

Difference Between a Coach and Consultant

By Donna Rawady

In today's business environment coaching and consulting are common practices. But what's the difference between the two?

Coaching refers to the act and art of helping someone discover their own untapped potential for growth and success. Effective coaches are great facilitators who ask probing and effective questions that engage the client to partner with the coach to explore the power behind the client's own knowledge, intuition, and capabilities.

In addition, coaching provides a process and framework for the self-initiated and a welcomed accountability towards one's own professional and/or personal development. A coach works one-on-one with a client over time to assess professional development goals and needs, and to provide consistent support if the client discovers and applies new strategies for success. This coach, however, if equipped, may take on a consulting role if a need for consulting or "telling" arises.

By definition, consulting refers to the act of providing recommendations, strategies or solutions based on the consultant's expert perspective. Unlike coaches, consultants are expected to tell the client what to do, and often deal with an immediate need or problem for which they have a high level of business experience.

They probe, listen, evaluate the situation, clarify the goal or problem, and advise the client on how to fix something or reach a goal. The consultant, however, may take on a coaching role while supporting the client as they implement recommended strategies.

The differences between coaching and consulting are clear. And if we're equipped to do both, the challenge may be to remind ourselves when it's important to ask and when it's important to tell.

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