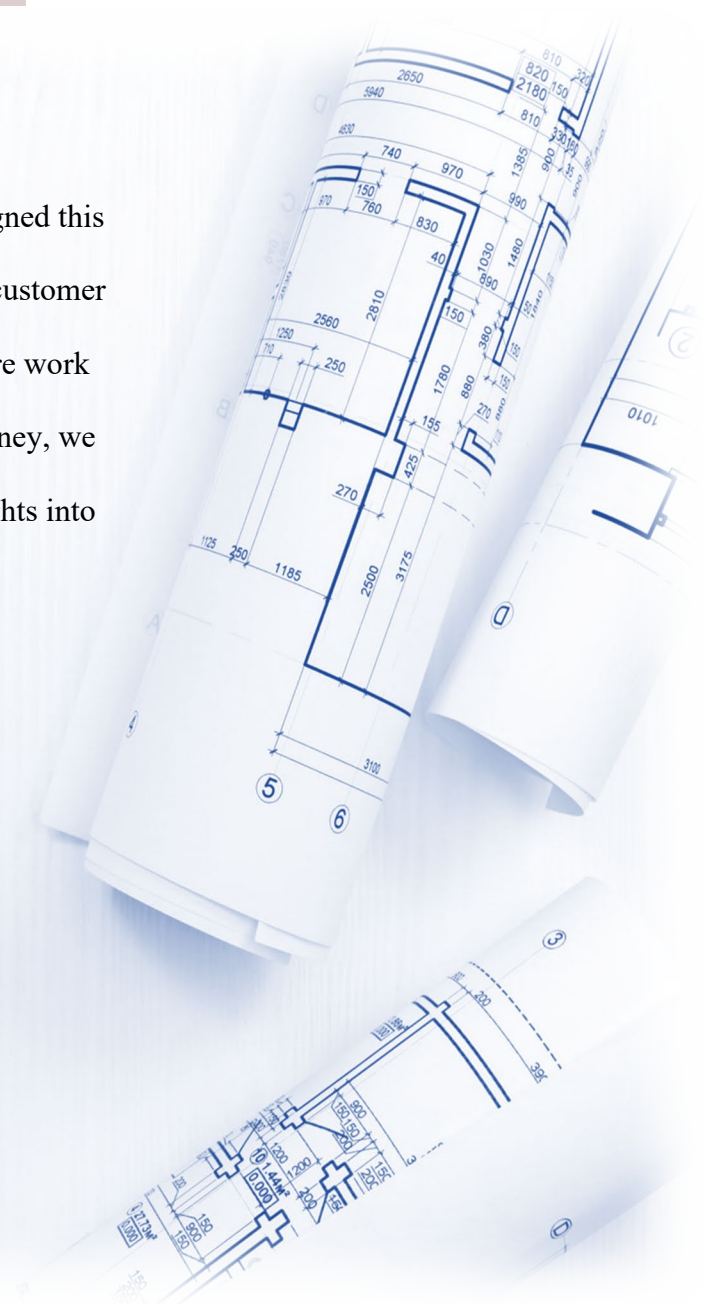


### Question 2

In what ways does GoCoach's customer experience influence individual client engagement, if any?

## 5 | Project Design

With our two project questions in mind, we designed this study to explore the individual future work self and the customer experience at GoCoach. Grounded in the themes of future work self, engagement, customer feedback, and customer journey, we conducted interviews with GoCoach clients to gain insights into engagement and customer experience.



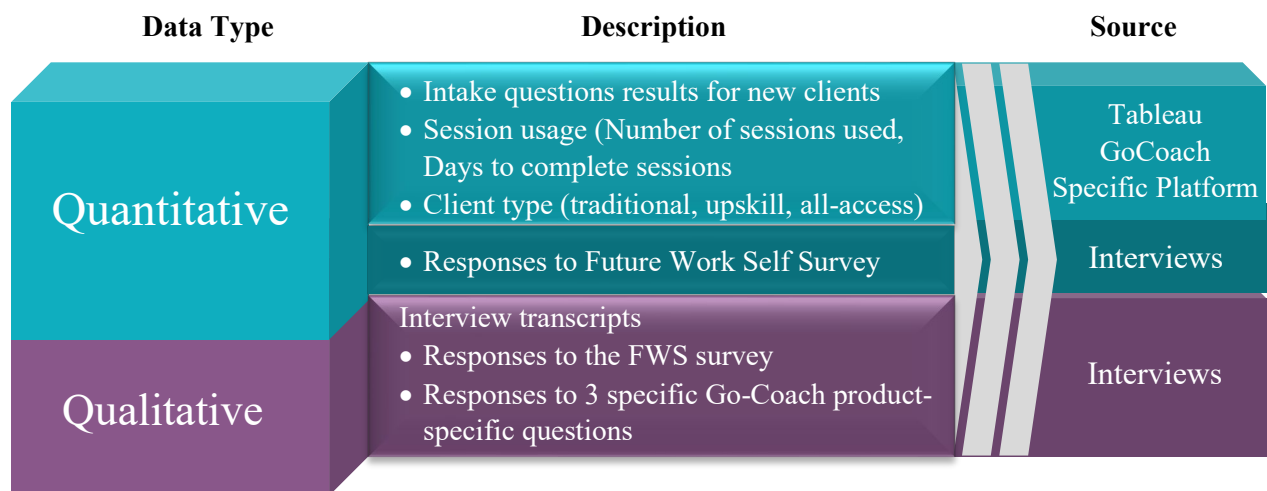
## Data Collection

We used a mixed methods approach to collect qualitative and quantitative data.

GoCoach's platform provided quantitative data captured from initial client in-take questions and metrics on coaching session usage. Customer interviews offered quantitative and qualitative data.

GoCoach provided data for all three client types at the macro and participant levels. The organization tagged data specific to the six interview participants in parallel to collecting the qualitative data.

