

FACT SHEET ABOUT COACHING¹

WHAT IS COACHING?

Though there are many different kinds of professional coaching, there are two major categories—personal coaching and business coaching. Personal coaching, also known as life coaching, is commonly designed to help people accomplish their personal goals, make life and work transitions, and grow personally. Business coaching, also referred to as executive coaching, leadership coaching, corporate coaching, team coaching, and management coaching, is used to help individuals and organizations identify and achieve their professional and business goals. Though both personal and business coaching may use similar approaches and techniques, they differ primarily in the populations served and in the kind of problems most commonly encountered.

WHAT IS EXECUTIVE COACHING AND LEADERSHIP COACHING?

Executive and leadership coaching is a one-on-one interactive relationship between a coach and a client. The executive client has a position of leadership, ownership, or management in an organization or business. The focus of the coaching process may be to help the leader improve organizational performance, to develop as a leader or manager, and to successfully transition to greater or different responsibilities. Leadership coaching helps leaders address their dilemmas, harness their deepest values, and achieve results for their organization. The coach helps the client achieve his or her goals, dreams, visions, and plans faster than could be accomplished otherwise.

Coaching provides a support structure for goal setting, problem solving, and personal and professional transformation. Leadership coaching is for individuals who are seriously committed to self improvement and who are motivated and prepared to invest the time, energy, and financial resources necessary to develop themselves, foster growth of their staff, develop their organizations, and build their companies.

Many leaders in organizations lack access to the kind of honest feedback provided by a coach. For some, the most beneficial aspect of being coached is having someone who is deeply interested in the leader's professional development but who is completely detached from the leader's personal and professional relationships. A leadership coach serves as a sounding board. If a hands-on leader loses sight of the bigger picture while attending to the details, the coach continually brings a fresh point of view, asking powerful questions that can transform the leader's perspective. The coach knows the client and the client's business and maintains a steady focus on the client's objectives and best interests.

HOW IS COACHING DIFFERENT FROM OTHER FIELDS LIKE CONSULTING, MENTORING, MANAGING, TRAINING OR PSYCHOTHERAPY?

Consulting

Consultants—the “sage on stage”—have expertise and are hired to provide direct answers to specific problems. Coaches—the “guide on the side”—are hired as a partner to the client and their job is to ask the right questions. In coaching, the assessment phase is only the beginning of the relationship. Unlike the consultant, the coach walks along beside the client as the client implements his or her plan.

Coaches are experts in the coaching process. A particular coach may or may not have specific knowledge of a given subject area or industry. Where coaches have expertise in other areas, they may use it to facilitate the coaching process. Unlike a consultant, however, the coach does not use this particular expertise to diagnose, direct, or design solutions for the client. In coaching, the client—not the coach—is the expert in his or her own work and personal life.

The outcome, or “deliverable,” of many consulting engagements is a report with recommendations. When the report is completed, so is the consulting relationship. The product of coaching is the relationship itself. Any contribution the coach makes to the client’s desired outcome is through the on-going interaction with the client. Although the coach may use information provided by the client to promote awareness and choice of action, the information is not used to evaluate performance or produce reports for anyone but the person being coached.

Mentoring

There are three major ways mentoring differs from coaching:

- 1) Mentoring is usually free. Coaching is not.
- 2) Mentoring is typically done by a superior, manager, or boss on an informal or as needed basis. Coaching, done by a professional outside of the organization, is a formal structured relationship.
- 3) Mentoring relationships do not set up specific goals and measurable results. Coaching relationships do.

Managing

A manager has a great deal of authority over the employee. A coach has none. A manager can require the employee to comply with directives or risk being fired. The coaching relationship is a partnership of equals. While a manager may have the employee’s best interest at heart, there is no guarantee that this is the case. Coaches have no hidden agendas and their primary concern is the welfare of their client. The coaching relationship is built on a mutual foundation of trust and partnership.

Training or Teaching

Typically, training is defined by holding an event and by the transmission of knowledge. Coaching focuses on developing a relationship, not delivering an event. While there may be some exchange of knowledge in a coaching relationship, the primary purpose is to help the client identify and achieve his or her personal and professional goals. Most executives consider coaching to be *just in time* learning. Training is often *just in case*.

Counseling or Psychotherapy

Coaching is not psychotherapy. The primary differences between coaching and counseling or psychotherapy are:

The clients served. Psychotherapists generally help people from all age groups—from children and adolescents to the elderly. A coach works only with adults—entrepreneurs, business leaders, individuals who are part of an organization, or people personal or career transitions.

The process used. Many mental health professionals use a lengthy process of in-depth analysis in which they try to discover the root cause for a particular disorder. The coach and the client co-create a plan of action to help the client move forward in achieving his or her goals.

The mindset. In counseling, a client may be seen by the professional as broken, bruised, or in need of healing. In coaching, the client is seen as healthy, creative, resourceful, and whole.

Coordination of care. A coach may refer a coaching client to a psychotherapist if the coach and client feel this could be beneficial. Similarly, a psychotherapist may refer a therapy client to a coach if the client could benefit from coaching. Although coaching and psychotherapy may be used concurrently with a client, coaching is not a substitute for psychotherapeutic work.

The professional training. Most professional psychologists, therapists, and mental health counselors have extensive training in human relationships, diagnosis, psychopathology, and treatment methods, whereas most professional coaches, in addition to other training or knowledge they may possess, have training in the process of coaching. Some of the same skills used in psychotherapy may also be used in the coaching relationship, such as: listening and communication, problem analysis, forwarding the learning, goal setting and action plans, conflict resolution, and interpersonal skills. Leadership coaches also have direct and relevant leadership and management experience. They are intimately familiar with how to help executives, leaders, managers, and professionals achieve their personal goals, professional visions, and business objectives.

¹ Compiled by Janet Baldwin Anderson, Ph.D. Some information is adapted from Stephen Fairley's, *Getting Started in Personal and Executive Coaching* (Wiley, 2003) and from www.coachfederation.org.