

5 Tips for Choosing an Executive Coach

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Should YOU get a coach? The executive who wants to further develop her leadership, improve her job performance, or deepen her personal satisfaction has a powerful ally in a coach. Organizations also benefit from coaching services. The quality of training and experience of coaches can vary, so consider several factors when making a selection.

- 1. See coaching as a positive partnership.** Executive coaching does not imply that the individual needs to be repaired. A coach is a true partner who guides you toward positive actions. Typically, executive coaching is short-term (three to six months) – but in about 10% of cases, a year or more.
- 2. Check several resources for coaches.** If your company has a contract for coaches, you'll want to determine their backgrounds and specialties. If you are looking for a coach on your own, word of mouth is powerful and your colleagues are likely to have recommendations. You can also go to organizations like The International Coach Federation (ICF) and check their lists.
- 3. Evaluate the experience and credentials of your prospective coach.** It is important to check on a coach's training, her/his coaching methods, and experience working with companies and executives. Never feel uncomfortable about asking for a coach's credentials and client outcomes – you are paying for a service.
- 4. Look for integrity.** The most important qualities of your coach are a total regard for you and truthfulness about the work. Good coaches should put your agenda first, not their own, and they do not over-promise results. They will challenge you to greatness and to take risks. Typically, your coach will give you options for how you work together (e.g., in-person or by phone) and for time and fee agreements. Coaches maintain strict confidentiality about the coaching client, even when working on behalf of an organization.
- 5. Trust the chemistry.** All skills being equal, the partnership boils down to the right fit between you and your coach: a matter of style, personality, background, and comfort level. Good coaches respect the importance of chemistry, so think about interviewing more than one person before choosing.