

# Executive Coaching and Mentoring

... How it could provide the answers to those difficult problems

*Expert knowledge means success*

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**Note:** This publication has not been updated since it was last published. Some of the hyperlinks may have changed and may need updating. In addition, some of the information in this publication may be out of date.

## Introduction

For any number of reasons, chief executives and business managers often find it difficult to share their deepest thoughts, concerns and problems with even their closest business colleagues. Obstacles such as internal politics, secret strategies, security issues, inquisitive competitors and employees with their own agendas - can all conspire to inhibit confidential soul-searching discussions with peers.

There's an old saying: "It's lonely at the top." It's so true. Who can bosses turn to for advice and unbiased guidance?

The abilities to lead, to sell, to master change, and to build effective teams are the critical success factors in any business that hopes to thrive in today's chaotic marketplace.

Size no longer limits the challenges that a company faces - it's constant change and intense competition from across the street or across the ocean that's driving more and more organisations to seek new and more profitable ways to conduct their business.

The solution is often something called "Executive Coaching" - it helps people and companies create breakthroughs in the areas of performance, effectiveness, satisfaction and profits. An executive coaching programme is a cost-effective process developed to upgrade management skills and talents to better align individual operating style with the needs of senior managers.

See if it applies to you - for example, do you want to...

- Clear your mind so that you can focus on setting some objectives - and make the best choices and decisions possible for you and your company?
- Achieve more business and personal goals?
- Develop the skills to manage change and build positive interpersonal relationships?
- Do more through managing your time more effectively?
- Avoid messing up both your life at work and your personal relationships through maintaining a satisfying balance between your business and private life?

## The Pressures of Life and Work

New economy, new rules, and new century add up to a crazy, chaotic, and extremely challenging life for experienced as well as new executives. What assistance do they need to help them through the tangles, minefields, and successes of business today and tomorrow?

Today's organisations not only face "mass re-education" of front line employees—their senior leaders need continuing education on how to lead in the future. Unfortunately, senior leaders are hard to capture as a group and are better helped through personal coaching.

### Key Questions

- Does your business (and its employees) know where it's going?
- Is there a vision?
- Are the business strategies aligned with the vision?
- Have you focused on potential scenarios which could make your business a raving success or disastrous failure?
- Will your business plan be looked upon favourably by banks, investors, and industry analysts?
- Can your business make the transition into other areas with a strong infrastructure, concise plan, and other recipes for success?

## Why Coaching?

Coaching isn't new. Switch on your television or turn to the sports pages in your daily newspaper and you'll find any number of success stories. The value of coaching to develop excellence in sports and artistic performance is well recognised. Equally, it can apply in the business world.

At senior levels, occasions for coaching generally fall into the following categories:

- Introducing new executives into a different or transforming culture.
- Personal development of executives with high potential through improving communication and management style.
- Business coaching or mentoring for executives with new responsibilities or those facing significant challenges.



- Remedial work with talented executives who are lacking communication, business or interpersonal skills.
- Counselling to assist executives with career development issues or to help executives successfully exit from an organisation during periods of downsizing or corporate restructuring.

Executives, like professional athletes, perform under pressure as team members, team leaders and as individual contributors. Executive coaching bypasses the time wasting vagueness of seminars and roundtable discussions to work directly on the unique challenges each individual executive confronts.

## Who Can It Apply To?

Executive coaching and mentoring can apply equally to:

- Both large and small organisations.
- Sole-traders, partnerships and companies.
- Managing partners in law firms and practice managers in other professional firms.
- Chief executives, leaders, senior managers and line managers.

## Why Coaching?

It's a rare person who would say that there are no occasions when help is needed. Whether because of personal issues, new business challenges or changing expectations - at these times a coach can quickly help develop the personal resources needed to succeed.

Executive coaching is key when:

- There is something truly important you are ready to accomplish.
- If you are like most successful executives, there is some goal, some vision of the future, to which you are powerfully committed and have not yet achieved.
- You may have great clarity about the vision or goal, but lack a clear path to get there. Or, you may think you know how to get there, yet for some reason, are not doing what needs to be done.
- Possibly the goal or vision remains hidden from you, and needs to be revealed.

- Sometimes you simply need someone to help keep you honest and accountable.

Whichever description fits you and your company best, the question stands: What would you commit to achieving, right now, if you knew you could not fail? What resources and effort would you have to put into it, and what would it be worth to you and the people with whom you interact?

Coaching provides the tools for an individual to maximise their own performance - it's a process of learning rather than teaching the organisational dynamics of which are:

- Direction
- Decision-making
- Market Positioning
- Communications
- Structure
- Execution
- Adaptability

## What's "Mentoring"?

Strictly speaking, mentoring is a form of management training in which a junior manager gains access to a senior manager from whom they can derive advice and guidance. But often, mentoring on this basis isn't possible - for example, where:

- For junior managers, a suitable mentor can't be found at work because of internal politics or the particular hierarchical structure of the organisation.
- For the most senior managers (principally the chief executive), there's nobody "above" to whom reference may be made.

In reality, coaching and mentoring are one and the same thing - both stimulate and manage the individual growth necessary to deliver business performance beyond present levels and beliefs of what is possible by helping executives to:

- Build a strong personal foundation.
- Increase their belief and confidence in their personal effectiveness.
- Recognise the importance of their role in the business's success.
- Develop their personal vision and uncover their value priorities.
- Increase their commitment to and motivation towards the organisation's vision.
- Determine appropriate goals, strategies, tactics and action plans.

- Enhance their management, leadership and interpersonal skills.
- Keep focused on the outcomes they value.
- Move beyond the obstacles that appear to be in the way to stop them.

