

12 Considerations when Selecting an Executive Coach

[With Rating Form]

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The process of selecting an executive coach should be no different than the process you use to select any individual contributor for a professional position, matching the applicant's qualifications and experience with your business requirements. The following considerations are intended to provide a framework for that process.

Experience in Coaching

Specific Considerations: What is experience in the client's industry, level in the organization, and function? How many years in the coaching field? Is coaching a primary or secondary career focus?

Relevance: Coaching, as much an art as a science, is learned through practice. A good coach has lots of it. A bad coach will not be able to consistently find clients. The more experience a coach has with a particular level, industry or function, the easier it will be to gain credibility with the client and the less time it will take to "get up to speed" in understanding the client's environment.

Experience in Business

Specific Considerations: What is general knowledge level of how business works? What sorts of practical experience with business issues and responsibilities? Is there an understanding of business culture and politics?

Relevance: A coach's focus is on the individual and not on the business. That being said, actual experience making decisions as a business person or a consultant will enhance credibility and also allow the coach to understand the individual's issues in a business context.

Focus of Practice

Specific Considerations: Does the individual have a specific coaching focus, or is he/she a "Jack/Jill of all trades." What is the rationale for that focus?

Relevance: Coaching skills are very transferable to varied coaching environments. However, a coach who has demonstrated commitment to a specific industry, profession or problem set is more likely to be proficient dealing with those specific situations.

Certifications

Specific Considerations: Has the coach been accredited from the International Coach Federation (ICF) or another respected certification body?

Relevance: Accreditation ensures a certain level of experience and a certain level of understanding of the concepts, issues and skill sets related to the coaching profession. However, many excellent and experienced coaches have never applied for accreditation because

they haven't felt a need to do so. Likewise, receiving accreditation by no means ensures the coach has the ability to deal with your specific needs.

Education and Training

Specific Considerations: Has the coach received education in fields relevant to coaching? Does he/she have significant training in respected coaching training programs?

Relevance: There are a few coaches, but not many, who have come up through the “school of hard knocks” without any relevant formal training. Coach-specific training in concepts, issues and skills related to coaching is generally important. Formal training in related areas can also be useful, for example: Psychology, social sciences, measurement and others that provide insight into understanding how people think, make decisions and act.

Demonstrated Successes & Referrals

Specific Considerations: Are referrals available from past clients or from other companies who have used the coach's services? Is the coach able to describe credible case studies?

Relevance: Because it is simply very difficult to assess a coach's skills without experiencing or observing the coach over a long period of time, a strong indicator is success with previous clients with similar backgrounds or environments. At the same time, it needs to be recognized that almost every professional, no matter how skilled or unskilled, will have someone they have served who has been happy with them—so multiple perspectives are valuable.

A Results Orientation

Specific Considerations: What defines success? How are goals established with the client? How is progress measured? How can you tell the coaching engagement is finished? What are the minimum/maximum lengths of typical engagements?

Relevance: One of the worst things a coach can do is to keep a client entertained for multiple months without achieving anything but having the client enjoy the experience. In order to obtain a decent ROI on the investment of company and personal resources, it is essential that all involved are clear on what outcomes are desired from the experience. Certainly these outcomes will be further defined and redefined during the coaching engagement, but the key is to do this consciously. A good coach understands and can articulate these issues.

A well articulated approach

Specific Considerations: What is a typical process? Which aspects are variable? Which consistently included? Is the coach able to clearly articulate the process?

Relevance: A coach needs to know what he/she is doing and how—and be able to articulate it. At the same time, a “one size fits all” mentality can be counterproductive. A good coach can outline an overall process and explain how that process is modified to meet the needs of a specific client.

Assessment Methods

Specific Considerations: How is information collected about the client and his/her environment? How/when are formal assessment instruments used? How does the coach choose which to use?

Relevance: Assessment is essential, and the client must be involved in the process of analysis. Formal instruments can be very useful, but they can also be easily misused and are not always appropriate. Here also, a “one size fits all” mentality can be counterproductive. Often the best form of assessment is through focused conversations with the client. It is important that the coach have a variety of techniques to choose from and can articulate a rationale for when and how to use them.

Coach/Consultant Balance

Specific Considerations: Can the coach articulate the difference between coaching and consulting? Where is the line drawn? How does the coach decide when to give direct advice?

Relevance: A coach helps an individual decide on goals and strategies to achieve those goals, and provides support in their achievement. A consultant solves problems for the client and offers advice. There is a gray line between these two approaches. However, the goal of coaching is to enable the client to achieve what he/she desires, not for the coach to achieve it for them.

Trust and Confidentiality

Specific Considerations: Can this person be a trusted advisor? Does he/she inspire trust? Is the coach involved in this business primarily to help others to grow or simply to make a living?

Relevance: Coaching is a profession that requires a high degree of confidentiality and trust—similar in this way to the mental health professional or other medical professionals. It also requires a genuine commitment to the client. Coaching cannot be successful without this.

Match with Client

Specific Considerations: Will the client feel comfortable with this individual and find him/her credible? Is there a fit with personal style, style of thinking, sense of humor? Does it “feel right?”

Relevance: If a client doesn't feel the match with a coach is a good one, it is simply not a good one. The client's confidence and comfort level with the coach are essential. That being said, initial brief impressions are not reliable and the client should be encouraged to make a choice among potential coaches by having an extended interview and/or trial session with them.

Executive Coach Selection Rating Form (page 1 of 2)

Candidate:

Reviewer:

Criteria	Relevance of Criterion H-M-L	Coach Rating 1-5	Comment
Experience in Coaching			
Client Industry			
Client level in the organization			
Client functional area			
Years in coaching			
Primary career focus			
Experience in Business			
General knowledge			
Practical experience			
Culture & politics			
Focus of Practice			
Specific coaching focus			
Rationale for that focus			
Certifications			
Accredited			
Accrediting body			
Education and Training			
Hours of coaching training programs			
Recency			
Education in related fields			
Demonstrated Successes			
Client referrals			
Corporate referrals			
Credible case studies			

Executive Coach Selection Rating Form (page 2 of 2)

Candidate:

Reviewer:

A Results Orientation			
Definition of success			
Measurement of progress			
A focus on completion			
Lengths of engagements			
A well articulated approach			
Defined process			
Flexibility			
Assessment Methods			
Formal instruments			
Interviews/Observations			
Through client interaction			
Coach/Consultant Balance			
Articulates the difference			
Draws the line appropriately			
Trust and Confidentiality			
Trusted advisor			
Focus on client or self			
Match with Client			
Comfort level			
Credibility			
Personal style			
Sense of humor			
Gut feel			

Overall Comments

___ **Accept**

___ **Consider**

___ **Reject**