

Choosing & Using an Executive Coach

1. Ask for referrals

Referrals work! Begin by asking people you trust if they know any well respected coaches. Your friends and colleagues have probably heard of someone you might connect with.

2. Trust your intuition

How do you feel when you talk to the coach? Do you feel comfortable and at ease?

3. Reflect

What would you like to get out of a coaching relationship?

What are your goals?

Are you at a crossroads in your life?

What are the biggest changes you want in your life right now?

What expectations do you have about coaching?

4. Prepare questions

Prior to meeting with a potential coach, draft some questions related to what you want to focus on in the relationship. How will you and the coach measure the success of the coaching relationship? What could you learn from this person?

5. Ask about qualifications and credentials

It's always a good idea to ask a potential coach about his or her qualifications and credentials. Most experienced coaches are certified by the International Coach Federation. Check out "Why Hire an ICF Credentialed Coach". Regardless of particular credentials, a prospective coach should be able to tell you what training and experience has prepared him or her to be a coach.

6. Get references

Your potential coach should have the names and contact information of people with whom he or she has worked successfully. Contact these people and ask them what the relationship has done for them.

7. Ask about coaching style and methods

Beware of coaches whose methodology and approach are described using the latest buzzwords and catchphrases ("I'm a holistic healer who uses macro and micro integral transformation to trend future openings and gaps"). A coaching model should be clear and direct.

8. Ask yourself, is it a match?

Does the coach's background, expertise, and experience match your needs? As an example, a coach whose primary area of expertise lies in entrepreneurship might not be as suitable if you're looking to advance your executive career within a multinational corporation.

9. Ask about fees, confidentiality, and policies

Coaches offer their services at widely varying rates, depending on experience level, geographic area, credentials and size of practice. Also, make sure you have a clear understanding about what is considered confidential and when.

10. Ask for a complimentary coaching session

If you have a comfortable feeling about the coach and about the potential benefits of working with him or her, ask for a free coaching session. Most coaches will offer a complimentary half-hour to one-hour session with a potential client. Although it's not exactly the same as a "regular" coaching session, it will give you an idea of what to expect and a sense of the coach's style.

When selecting a coach, remember that you will be part owner of the relationship. If at any point in the coaching relationship you feel that it's not working out the way you expected, talk to your coach. If nothing

results from your conversation, then you may want to look for another coach. The bottom line is that a coaching relationship must be the right fit for you.

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