**Figure 3: Data Plan Outline**



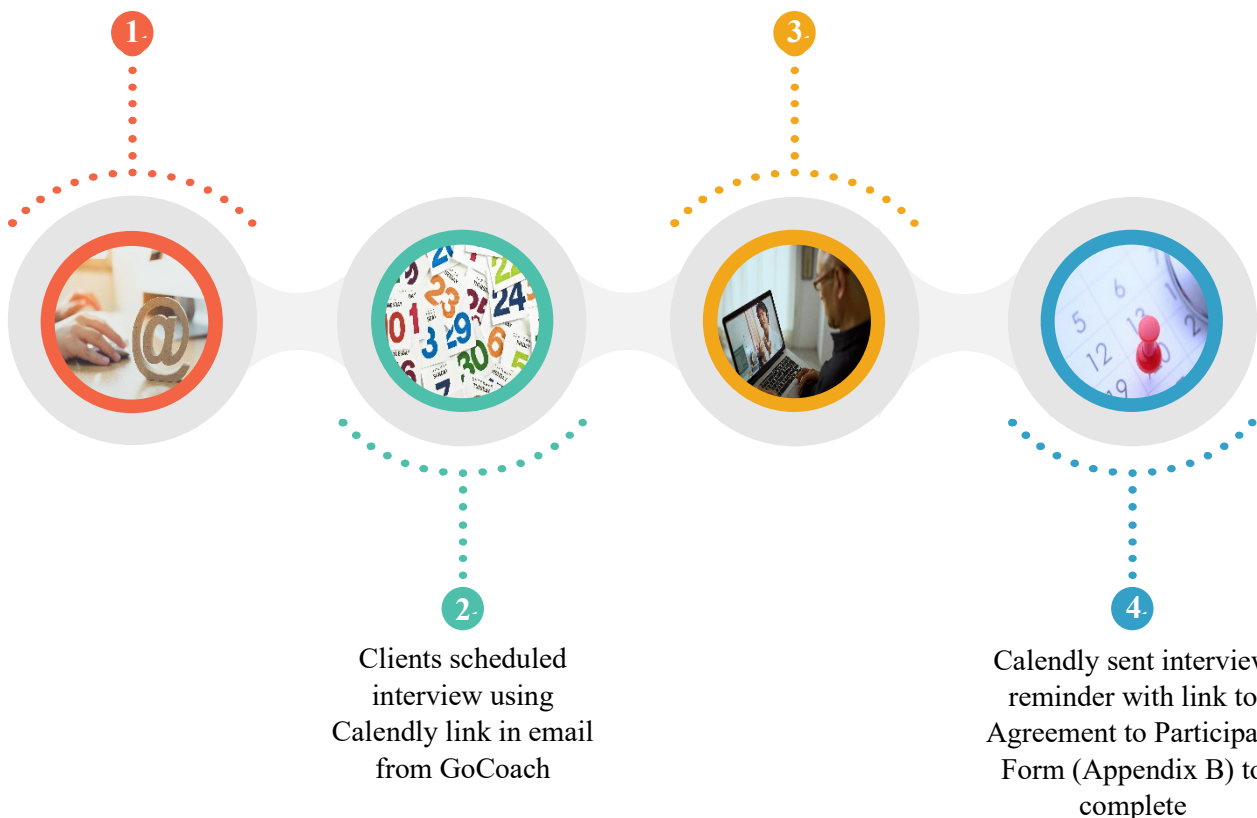
Second, we conducted individual sixty-minute interviews with six GoCoach customers using Zoom. Interview participant selection applied convenience sampling to minimize disruption to GoCoach customers. Interview questions (Appendix C) leveraged Strauss et al.'s Future Work Self Survey (2012). They demonstrated the instrument's validity in determining future work salience and its positive relationship with proactive career behaviors. For the

interviews, we read aloud the 23 questions to participants and used a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree). Strauss et al. (2012) used the same Likert scale in their research. After providing a rating, participants provided their rationale for their responses. Additionally, respondents answered three open-ended questions about their customer experience through various interactions with GoCoach. At any point during the interviews, participants could indicate they did not want to answer the question or request to end the interview and not answer any questions.

### Figure 4: Interview Participant Recruitment Process

GoCoach distributed introductory e-mail (Appendix A) to their clients. *(Included a \$50 gift card for anyone that signed up and completed an interview)*

Calendly automatically sent confirmation email, including Zoom meeting details



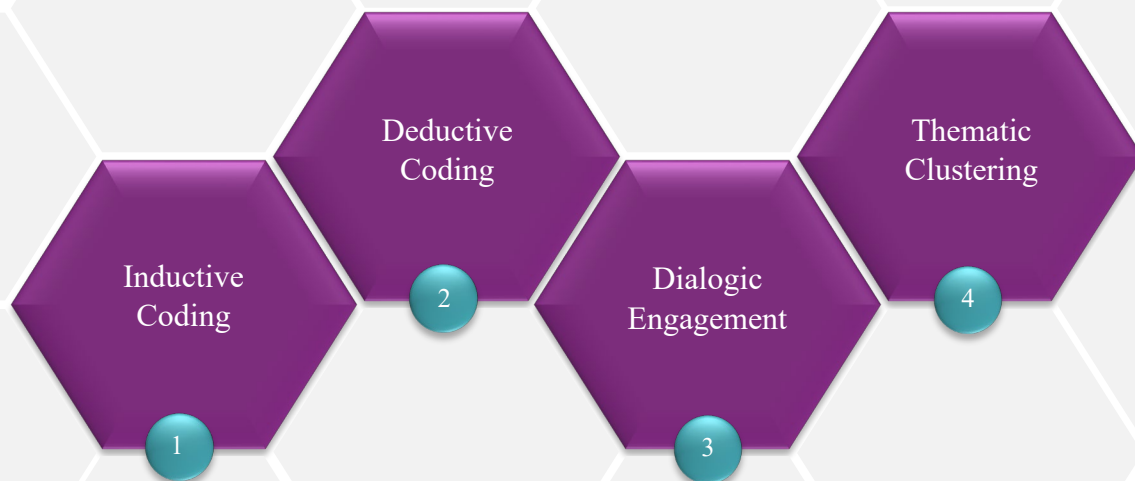


## Data Analysis

### Qualitative Data Analysis

Our data analysis approach encompassed the coding process, refinement, and theme identification. We utilized a four-pass approach to code, revise and refine the coding. This multiple-coding approach improved our shared understanding and served as a validity check of the coding process (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). We used software to transcribe the interviews (Otter.ai and Transcribe app). Before the beginning of any analysis, we polished the transcripts and removed any identifiers for their respective interviews. We anonymized interviewee names to provide further confidentiality. Our study excluded data from one interview because the participant was not a coaching client but a relationship manager with GoCoach.

