

Some Frequently Asked Questions About Coaching

1. What is coaching?

Professional Coaching is a professional partnership between a qualified coach and an individual or team that supports the achievement of extraordinary results, based on goals set by the individual or team. Through the process of coaching, individuals focus on the skills and actions needed to successfully produce their personally relevant results. The individual or team chooses the focus of conversation, while the coach listens and contributes observations and questions as well as concepts and principles which can assist in generating possibilities and identifying actions. Through the coaching process the clarity that is needed to support the most effective actions is achieved. Coaching accelerates the individual's or team's progress by providing greater focus and awareness of possibilities leading to more effective choices. Coaching concentrates on where individuals are now and what they are willing to do to get where they want to be in the future. ICF member coaches recognize that results are a matter of the individual's or team's intentions, choices and actions, supported by the coach's efforts and application of coaching skills, approaches and methods.

2. What are the benefits of coaching?

Individuals who engage in a coaching relationship can expect to experience fresh perspectives on personal challenges and opportunities, enhanced thinking and decision making skills, enhanced interpersonal effectiveness, and increased confidence in carrying out their chosen work and life roles. Consistent with a commitment to enhancing their personal effectiveness, they can also expect to see appreciable results in the areas of productivity, personal satisfaction with life and work, and the achievement of personally relevant goals.

3. How can you determine if coaching is right for you?

To determine if you could benefit from coaching, start by summarizing what you would expect to accomplish in coaching. When someone has a fairly clear idea of the desired outcome, a coaching partnership can be a useful tool for developing a strategy for how to achieve that outcome with greater ease.

Since coaching is a partnership, also ask yourself if you find it valuable to collaborate, to have another viewpoint and to be asked to consider new perspectives. Also, ask yourself if you are ready to devote the time and the energy to making real changes in your work or life. If the answer to these questions is yes, then coaching may be a beneficial way for you to grow and develop.

4. What are some typical reasons someone might work with a coach?

There are many reasons that an individual or team might choose to work with a coach, including but not limited to the following:

- There is something at stake (a challenge, stretch goal or opportunity), and it is urgent, compelling or exciting or all of the above
- There is a gap in knowledge, skills, confidence, or resources
- A big stretch is being asked or required, and it is time sensitive

- There is a desire to accelerate results
- There is a need for a course correction in work or life due to a setback
- An individual has a style of relating that is ineffective or is not supporting the achievement of one's personally relevant goals
- There is a lack of clarity, and there are choices to be made
- The individual is extremely successful, and success has started to become problematic
- Work and life are out of balance, and this is creating unwanted consequences
- One has not identified his or her core strengths and how best to leverage them
- The individual desires work and life to be simpler, less complicated
- There is a need and a desire to better organized and more self-managing

5. What has caused the tremendous growth in the coaching industry?

Coaching has grown significantly for many reasons. Generally the world has changed a lot, and coaching is a useful tool to deal with many of those changes. For example, coaching is a great tool for today's challenging job market. There is more job transition, more self-employment and small business. Some of the real life factors include:

- Rapid changes in the external business environment
- Downsizing, restructuring, mergers and other organizational changes have radically altered what has been termed the "traditional employment contract"—companies can no longer achieve results using traditional management approaches
- There is a growing shortage of talented employees in certain industries—to attract and retain top talent, companies must commit to investing in individuals' development
- There is a widening disparity between what managers were trained to do and what their jobs now require them to do in order to meet increasing demands for competitive results
- There is unrest on the part of many employees and leaders in many companies—people are wrestling with fears around job insecurity and increased workplace pressures to perform at higher levels than ever before.
- Companies must develop inclusive, collaborative work environments, in order to achieve strategic business goals, and to maintain high levels of customer satisfaction

In addition, individuals who have experienced the excellent results of coaching are talking to more people about coaching. In short, coaching helps people focus on what matters most to them in life: business and personal. People today are more open to the idea of being in charge of their own lives. Coaching helps people do just that; so the industry continues to grow.

6. What should someone look for when selecting a coach?

The most important thing to look for in selecting a coach is someone with whom you feel you can easily relate create and the most powerful partnership. Here are some questions you may want to ask prospective coaches:

- What is your coaching experience? (number of individuals coaches, years of experience, types of situations)
- What is your coach specific training? Do you hold an ICF Credential, or are you enrolled in an ICF Accredited Training Program?
- What is your coaching specialty or client areas you most often work in?
- What specialized skills or experience do you bring to your coaching?

- What is your philosophy about coaching?
- What is your specific process for coaching? (how sessions are conducted, frequency, etc.)
- What are some coaching success stories? (specific examples of individuals who have done well and examples of how you have added value)

7. How long does a coach work with an individual?

The length of a coaching partnership varies depending on the individual's or team's needs and preferences. For certain types of focused coaching, 3 to 6 months of working with a coach may work. For other types of coaching, people may find it beneficial to work with a coach for a longer period. Factors that may impact the length of time include: the types of goals, the ways individuals or teams like to work, the frequency of coaching meetings, and financial resources available to support coaching.

8. How do you ensure a compatible partnership?

Overall, be prepared to design the coaching partnership with the coach. For example, think of a strong partnership that you currently have in your work or life. Look at how you built that relationship and what is important to you about partnership. You will want to build those same things into a coaching relationship. Here are a few other tips:

- Have a personal interview with one or more coaches to determine "what feels right" in terms of the chemistry. Coaches are accustomed to being interviewed, and there is generally no charge for an introductory conversation of this type
- Look for stylistic similarities and differences between the coach and you and how these might support your growth as an individual or the growth of your team
- Discuss your goals for coaching within the context of the coach's specialty or the coach's preferred way of working with a individual or team
- Talk with the coach about what to do if you ever feel things are not going well; make some agreements up front on how to handle questions or problems
- Remember that coaching is a partnership, so be assertive about talking with the coach about anything that is of concern at any time

9. How can the success of the coaching process be measured?

Measurement may be thought of in two distinct ways. First, there are the **external indicators** of performance: measures which can be seen and measured in the individual's or team's environment. Second, there are **internal indicators** of success: measures which are inherent within the individual or team members being coached and can be measured by the individual or team being coached with the support of the coach. Ideally, both external and internal metrics are incorporated.

Examples of external measures include achievement of coaching goals established at the outset of the coaching relationship, increased income/revenue, obtaining a promotion, performance feedback which is obtained from a sample of the individual's constituents (e.g., direct reports, colleagues, customers, boss, the manager him/herself), personal and/or business performance data (e.g., productivity, efficiency measures). The external measures selected should ideally be things the individual is already measuring and are things the individual has some ability to directly influence.

Examples of internal measures include self-scoring/self-validating assessments that can be administered initially and at regular intervals in the coaching process, changes in

the individual's self-awareness and awareness of others, shifts in thinking which inform more effective actions, and shifts in one's emotional state which inspire confidence.