



A CONSUMER'S GUIDE TO COACHING

No-nonsense answers & helpful resources
designed to make YOU an informed consumer.



Coaching: What's The Buzz?

Have you noticed? Coaching is all the rage. Chances are you know someone who has a coach. Or is a coach. Or is studying to become a coach. Of course we're not talking about athletic coaching, a la Vince Lombardi. We're talking about professional coaching, sometimes referred to as life coaching, personal coaching or executive coaching.

Although professional coaching is relatively new, it has attracted tons of attention. That's because coaching can be an extremely effective tool for change in your personal, professional or business life. But there's also plenty of hype and misinformation about coaching out there. And some people are concerned that, because coaching is a self-regulated profession, anyone can market themselves as a coach.

We created this publication to address such concerns and to give consumers like you factual, down-to-earth information about coaching. Yes, we are coaches, so we're not unbiased. But we can give you straightforward answers to common questions about coaching as well as a realistic picture of what to expect when you work with a coach.

What Exactly Is Coaching, Anyway?

The aim of coaching is to assist clients in achieving the vision or results they want — in their personal lives, their work lives or often in the balance of the two. Coaching is practical and action-oriented. Together with their coach, clients explore their strengths, values and dreams; set goals for themselves, and take steps to reach them.

Coaching works best when you know what you want to get done.¹

—James Hunt, associate professor of management, Babson College, and coauthor, *The Coaching Manager*

Coaches are skilled at guiding clients in recognizing and using their resources, gaining new insights and developing a concrete plan for reaching their objectives. A coach serves as a sounding board, providing honest feedback, encouragement and a fresh perspective. For many clients the accountability that coaching provides is especially energizing. Coaching is particularly effective for individuals who are in transition, tackling new challenges or looking for new ways to overcome persistent obstacles.

The overall goal of coaching is to move the client forward on a path that's ideal for them. The specific objectives of individuals and organizations that hire coaches vary widely. Common coaching goals include: improving time management, pursuing a new career, committing to an exercise program, improving business results, re-focusing on family or wellness, and transitioning into active retirement.

Generally, coaching is not suited for individuals facing an emotional crisis or struggling with severe psychological issues. Coaching has a different methodology and philosophical basis than consulting, mentoring or therapy.

If you think coaching is for you, we recommend checking out several coaches. Many coaches offer a free introductory session — a terrific opportunity to experience coaching.

Useful Distinctions: What's in a name?

Many professional coaches specialize in one or more areas. The following definitions will help you identify the type of coaching that's right for you or your organization.

Life Coaching or Personal Coaching. Supports individuals in creating a deeply satisfying, well-balanced life. Clients work toward goals such as more meaningful work, greater self-expression and more fulfilling relationships.

Career Coaching. Supports individuals in identifying their ideal career choice, transitioning into a new career or reinvigorating their chosen career.

Business and Executive Coaching. Supports organizations in boosting the impact, strength and productivity of business managers, sales personnel and other key players. Coaching can: transform managers into great leaders, retain top talent, sharpen managerial skills, foster a laser-sharp focus on strategic objectives.

A coach can help you . . .

- renew your excitement about life and work
- articulate a vision — for yourself, your family or your business
- create a healthy work-life balance
- discover new possibilities
- overcome obstacles and challenges.
- achieve almost anything you put your mind to



Corporate Coaching.

Supports businesses, management and workplace teams in transforming organizational culture, renewing an organization's mission and/or boosting its bottom line. Other goals include: promoting idea-sharing, sparking innovation, enhancing communication and restoring employee initiative.

Relationship Coaching. Supports individuals or couples in creating healthy, rewarding relationships. A Relationship Coach guides clients in creating strategies for transforming current relationships, moving beyond toxic relationships and cultivating healthy new relationships.

Q My career needs jumpstarting and, honestly, my marriage does too. I also need to start exercising. Do I need more than one coach?

A Not necessarily. Many coaches are qualified to support you in making changes in both your personal and professional lives. In addition to their training as coaches, these professionals have backgrounds in human development, counseling, training and development, and as managers, executives or entrepreneurs. Ask targeted questions to find out if your prospective coach has the skills and background to meet your needs.