**Figure 4: Four Step Coding Process**

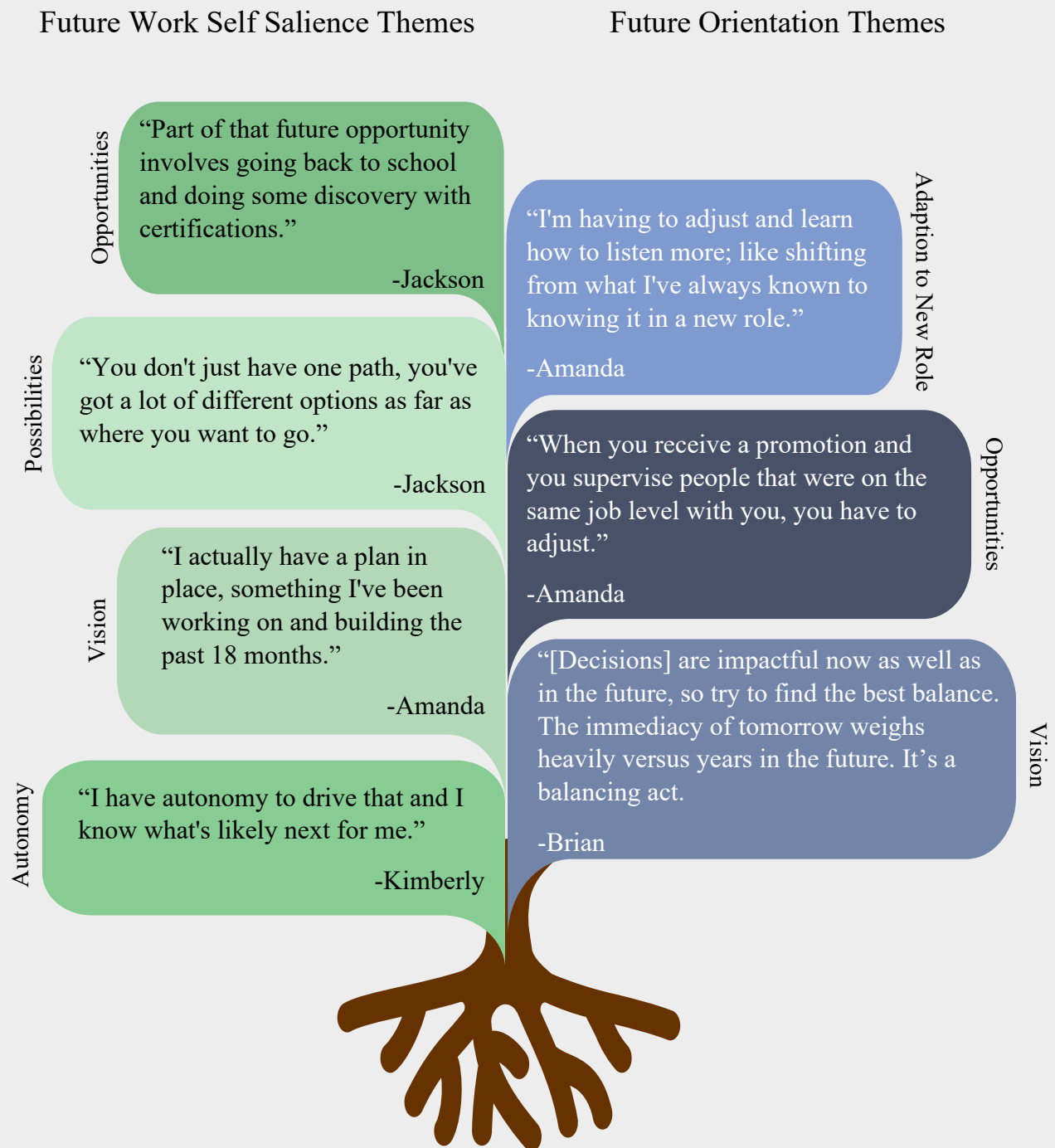


First, we individually read and used inductive coding to identify themes in each interview transcript. Then, we collectively reviewed the transcripts to identify common themes. The second step in our coding process involved deductive coding in organizing data by future work self factors, based on Strauss et al.'s (2012) research. After completing this step, we participated in dialogic engagement to compare the inductive coding completed in our initial step. The third step enabled us to discuss the themes in our coding usage and areas of misalignment. In our final pass, we employed thematic clustering to condense the number of codes for meaningful analysis. Our coding process resulted in developing a codebook with theme definitions and interview sample quotes to illustrate our interpretation.

**Figure 5: Future Work Self Codebook**

Future Work Self Factors	Theme
Future Work Self Salience	<b>Opportunities</b> Choice of outcomes that are more likely to happen for a client
	<b>Possibilities</b> Outcomes that are less likely to happen for a client
	<b>Vision</b> A strategy with goals and a defined plan, which evolves over time
	<b>Autonomy</b> The ability for a client to not be influenced by organizational factors
Future Orientation	<b>Adaption to New Role</b> Ability to take on new responsibilities and navigate relationship dynamics
	<b>Opportunities</b> Choice of outcomes that are more likely to happen for a client
	<b>Vision</b> An approach to future happiness involving proactive decision making

