



Choosing the Right Coach for You

7 Key Questions to Ask for Your Success

So you're thinking about hiring a coach? As you will soon discover, it can be a satisfying and rewarding experience. Coaching has been proven to boost performance and produce positive results. More and more individuals and corporations are hiring coaches to take advantage of its many valuable benefits.

How do you get started? And where do you find the best coach for you? The industry offers an array of coaching specializations suited to various needs, backgrounds and developmental goals. By understanding your own objectives, clarifying industry standards and asking the right questions, you can choose the coach who is perfect for you.

Here are the most important points to consider:

1. How do I identify the type of coach that's right for me?

There are several major categories of coaches. Before beginning your search, determine what type of coach will best meet your current needs.

Check one of the following statements that represent your interests:

- I want a coach who focuses on life goals, relationships, fitness and health, getting organized and reducing stress.
- I want a coach who helps me achieve my larger career objectives, helps me see a clear career path and offers me the tools to help me reach my career goals.
- I want a coach who can work with life issues and career goals while focusing on my job performance and leadership. This coach will help me communicate more effectively and improve team performance to achieve better results.

If you checked box 1, a *life coach* is probably best suited to your needs. If box 2, a *career coach*. And if box 3, a *leadership or executive coach*.

2. What experience should I look for in a coach?

Look for a coach who has achieved results for clients like you. Listen for stories about individuals and organizations that relate to where you have been and where you want to go. Those with a similar professional background may provide easy connection and rapport; however this is only one of several important factors. Ask the prospective coach for examples such as:

- What specific results have your clients achieved?
- Which past clients relate most to my current situation?
- What business and leadership challenges have your clients faced and how were they overcome?

3. How important is formal coach training and certification?

It's important. Anyone can claim to be a coach. Make sure to look for a trained and credentialed coach who has met stringent training and experience requirements. Organizations like the International Coach Federation and the Worldwide Association of Business Coaches set the standards for professional coaching and are dedicated to the integrity of the coaching profession. Ask the coach:

- What educational and leadership experiences prepared you to be a coach?
- What coach certification do you hold?
- What have you learned through your experiences as a coach in the past year?

4. Should I consider a coach's personal values and leadership philosophy in this decision?

Absolutely. After all, good coaches often serve as role models and mentors -- as well as consultants. They must be people we can respect and admire for their professional and personal accomplishments. Here are some general statements you should be able to make about your coach:

- My coach is focused entirely on me and my goals and is not caught up in pushing his or her own agenda in the engagement.
- My coach and I have similar personal values and are aligned on our definition of "success".
- The coach's approach, his or her models and methodologies, make sense to me.

5. Is there a certain structure of engagement that successful coaches use?

No. Each coach will prefer certain methods and models and will choose those best suited to your needs. While there are many styles in coaching, a successful engagement will evoke new possibilities in you that lead to tangible results. Ask a coach:

- How will you structure the engagement in terms of how often we meet and how much contact we have?
- What kind of reading, writing and other homework will you expect from me?
- What tools will you use to make your initial assessments and measure my progress?

6. Should I ask for references?

Certainly. Coaches should be eager to share results they have achieved for past clients. Outstanding coaches have a reputation for integrity, authenticity, compassion... and once again, getting results. Substantiate past client information through:

- Specific success stories the coach can tell about past work.
- Testimonials that the coach can share written by past clients.
- References that you contact directly.

7. How important is “good chemistry” in my coaching relationship?

A sense of trust and easy rapport is very important in a relationship as intimate as this one. Here’s a good rule of thumb: if you leave your initial meeting wanting more, you are on the right track. Following your initial meeting with a prospective coach, ask yourself if you can make these statements:

- I felt the coach was relating to me and that there was a sense of rapport.
- I felt a growing trust throughout the meeting.
- I felt like I could be myself in the conversation.

Quick List Summary: Your Question Checklist

To help you get started in the process, use this checklist to guide you.

Ask a prospective coach the following:

- What specific results have your clients achieved, personally and for their organizations?
- Which past clients relate most to my current situation?
- What business and leadership challenges have your clients faced? And how were they overcome?
- What educational and leadership experiences prepared you for your career as a coach?
- What coach certification do you hold?
- What have you learned through your experiences as a coach in the past year?
- How will you structure the engagement? How often will we meet and how much contact will we have?
- What kind of reading, writing and other homework will you expect from me?
- What tools will you use to make your initial assessments and measure my progress?
- Are there references I can explore?

After the interview, ask yourself these questions:

- Was the coach focused entirely on me and my goals?
- Do we have similar personal values and are we aligned on a definition of “success”?
- Does the coach’s approach, their models and methodologies, make sense to me?
- Did I feel that the coach was relating to me and that there was a sense of rapport?
- Did I feel a growing trust throughout our first meeting?
- Did I feel like I could be myself in the conversation?

Choosing The Right Coach For You is an educational presentation written jointly by Maria van Hekken, President of Yes2Yes and Tom Lombardi, Senior Consultant with Growth River, LLC. Its purpose is to provide valuable insight about the role of coaching and useful techniques to guide you to find the right coach for your needs. It is part of **For Your Success**, an expanding series of collaborative coaching resources.