Getting Results In Business

In a 2004 study, senior executives from Fortune 1000 companies reported overwhelmingly positive results from employer-sponsored coaching programs. Outcomes included: improved relationships between executives and subordinates (77%), increased teamwork among workers (67%), greater job satisfaction (61%), and improved productivity among employees (53%). The return on investment for executive coaching is nearly six times the initial cost of purchasing coaching services, according to the study.²

How Coaching Works

Most coaches meet with clients by phone. Typically, coaching sessions are scheduled two to four times a month for 30 to 60 minutes per session. Between sessions coaches provide support by email and resources such as articles, useful contacts, checklists, etc. In working with clients, coaches draw on their training and experience as a coach as well as on their own life experiences, personal and professional networks, intuition and, most importantly, their understanding of the client's goals, needs and aspirations.

Most coaches use a methodology that looks something like this:

1

The first step involves gathering information to determine your dreams and goals, opportunities and challenges, values and strengths. In addition to talking with your coach, you might fill out worksheets or take a personality assessment test.



2

Your coach will ask thought-provoking questions based on your responses. This involves an easy give-and-take that usually leads to the discovery of exciting new ideas and new ways to overcome obstacles. Along the way, you'll gain self-knowledge and new insights into yourself or your organization.



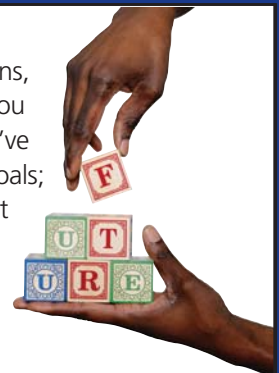
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Next, your coach will work with you to develop a personalized strategy and action plan. Most sessions conclude with an agreement between client and coach regarding the specific action steps the client plans to take.



4

At subsequent sessions, your coach will ask you what movement you've made toward your goals; what, if anything, got in your way, and what you learned. Many clients find this accountability a powerful ally for change.



Q How long does coaching take? Will I be expected to make a time commitment? If so, for how long?

A Many coaches request a 3-month commitment when you begin working with them, and many clients work with a coach for 6 months to a year. Some clients work in spurts, partnering with a coach for a time, then taking a break from coaching to cement their progress. Some coaching relationships evolve into a once-a-month arrangement. Clients who use coaching to achieve a specific goal may find that one 3-month period of coaching serves their needs. Periodically you and your coach will assess the coaching partnership. Are you meeting your goals? What would make the relationship more effective? Is it time to conclude the coaching partnership?

Q Why is there such a disparity in coaching fees?

A Coaching fees reflect market demand and a coach's expertise. Generally, coaches who work with individuals charge slightly lower fees than those working in corporate environments. The average hourly fee for individual coaching ranges from \$125 to \$250. For corporate engagements, hourly fees range from \$250 to \$1,000.

Coaching Credentials: The ABCs

There are so many different credentials for coaches that, frankly, they have almost lost their meaning. The following three organizations have established professional standards that are highly respected.

International Coach Federation (ICF): ICF's credentialing process is thorough and exacting, requiring coaches to complete a credentialed training program, accrue client coaching hours and pass written and oral exams. Certification is at three levels – Associate Certified Coach (ACC), Professional Certified Coach (PCC) and Master Certified Coach (MCC).
www.coachfederation.org.

International Association of Coaches (IAC): Coaches earn the IAC-CC designation (IAC Certified Coach) through study and demonstrated mastery of 15 coaching proficiencies.
www.internationalassociationofcoaches.org.

Worldwide Association of Business Coaches (WABC): To join WABC, coaches must meet rigorous admission and renewal standards based on their business and coaching experience and references. www.wabccoaches.com/

Make Training Pay!

When managerial training is combined with executive coaching the results can be incredibly powerful. According to one study, training combined with one-on-one executive coaching improved managerial productivity by 88%, while training alone increased productivity by only 22.4%.³



Money-Saving Tip!

In many cases, business- or career-related coaching is tax-deductible. Be sure to ask your tax specialist or financial planner.