**Figure 6: Future Work Self Codebook – Sample Quotes by Theme**

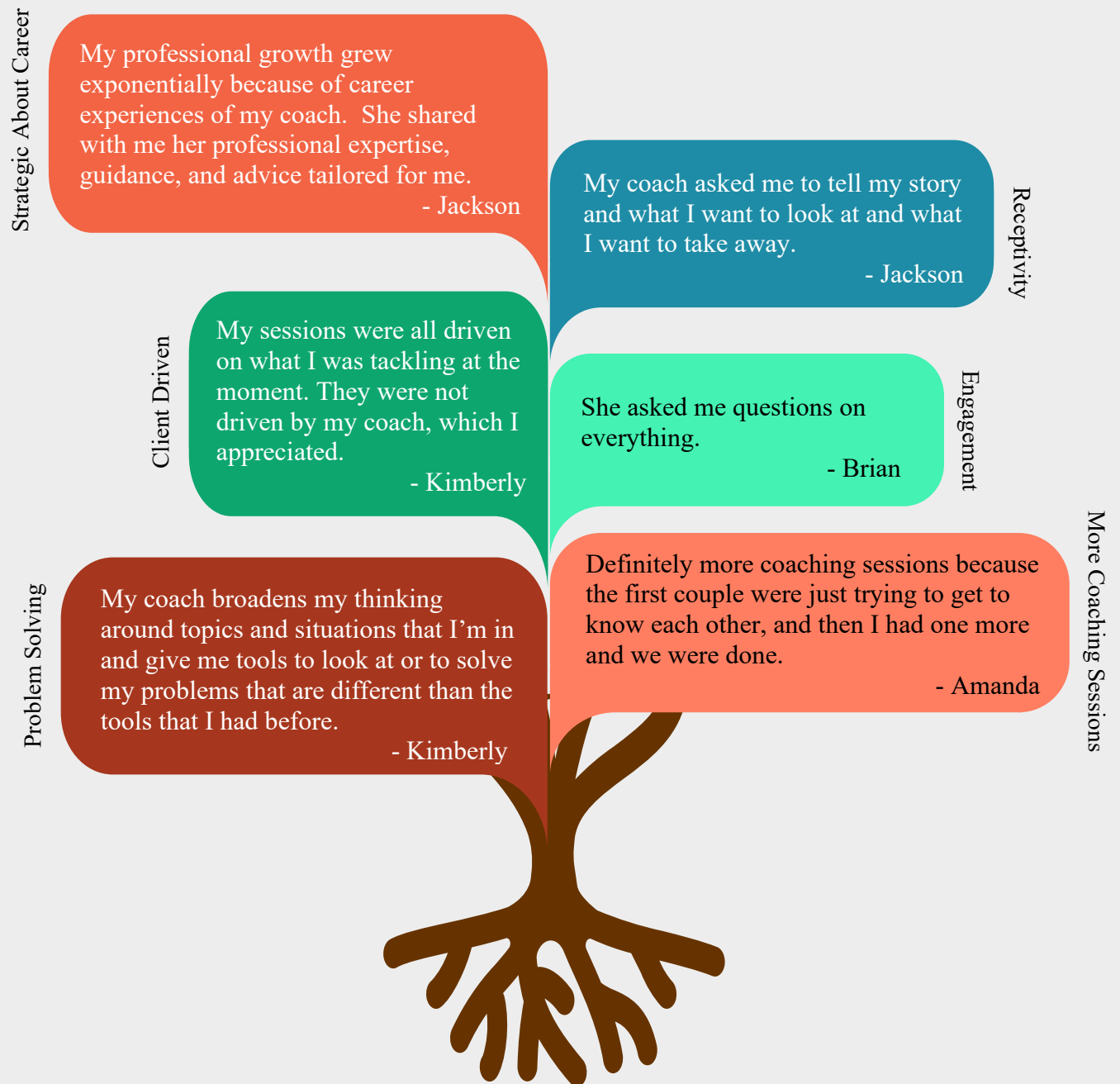


We applied the same four-step coding process to analyze the interview transcript data from the GoCoach-centric questions from the interviews. After completing the multiple readings, we produced another codebook specific to these questions.

**Figure 7: GoCoach Centric Questions Codebook**

	Theme
<b>GoCoach Centric Questions</b>	<b>Strategic About Career</b> Making short-term and long-term decisions resulting in favorable professional outcomes
	<b>Client Driven</b> Describing coaching sessions as responsive to cues found in their comments and questions during discussions with their coach
	<b>Problem-Solving</b> Coach gave advice or tools to aid in overcoming obstacles to career advancement
	<b>Receptivity</b> Participants indicated they felt their input to the process had value.
	<b>Engagement</b> They experienced a personal connection with their coach.
	<b>More Coaching Sessions</b> Expressing a desire for additional coaching sessions

**Figure 8: GoCoach Centric Questions Codebook – Sample Quotes**



## Quantitative Data Analysis

We used descriptive statistics to provide insight into the quantitative data. Data included all GoCoach client responses to the intake survey, session usage, and coaching tracks. We analyzed the data at the client level and by the interview participant group. Both methods provided insights linked to our literature review and supporting evidence for our analysis and recommendations. Identical to our qualitative data analysis, we anonymized names to give more confidentiality and excluded data from one interview because the participant did not meet our criteria for participating in coaching sessions.



**Table 1: Interview Participant Responses to Future Work Self Statements: Average and Mode**

	<b>Future Work Self Statements</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Mode</b>
Future Work Self Saliency	This future is very easy for me to imagine.	4.2	4
	The mental picture of this future is very clear.	4.2	4
	I can easily imagine my Future Work Self.	4.6	5
	I am very clear about who and what I want to become in my future work.	4.6	5
	What type of future I want in relation to my work is very clear in my mind.	4.8	5
Future Orientation	I consider how things might be in the future, and try to influence those things with my day-to-day behavior.	4.8	5
	Often I engage in a particular behavior in order to achieve outcomes that may not result for many years.	4	4
	I am willing to sacrifice my immediate happiness or well-being in order to achieve future outcomes.	3.4	3
	I think it is important to take warnings about negative outcomes seriously even if the negative outcome will not occur for many years.	4	5
	I think it is more important to perform a behavior with important distant consequences than a behavior with less-important immediate consequences.	3.6	4
	The decisions I make today are based on what I think might happen in the future.	4.2	5

**Table 2: Participant Averages Across Future Work Self Salience and Future Orientation**

	<b>Kimberly</b>	<b>Brian</b>	<b>Amanda</b>	<b>Rita</b>	<b>Jackson</b>	<b>Overall Average</b>
Future Work Self Salience	4.6	4.2	4.4	4.8	4.4	4.48
Future Orientation	4.4	2.8	4	4.2	3.8	4

**Table 3: GoCoach Usage Metrics**

	<b>Percentage of Sessions Consumed</b>	<b>Number of Sessions Allocated</b>
Amanda	100.0%	3
Brian	20.0%	5
Jackson	100.0%	3
Kimberly (1st)	100.0%	5
Kimberly (2nd)	100.0%	5
Rita	83.3%	6
Interview Participant Average	83.9%	4.5
Average of All GoCoach Clients	75.1%	5.6

*Note: Kimberly appears twice because she completed two coaching session packages. Everyone else participated in only one coaching session package.*



## 6 | Findings

Our analysis resulted in four key findings. The first two findings address our first project question, and the last two clarify our second project question. We leveraged quantitative data from the GoCoach intake survey and participants' verbal responses to the future work self survey questions. Additionally, we used their interview responses captured in transcripts to elaborate on their answers. Literature provided another layer of support for our findings.

**1 | Individuals with a higher future work self salience score used more coaching sessions**

**2 | Levels of future work self salience align with future orientation**

**3 | Interview participants described sessions as being client-focused**

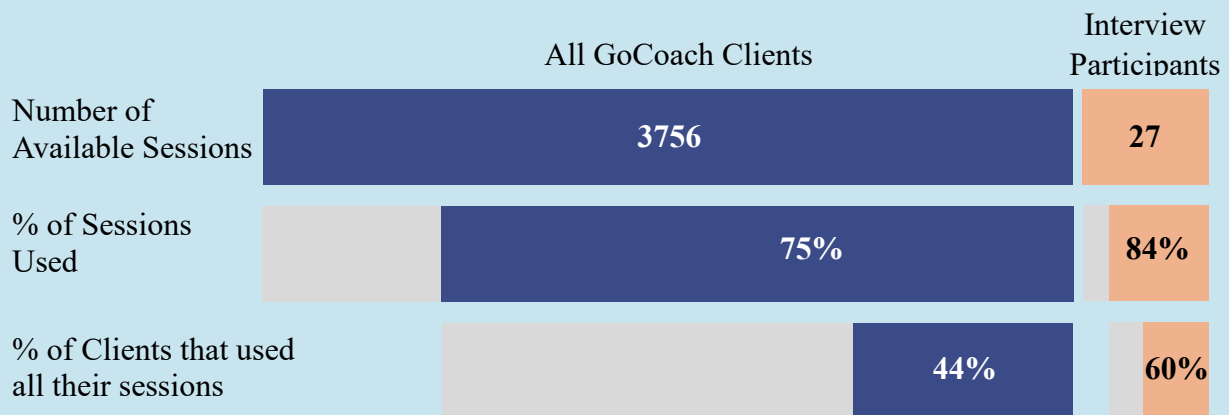
**4 | Participants indicated satisfaction with current touchpoints**

## Project Question 1: In what ways does a clients' representation of future work self impact their level of engagement, if any?

