



Taking *the Lead*

Executive Coaching Works, But is it for You?

Donna Rawady

If you haven't worked with an executive coach, you may have difficulty imagining exactly what an executive coach is. In fact, the definition of "coach" may differ based on who you're talking to. Some coaches will describe themselves as experts at probing—at facilitating your exploration of your own goals, without offering advice or counsel. There are others who, agreeing with and understanding the importance of their ability to help clients explore their own solutions, also offer consulting based on their business experience and leadership expertise.

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Let's assume as you read this article that having an executive coach—sometimes referred to as a professional coach—simply reflects the opportunity to work one-on-one with a professional, over a period of time, who seeks to understand your specific needs for development, exploration, and strategic change, in one or more areas that affect your work and life. Think of him or her as a personal trainer, helping you generate your own call to action to strengthen the professional or business area of your choice.

Although plenty of individuals swear by having an executive coach, and there are certainly plenty of coaches who are prepared to highlight the benefits, the most significant question that you may be asking yourself is—Is it for me? Since it would be impossible to represent the multitude of coaching applications for professionals in all walks of business, here, the following considerations may be helpful to you as you ask—Is executive coaching for me or is it at least worth exploring?

- Every leader, at one time or another has his or her doubts or insecurities, and there may be risks involved in showing doubts or emotions to those

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you work with and/or lead. If you're working with a trusted coach, you should feel free to let your hair down and share your true concerns. A strong coaching relationship provides a safe, confidential environment for the exploration of your thoughts, strategies and plans, and projected outcomes, with an understanding that creative exploration generates stronger decision making and action.

- If you were to work with a coach, the focus would be on you—your successes, challenges, personal and organizational goals and objectives, and your ease or difficulty in reaching them—which generally is a favored aspect of the coaching relationship, although it can be uncomfortable at times. The client who is willing to step up to the mirror will reap the most benefits from a coaching relationship.
- Leadership development opportunities for the executive are often based on the perspectives of subordinates and/or peers should the client welcome their input, and a coach may be an integral part of gathering those perspectives and helping the client respond to them. A good coach is skilled at helping you seek the truth and won't be afraid to reflect it back to you. Exploring how your team can improve is synonymous with exploring how you can improve. So if you're not prepared, for any reason, to acknowledge the truth and explore your own contribution to the current and future dynamics of your team,

it's not a good time to seek out a coach.

- It's not unusual for executives to feel isolated in their leadership roles. You may sometimes find yourself wishing you had someone with applicable expertise to brainstorm or strategize with about a business decision, or a reorganization you're considering, or a delicate discussion you're preparing for with a difficult direct report. Discussions with a coach offer an objective professional perspective—another brain—that some find invaluable.
- Most importantly, in order for executive coaching to work for you, you must have a desire, or feel a need, and be prepared to invest the time and consistent hard work that a successful coaching relationship will require.

If you are interested in exploring further, here are a few quick guidelines that may help you choose the right executive coach for you:

A BUSINESS SUCCESSION PLAN
THAT WORKS. . .



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and solutions for transitioning
the next generation of leaders,
while ensuring the financial
security of your retiring owners.**

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1. Ask around. Your colleagues may have feedback relating to executive coaches they have worked with or heard of.
2. Interview more than one candidate before making any commitments. Every coach is not a perfect fit for every client.
3. Be sure that you feel a professionally stimulating chemistry between you and your prospective coach and that you share similar philosophies.
4. Ask for client referrals and/or testimonials.
5. Feel free to ask for the proposed coaching/consulting plan in writing, including time lines and costs.

You may think you're a good candidate for a coaching relationship, or you may be sure that you're not. Either way you're probably right. **BSM**

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