

# GET REAL

*Tactical Tools for Leaders*

## How to Choose a Professional Coach and/or Consultant

Thinking about hiring a professional coach? Need a consultant with specific areas of expertise? If you decide to explore this as a professional or personal development option, or to support your strategic plans, here are a few things you may want to consider:

- **Ask around.** Your colleagues may have feedback relating to consultants or coaches they have personally worked with or heard of.
- You may choose to **interview more than one candidate before making any commitments.** Most candidates will (should) be willing to meet with you free of charge for at least an hour, if not more, to discuss your needs and share details about their services and experience. An experienced consultant or coach realizes that they may not be the perfect match for every person or need. Also keep in mind that in today's environment, it's not unusual for individuals to hire professionals remotely, where communications are done by phone and email.

• **Ask for client referrals — and then take the time to call them.** At the very least ask for testimonials. You'll be making a significant investment, financially and personally. Learn as much as you can about the candidate's integrity and successes. Even in light of confidentiality, there are generally a few clients who offer to serve as referrals or who may have already offered written testimonials.

• **Feel free to ask for the proposed coaching/consulting plan in writing.** Your candidate should have no problem documenting his/her understanding of your immediate goals and desired outcomes, as well as preliminary recommendations for an assessment and a coaching/consulting plan. The proposal should also include estimated timelines and costs.

• **After meeting with a candidate, ask yourself these questions —**

- *Is this someone I can see myself looking to for advice?*
- *Is this someone who I believe won't hesitate to challenge me when I may need it?*
- *Does this person's areas of expertise, best match my current needs?*
- *Do I get a sense of the candidate's willingness to be flexible?*
- *Do our life and work philosophies seem to be aligned?*
- *Do I feel there is a comfortable yet professionally stimulating chemistry between us?*

**If you've followed these guidelines and answered yes to all of the above questions, you're prepared to make your choice.** Once you do, get ready for what should be one of the most rewarding professional and personal investments of your life.

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*Do you have a specific question relating to an accountability challenge you're experiencing currently? Email me and I'll reply to you on the next business day, with a complimentary response.*

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