### Finding 1

Our first finding indicated that participants with higher responses to future work self salience questions also used more coaching sessions. Three data sources provided evidence for this observation. From the interviews, the participants provided an average rating of 4.48 to the five future work self salience questions, with five being the highest on the Likert scale. For the question "What type of future I want in relation to my work is very clear in my mind," all but one individual gave a score of five giving this statement the highest average score related to future work self salience. We compared this to their coaching usage data (the percentage of sessions used available to them) and found participants used, on average, 84% of their sessions. In comparison, GoCoach clients, on average, used 75% of their available sessions. Additionally, 60% of the participants used all their sessions compared to less than 50% of all GoCoach clients that used all sessions.

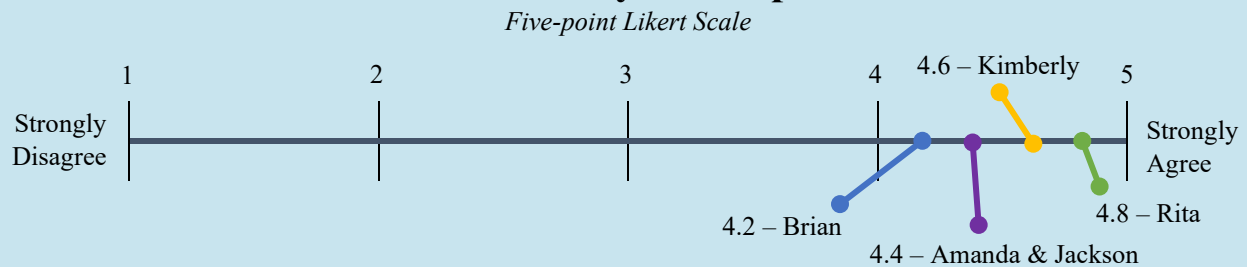
**Figure 9: Coaching Session Usage Data**



Source: GoCoach Platform Data, December 2022

Note information is not drawn to scale and is meant for illustration purposes only

**Figure 10: Average Responses to Future Work Self Salience Questions by Participant**



Qualitative data collected from participant interviews added another layer of evidence. Themes emerged as participants elaborated on their answers, with vision and possibilities as the prominent ones. We described vision as a strategy with goals and defined plan which evolves. Participants identified with this theme for their future career the most frequently and how they saw themselves in the future. Possibilities appeared as the other key theme because it was often linked to vision and focused on future career aspirations for themselves. We defined possibilities as outcomes that are less likely to occur for a client.

**“I have a pretty clear plan of what I want in the future”**

**- Jackson**

**“I’m not one that sees the future one way...I’m more like out of the possibilities here’s a handful that I would like to see.”**

**- Brian**

Additionally, qualitative data from the interviews explained a variance in Brian's low usage of coaching sessions. He used only 20% of his sessions compared to the other interviewees but had an average future work self salience score of 4.2. His interview transcript provided a thick description explaining the discrepancy. He indicated that he should have started the sessions early to complete them before no longer having access. This further reinforced our finding of individuals with a high future work self salience wanting to complete their coaching sessions at a higher rate. It also emphasized the connection between our observation and previous research.

Literature connects usage (engagement) to future work self salience reinforced with coaching. Lin et al. (2016) found that future work self salience impacts an employee's engagement, amplified with coaching. Further, Markus & Nurius (1986) found future work self motivates more proactive future work behaviors, such as seeking coaching sessions.

## Finding 2

Our second finding, participants' future work self salience levels align with their future orientation, seeks to address our first project question. The concept of future orientation refers to a person's inclination to think about the future rather than immediate consequences and represents the individual's ability to delay gratification (Strauss et al., 2012). Evidence supporting this finding comes from three sources: participant responses to the future orientation and future work self salience sections of the Future Self Work survey, coaching session usage, and extant research. Additionally, participant interviews contributed qualitative data to elaborate on their survey responses to the two sections of the Future Self Work survey.

**“There are everyday things you do which have short-term outcomes. It is very critical in life to do these simple things with a mindset of years down the road. You have to possess the self-awareness to understand that what you do today will impact your future, so trying to correct those things is essential rather than being reactionary.”**

**- Jackson**

Participant narratives collected during their interviews emphasized opportunities, adaption to a new role, and vision. We applied the exact definition used in Finding 1 for opportunities. We defined adaption to a new role as the ability to take on new responsibilities and navigate relationship dynamics. For Finding 2, the term vision took on the acquired definition of an approach to future happiness involving proactive decision making. A connecting thread throughout the three key themes was the link to a future role. Participants' rationale for their responses to the future orientation questions section of the future work self-survey

frequently referenced vision and adaption to a new role. One participant, Amanda, provided a narrative highlighting the linkage.

**“I've had to make adjustments and with the new position, I'll have to do the same thing. And it's not really a new position, but the new added, um, responsibilities, I'll have to do the same thing and learn how to approach. Every day can be wonderful or you can have stressors...I don't know if I would go into something at this juncture in my life that would not make me at least a little bit happy.”**

During the interviews, we collected quantitative data from the participants as they rated their agreement to the future work self salience and future orientation sections of the future work self survey. The data revealed that all participants possessed high levels of future work self salience and future orientation, except for one individual. In all instances, the average rating on future work self salience statements was slightly higher than their average ratings on future orientation statements. Brian's average rating on future orientation was the only outlier not closely clustered with his average future work self salience score. As in Finding 1, session usage (engagement) aligned with future work self salience. Additionally, we found that session usage also aligned with future orientation.

**Figure 11: Average Future Orientation vs. Future Work Self Salience vs. Session Usage By Participant**



Source: GoCoach Platform Data, December 2022

Literature also highlights the linkage between future work self salience, proactive career behaviors, and increased engagement. Strauss and colleagues (2012) found high future work self salience motivates future orientated behavior. Further, Lin et al. (2016) indicated that increased job engagement aligns with higher levels of future work self salience.

## Project Question 2: In what ways does GoCoach's customer experience influence individual client engagement, if any?

### Finding 3

The third finding indicated that interview participants described sessions as client-focused. Client-focused themes included five categories: *strategic about career*, *client-driven*, *engagement*, *receptivity*, and *problem-solving*. As a result of multiple readings of interview transcripts to check for interrater reliability, strategic about career emerged as the dominant theme (42.86%), followed by client-driven (25.71%), and problem solving (14.29%). The least referenced themes included engagement (8.57%) and receptivity (8.57%). We defined strategic about career as participants making short-term and long-term decisions resulting in favorable professional outcomes. During her interview, Rita spoke explicitly about being strategic about her career. The client-driven theme resulted from participants describing their coaching sessions as responsive to cues found in their comments and questions during discussions with their coach. During his interview, Brian provided an example of how his coach responded to cues in their conversation.