"Coaching produced a 529% return on investment and significant intangible benefits to the business."⁴



Finding the right coach for you

How do I know the coach I'm consulting is qualified to help me? What should I look for in a coach? These are the kinds of questions to consider when hiring a coach. Here are 3 essential steps.

Step 1: Be resourceful

Begin by gathering names of coaches. Following are a few sources.

Word of mouth. Ask trusted friends and colleagues for names of coaches they've worked with successfully.

International Coach Federation. Check out this nonprofit professional association's online list of certified coaches. www.coachfederation.org.

Other online listings. Look at online listings of pre-screened coaches. Here are a few we recommend:

- <http://forbes.directory.com>. Interactive business directory maintained by Forbes.com, the online edition of Forbes business magazine.
- <http://lifecoachguide.com>. Unaffiliated directory of coaches maintained by marketing firm Paladin Resources, LLC.
- <http://www.coachlink.biz>. Free coaching referral service.

Step 2: Do your homework

Although there are top-quality coaches who have no formal training or credentials, it is generally recommended that you hire a coach who meets minimum professional standards and has a solid track record. Ask coaches for references, including names of previous and current clients, then contact each reference.

Don't be afraid to ask coaches tough questions and listen closely to their answers. Here are some questions to ask:

- What training and experience have you had? What certifications do you hold? Do you have specialized skills or experience? How many clients have you coached?
- What are your unique strengths?
- What did you do before becoming a coach?
- How many people have you coached in situations similar to my own or with similar goals? What are some of your client success stories?
- What is your coaching method and philosophy? How frequently will we meet and for how long? What kind of results can I expect?
- What kind of support do you provide between sessions?

Know yourself. Coaching is a two-way street whose success depends as much on the client as on the coach. Are you ready to make the most of a coaching relationship? Here are some questions to consider:

- Am I willing to explore new perspectives and concepts, new ways of doing things?
- Am I able to be completely honest with myself and my coach?
- Am I prepared to change behaviors that may be limiting my success?
- Do I have the time, energy and willingness to work between sessions?
- Do I believe in the value of coaching? Do I see it as a worthwhile investment?
- Do I have adequate financial resources to pay for coaching?

Step 3: Trust your intuition

The chemistry between you and a coach is critical. Do you feel a connection with the individual? Could you develop a trusting, respectful relationship? Are you most comfortable working with someone whose style is friendly and informal or someone whose approach is all-business? Is a sense of humor important? Would you prefer meeting by phone or in-person?

Final Note

Coaching offers a clear-cut process for getting where you want to go. Time and again we have seen how the support, insights and accountability of a coaching partnership have led to significant, long-lasting changes for clients. Is coaching right for you? The answer depends on your personality, your needs and goals, and your readiness to change. We hope this publication has given you the tools to decide.

¹ Harvard Business School Working Knowledge, "What an Executive Coach Can Do for You," by Paul Michelman, June 13, 2005.

² Boston Sunday Globe, "Executive coaching viewed as bargain," by Diane E. Lewis, August 22, 2004

³ Public Personnel Management, "Executive coaching as a transfer of training tool: Effects on productivity in a public agency," by Gerald Olivero, K. Denise Bane, Richard E. Kopelman, Winter 1997.

⁴ Metrix Global LLC, www.metrixglobal.net, "Executive Briefing: Case Study on the Return on Investment of Executive Coaching," prepared by Merrill C. Anderson, Ph.D., November 2, 2001.

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Mickey Parsons is founder of Parsons Associates Coaching, where he and his colleagues provide coaching services for professionals, business leaders and entrepreneurs. Mickey's background includes extensive experience in counseling, education and human resources, and more than 15 years' experience managing and leading business organizations. He holds a master's degree in educational psychology and numerous professional credentials, including: Professional Certified Coach, Certified Professional Behavior Analyst and Certified Employee Assistance Professional.

Mickey has served as coach, consultant and trainer for more than 50 companies, including Atlanta Journal Constitution, American Express, AXA Financial Advisors, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Cox Newspapers, Olan Mills Studios, Brach Candy Company, Unum Provident, Bank of America, Lennar/USA Homes, McKee Foods – The "Little Debbie" Corporation, McDonalds Corporation, Home Shopping Network, and the New York Times

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