## Executive Coaching Explained

Executive coaching helps to produce significant and lasting results in your business and career. Sessions are typically weekly 60-minute phone calls or meetings, with ad-hoc conversations and email communications as required, plus occasional additional face-to-face meetings if mutually convenient. You immediately focus your priorities and clarify your goals - then you're ready to go about realising them.

You may want to tackle issues of strategy, priority and time management, focus, and implementation, along with particular marketing, research and development, and human resource details. Sometimes the answers come simply by having an objective listener.

The coaching programme comprises:

- Initial meeting to define objectives and agree number of sessions.
- Usually we agree on six sessions or less. These can be spread over a number of weeks.

Executive coaching will benefit you if:

- You feel the need to personally grow and develop (you want to improve yourself).
- You want to use your whole person with skill and effectiveness.
- You want to become more confident in your ability to act ethically at work.
- You want to develop a stronger and more authentic identity.
- You are interested in the psychology of things through understanding the intelligence and insight found in intuition and emotions.
- You want to learn how to engage in intuitive and personal introspection.
- You are interested in pursuing deeper self-inquiry.
- You want to clarify your core values and principles and strengthen your ability and resolve to apply them.
- You wish to re-awaken your sense of purpose at work.

- You wish to become more shrewd, pragmatic, and politically astute.

Executive coaching is effective because of three unique aspects:

1. **Synergy** - The client and the Coach become a team, focusing on the client's goals and needs therefore accomplishing more than the client would alone.
2. **Structure** - With a Coach, a client takes action, thinks bigger, and gets the job done, thanks to the accountability the Coach provides. This is reinforced by the saying that the promises we make to ourselves are the easiest ones to break but when we make a promise to someone else, such as a coach, there's a greater chance that the promise will be kept.
3. **Expertise** - The Coach motivates the client to make more money, make better decisions, set the best goals, and restructure their professional and personal lives for maximum productivity.

In helping executives to develop themselves, executive coaching focuses on:

- **Setting priorities for the business**
  - through recognising the existence, understanding and resolution of critical issues, and at the same time aligning one's personal and corporate strategies.
- **Gaining a balanced perspective**
  - by identifying the managerial, leadership and technical strengths and limitations, and then stretching the horizons to gain new knowledge.
- **Improving personal effectiveness**
  - by facing up to and dealing with personal issues and then integrating personal and work value systems.
- **Improving thinking skills**
  - by analysing work situations and learning to nurture creative problem-solving.
- **Developing interpersonal skills**
  - by understanding and accepting individual differences and encouraging challenging yet open and supportive communication.
- **Coping with ambiguity**
  - creating personal innovation and through building an action orientation by promoting independent and responsible behaviour, as well as the development of personal confidence.

## Who Benefits?

- **Executives and Professionals** - by helping them develop the skills and tools they need to be professionally fulfilled and at the same time helping them to develop a life that encompasses the elements of balance.
- **Corporate Teams** – by helping them develop the skills and tools they need to be a cohesive, collaborative and synergistic machine, radically shifting the relationship and culture process, and placing a new emphasis on learning and harnessing individual and collective creativity.

Executive coaching is an investment for the organisation and it pays dividends in organisational as well as personal effectiveness. The coach brings an objective point of view, excellent listening and analysis to redirect or reinforce individual expectations and initiatives. In-depth discussions lead to actionable agendas, often including coaching prior to and following critical meetings or presentations.

Coaching leaders can create fundamental, sustainable change in effectiveness, developing enormous individual potential while retaining valuable talents and knowledge within the organisation.

Executive coaching is for people who are ready, able and willing to make positive changes in their lives: people who want more than just "putting up with" things in their lives – people who want to take charge of their lives and improve in every way:

- If you are a looking to identify your life and work goals and achieve them more easily, maximise your time, energy and talent, focus on targets that are important to you, change careers or develop strategies that enable your success, enhance your communication style.
- If you are an Executive or Professional looking to empower your staff, restructure your department, improve your conflict resolution skills, motivate yourself and those around you, broaden your skill base, and make an increased contribution to your firm's bottom line.

Effective executive coaching and management coaching leads to improved performance in the organisation, resulting in greater profits and improved shareholder value. It's a way in which an individual can fast track their career and improve their quality of life - improving performance through developing specific skills. These

may include leadership, adaptability, renewal, relationships and customer management.

It's of high value to organisations that are anticipating or undertaking organisational and cultural change, strategic reviews, and leadership planning.

The key to successful change in an organisation lies in a company-wide commitment to ongoing learning and improvement. Organisational enhancement comes from complete management support and encouragement to bring out the talent in each employee. It results in the power of informed people and teams to make educated changes, resulting in streamlined processes and greater profitability.

## Next Steps

Coaching normally starts with a "lets-get-to-know-each-other" meeting. Your coach wants to hear about your goals, needs and problems and you want to get comfortable with the coach. During this meeting, both parties agree a list of objectives and a strategy to achieve them.

In essence, a coaching session can cover almost anything you want from clarifying your objectives and setting challenging yet achievable goals - to developing assertiveness, managing stress and handling the impact of change. It can help you to learn how to motivate yourself most effectively. Your confidence can rise so that you can conquer phobias and break through barriers of limitation. Coaching can support you as you overcome procrastination and take projects to completion through prioritising what needs to be done. It helps in making key decisions and designing/developing strategies and action plans along the way as well as facing up to hard decisions and handling difficult situations. The process of coaching can also help in managing relationships between senior and middle management.

If you want to be better at spotting and maximising business opportunities and want to make more effective decisions and achieve challenging objectives, coaching might provide the solution you've been looking for.

## Further Information

This guide is for general interest - it is always essential to take advice on specific issues. We believe that the facts are correct as at the date of publication, but there may be certain errors and omissions for which we cannot be responsible.

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