## Figure 12: Interviewee Quotes on Their GoCoach Customer Experience

**“Working with GoCoach has really helped me be more strategic about my career.”**

**-Rita**

**“She’s made me a better operational problem solver through her questioning and her what-if [scenarios].”**

**-Kimberly**

**“Her [the coach’s] suggestions are always derived from insights she picked up from our conversations.”**

**-Brian**

When a participant mentioned that their coach gave them advice or tools to aid in overcoming obstacles to career advancement, we coded that as part of the problem solving theme. In her interview, Kimberly offered an example of how her coach made her a better problem solver. The receptivity theme evolved from participants indicating they felt their input to the process had value. We defined engagement as when the participants described experiencing a personal connection with their coach.

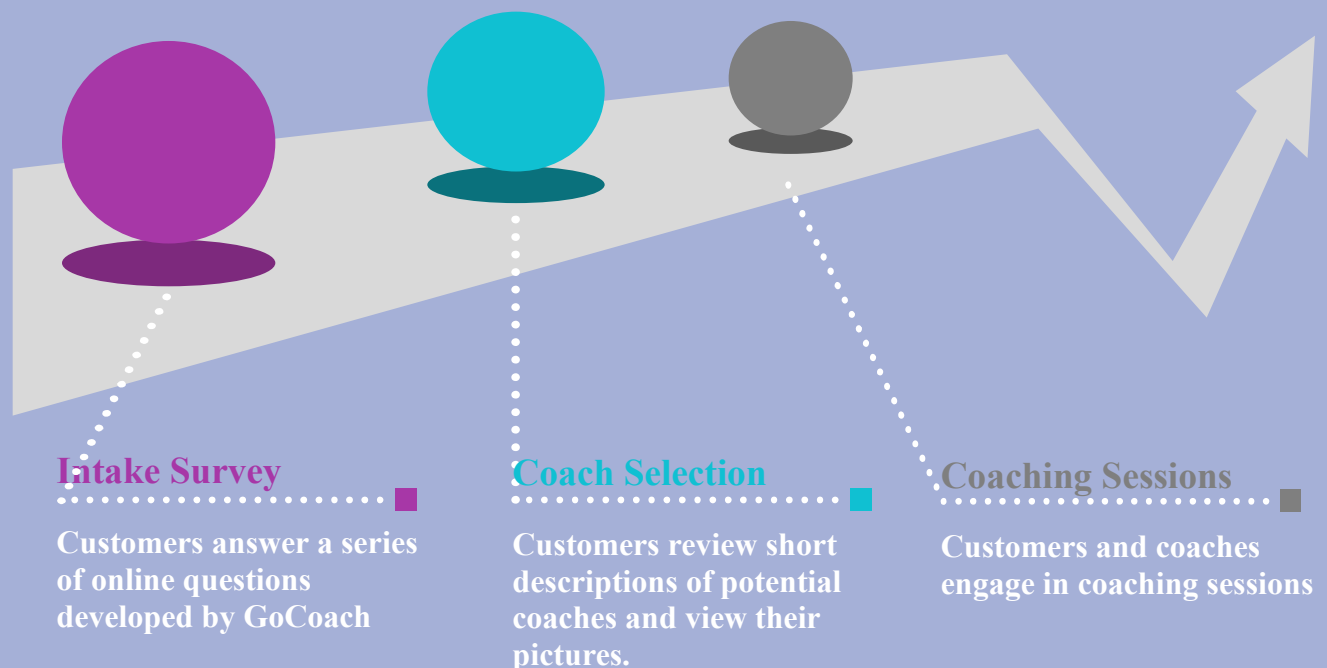
Additionally, the literature supports our client-focused finding. A thread within the literature describes how client-focused touchpoints target improving customer performance and desirable customer outcomes through their feedback (Smither, 2011; Jones et al., 2016; Hall et al., 1999). This feedback occurred during various interactions with the organization. The touchpoints between the customer and the organization create the customer journey (Tueanrat et al., 2020).



## Finding 4

The fourth finding showed that participants indicated satisfaction with current touchpoints. Leveraging the same approach in the previous observation, we ascertained that only one did not indicate wanting more sessions. As noted in our first finding, the outlier, Brian, explained that he regretted not engaging in his coaching sessions sooner and not exhausting all sessions before his access window closed. His explanation allowed for the possibility that he may have desired more sessions if he had completed all the initial offerings, like the other participants. This discovery resulted in an additional theme of a desire for more coaching sessions. Coaching sessions, the intake survey, and coach selection offered three specific touchpoints for our participants.

Figure 13: GoCoach Customer Journey



The coaching session touchpoint provides the essential element to GoCoach's service to customers. Clatworthy (2011) notes that touchpoints influence the customer opinion of the organization's service. Our study found that GoCoach's customers wanting to engage in more coaching sessions indicated satisfaction with the coaching touchpoint.

**“I savored each of my allotted sessions and wanted to make the most of each. I desired to go deeper into content but was unable to because I ran out of time and would prefer more sessions.”**

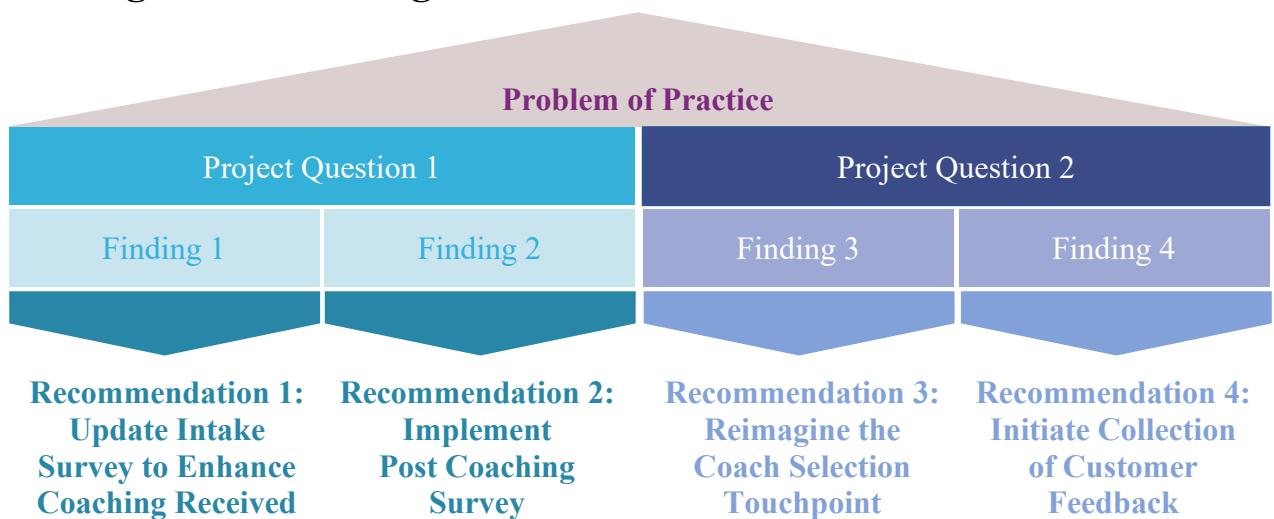
**- Kimberly**

The coaching touchpoints also gave customers opportunities to have a voice in the services they received, leading to increased satisfaction. When customers have input in service development, it leads to co-creation. As part of the customer journey, co-creation recognizes customers as co-creators rather than just consumers, which plays an essential role in creating and shaping a service or product (Varnali, 2019; Atkinson et al., 2021).

## 7 | Recommendations

Our inquiry generated four recommendations. These recommendations seek to address the problem of practice of strengthening GoCoach's understanding of its customer experience. Leveraging our findings and literature review, we formulated the following steps to build a broader understanding of the customer experience through additional data points collected at various touchpoints. These recommendations are initial starting points for GoCoach to develop its customer experience capability.

**Figure 14: Linking Problem of Practice to Recommendations**



## Recommendation 1

Our first recommendation is to refresh the GoCoach intake survey clients complete before selecting a coach. The intake survey refresh enhances the coaching received by clients. It entails revising current intake questions by adding questions from the future work self survey. The results would enable GoCoach to segment coaching based on a client's future work self salience. Therefore, individuals high in future work self would match with coaches more attentive to them achieving defined future visions versus those with low future work self receiving more general career coaching. This more tailored approach would further increase the engagement of clients. According to Strauss and colleagues (2012), future work self salience triggers a motivating discrepancy, discovering new possibilities, and thinking about one's future.

**Figure 15: Refreshed Intake Survey**

### CURRENT INTAKE SURVEY

1. Do you feel stuck in your current role?
2. Are you satisfied in your current role?
3. Do you feel motivated to do your best?
4. Do you have a career growth and development plan?

### CURRENT INTAKE SURVEY

1. This future is very easy for me to imagine.
2. The mental picture of this future is very clear.
3. I can easily imagine my Future Work Self.
4. I am very clear about who and what I want to become in my future work.
5. What type of future I want in relation to my work is very clear in my mind.

## Recommendation 2

Our second recommendation proposes the implementation of a post-coaching survey. Clients would retake the intake survey, and results would be compared against each other to show progress potentially. Though we found high levels of future orientation and future work self salience among project participants, the GoCoach intake survey showed a high percentage (83%) of participants without a career growth and development plan, like all clients' results. Strauss et al. (2012) found the greater degree of FWS an individual possesses manifests a more significant discrepancy between current and future self, motivating proactive behaviors. Therefore, this recommendation focuses on understanding whether completing coaching sessions increases future work self salience and results in observable proactive behaviors such as creating career growth and development plans. The survey would benefit GoCoach as it would quantify the impact of their coaching on potential clients and investors.

**Figure 16: Post-Coaching Survey Process**



### Recommendation 3

Our third recommendation advised GoCoach to consider reimagining its coach selection process by adding a short video of the potential coaches offering additional insight into their background, areas of expertise, and coaching style. Currently, customers select their coach based solely on a picture and a written narrative crafted by the potential coach. This refreshed coaching selection touchpoint enhances the current customer journey by providing customers with additional information to consider when selecting a coach. Adding a video element strengthens our third finding, indicating satisfaction with existing touchpoints. Furthermore, since this recommendation originated from a customer suggestion, it allows GoCoach to embrace the co-creation theme. Allowing customers to evolve into active co-creators of the customer journey provides organizations with increased chances to refine current service offerings or develop new ones (Witell et al., 2011).

Figure 17: Recommended GoCoach Customer Journey



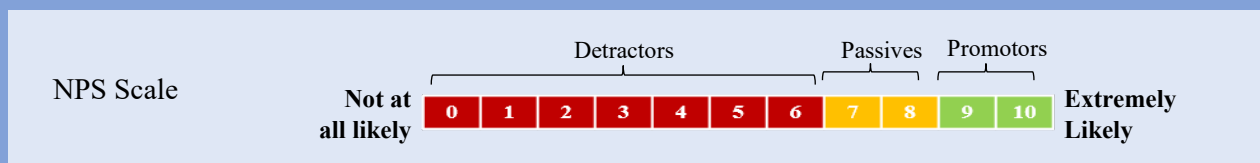


## Recommendation 4

For our final recommendation, we put forth GoCoach using a Net Promoter Score (NPS), allowing for a customer feedback tool at the end of their customer journey. Currently, no mechanism exists to collect feedback when customers finish coaching sessions. Acknowledging the skepticism towards NPS usefulness held by academics, we also recognize practitioners' acceptance of NPS as the most relevant marketing accountability measure (Baehre, O'Dwyer, O'Malley, & Story, 2022). Widely adopted by business leaders, the NPS measures customer satisfaction and predicts sales growth (Baehre, O'Dwyer, O'Malley, & Lee, 2022). Reichheld (2003) notes that an NPS improves the customer feedback process by providing valuable metrics on customer experience and offering predictive insights focused on organizational growth. The additional touchpoint of participating in an NPS serves as a final stop in their customer journey. Since NPS scores provide insight into customer loyalty, GoCoach can better gauge customer likeliness to use their service for future coaching sessions. Because many businesses use NPS, GoCoach can use their NPS results to measure progress through industry standard NPS benchmarks.

**Figure 18: Net Promoter Score (NPS)**

NPS Question: How likely is it that you would recommend GoCoach to a friend or colleague?



Calculating NPS  $NPS = (\sum \text{Promoters} - \sum \text{Detractors}) / \text{Sample Size}$

Source: Baehre et al. (2022)

## 8 | Conclusion

This capstone project sought to strengthen GoCoach's understanding of its customers' experience. Through a mixed methods approach, we identified four findings resulting in an equal number of recommendations for our partner organization. Our review narrowed to four interconnected areas of focus: future work self, engagement, customer feedback, and customer journey. The literature, along with ongoing conversations with the GoCoach team, resulted in two project questions:

- **Project Question 1:** In what ways does a client's representation of future work self impact their level of engagement, if any?
- **Project Question 2:** In what ways does GoCoach's customer experience influence individual client engagement, if any?

A series of six interviews and a review of existing GoCoach data revealed four findings, each connected to our project questions and the overall problem of practice. Our first finding indicated that participants with higher responses to future work self salience (FWSS) questions also used more coaching sessions. Our second finding highlighted how participants' future work self salience levels align with their future orientation. The third finding revealed that interview

participants described sessions as client-focused. The fourth finding denoted participants indicated satisfaction with current touchpoints.

The four findings led to the development of our recommendations, braced by participant interviews and research supported by the literature. Our recommendations offer a path forward for GoCoach to improve its customer experience in the short and long term. The first recommendation involved GoCoach refreshing the intake survey customers complete before selecting a coach to include questions from the future work self-survey. Our second recommendation proposed the implementation of a post-coaching survey to measure the impact of coaching sessions. The third recommendation advised GoCoach to have coaches record a short video offering additional insight into their background, areas of expertise, and coaching style as part of an improved coach selection touchpoint. Our final recommendation entailed GoCoach implementing a customer feedback tool at the end of their customer journey, such as a Net Promotor Survey.

As GoCoach continues to grow and expand its offerings, opportunities exist to further improve the customer experience through additional exploration of FWSS and its clients' experiences along several dimensions. One area involves FWSS and the connection to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives at GoCoach's partner organizations. Roles of gender and multiple generations in the workforce connect to DEI. As another avenue to explore, this might provide insights into the customer experience associated with these groups. Also connected to DEI is the contingent workforce. As organizations leverage temporary employees to address talent gaps, GoCoach should consider examining how FWSS differs for clients serving as contracted employees and those serving as permanent employees.

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## 10 | Appendices

## A. Participant Recruitment Letter

### GoCoach Sponsor Outreach Communication

**Subject:** Collaborative Capstone Project between GoCoach and Vanderbilt University

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

GoCoach was asked by two doctoral students at Vanderbilt University's Leadership and Learning in Organizations program to partner on their capstone project. Their final project focuses on how to increase engagement with our coaching services for our coachees (to improve their overall experience) and analyzes how we collect feedback on the coachee experience. Your company's points of contact with GoCoach have given us permission to reach out to you and ask if you are interested in participating in the project. As a thank you, GoCoach is offering a \$50 giftcard for your participation in an interview with us.

The team includes Ann Wrobley and Matthew Link. Both of them are current doctoral candidates in the Leadership and Learning in Organizations program at Peabody College of Education at Vanderbilt University. Ann ([www.linkedin.com/in/awrobley](http://www.linkedin.com/in/awrobley)) comes from a management consulting background and Matthew (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/matthew-link-b67b26a/>) comes from an educational leadership background.

Should you agree to be interviewed, it will require conducting a one-hour virtual interview that is recorded. Additionally, you may be asked to review their findings to confirm the accuracy of their analysis.

Please click [HERE](#) to schedule a time to be interviewed.

If you accept, please expect the following:

- A one-hour interview will be scheduled at your convenience.
- The interview session will be recorded.
- Your confidentiality will be protected with pseudonyms for your name and organization,
- You may be asked to review analysis conducted by the research team.
- Ability to opt-out of the project and communications at anytime

I look forward to hearing from you. Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions you have.

Sincerely,

## B. Participant Agreement Form

Dear participant,

You have been invited to take part in an improvement project to increase engagement with our coaching services for our coachees and analyze how we collect feedback on the coachee experience. This project will be conducted by Ann Wrobley and Matthew Link, students from the Doctor of Education in Leadership and Learning in Organizations at Peabody College of Education at Vanderbilt University.

If you give permission to participate in this project, you will be asked to answer questions on record about your GoCoach experience. The interview will take no more than 60 minutes. You may review these recordings and request that all or any portion of the tapes be destroyed. There are no known risks associated with your participation in this project beyond those of everyday life. Although you will receive no direct benefits, this investigation may help us understand how to improve the overall Coachee experience.

Participation in this project is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time. You also have the right to skip or not answer any questions you prefer not to answer and the right to edit the agreement.

If there is anything about the project or your participation that is unclear or that you do not understand, if you have questions or wish to report a project-related problem, you may contact Ann Wrobley at (917) 456-\*\*\*\* or [ann.l.wrobley@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:ann.l.wrobley@vanderbilt.edu) and Matthew Link at (484) 269-\*\*\*\* or [matthew.j.link@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:matthew.j.link@vanderbilt.edu).

\_\_\_\_ Yes, I give permission to Ann and Matthew to use my audio recordings for their project.

\_\_\_\_ You have received a copy of this agreement to keep.

### *Permission to Participate*

Signature of Participant

Date

### C. Interview Script including Questions

Note: All interviews will be conducted via Zoom meetings.

#### Opening Statement:

Thank you for your time today. I appreciate your participation in our capstone project. All information will be kept confidential. Are you comfortable with me recording this session? (If participant is not comfortable, the session will not be recorded.) If at any time during our discussion, you prefer not to respond to a question, please let me know and we can move to the next question. Before we begin, do you have any questions?

#### Interview Questions:

Please provide a response to each question or statement based on a 5-point likert scale, with 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree. I may ask a follow-up question for additional elaboration beyond the rating you initially provide.

1. This future is very easy for me to imagine.
2. The mental picture of this future is very clear.
3. I can easily imagine my Future Work Self.
4. I am very clear about who and what I want to become in my future work.
5. What type of future I want in relation to my work is very clear in my mind.
6. I consider how things might be in the future, and try to influence those things with my day-to-day behavior.
7. Often I engage in a particular behavior in order to achieve outcomes that may not result for many years.
8. I am willing to sacrifice my immediate happiness or well-being in order to achieve future outcomes.
9. I think it is important to take warnings about negative outcomes seriously even if the negative outcome will not occur for many years.
10. I think it is more important to perform a behavior with important distant consequences than a behavior with less-important immediate consequences.
11. The decisions I make today are based on what I think might happen in the future.
12. Having a career in my field is an important part of who I am.
13. This career field has a great deal of personal meaning to me.
14. I strongly identify with my chosen career line.
15. I do not feel "emotionally attached" to this career field.
16. The major satisfactions in my life come from my family.
17. The most important things that happen to me involve my family.
18. Select the response which best describes you and your day-to-day priorities. ("I am primarily a career person" to "I am primarily a family person")
19. I hope to become a leader in my career field.
20. When I am established in my career, I would like to manage other employees.
21. When I am established in my career, I would like to train others.
22. I hope to move up through any organization or business I work in.

23. I think I would like to pursue graduate training in my occupational area of interest.

Now, I will ask you three questions related to how to improve the GoCoach coachee experience.

1. How has working with GoCoach changed your outlook?
2. What could have made your experience better?
3. Do you feel like you had a voice in the coaching sessions (was your coach receptive)?

**Closing Statement:**

Thank you for sharing your insights with me today. As a reminder all information will be kept confidential and any identifying information will be removed. If upon reviewing the transcript I have any follow-up questions to your responses, may I contact you again to provide clarity? Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions or additional thoughts. Here is my contact information: [matthew.j.link@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:matthew.j.link@vanderbilt.edu) or [ann.l.wrobley@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:ann.l.wrobley@vanderbilt.edu)