

## Things to Think About When Selecting a Coach

A coach can help both you and your business to effectively launch the strategies and solutions that will keep you ahead in uncertain times. Finding the right coach, however, requires a critical examination of the factors that make a coach not only successful, but also effective for the goals you have set. Here are some of the factors to consider when choosing your coach.

### Certification

With any relationship that can greatly improve one's personal and financial well being; the first step should be to make certain of the professional's certification. You would do this when searching for a new physician or building contractor, and you must do this with a coach. Unfortunately, in today's market, anyone can open a coaching business, and many uncertified and inexperienced individuals, sensing the promise of potentially lucrative engagements, actively market themselves as coaches. To guard against this and to provide the highest quality of service to individuals and businesses, formal certifications and standards have been established for coaches.

The International Coach Federation is the world's largest and most respected organization involved in setting professional standards for coaching. ICF credentials individual coaches and accredits institutions that provide coaching education. ICF member coaches must subscribe to a professional code of ethics and are subject to a recurring Ethical Conduct Review process and ongoing continuing education.

To become certified, coaches must complete a course of study at an ICF-accredited institution, deliver professional coaching services for a minimum number of hours, and pass a rigorous coaching exam. More than 6,600 coaches hold one of three ICF credentials offered: Associate Certified Coach, Professional Certified Coach and Master Certified Coach.

### Experience

In addition to confirming professional certification, it is essential to assess a prospective coach's experience – both in the field of coaching and in related fields. Since coaches address both personal and professional growth, an ideal coach will offer both life experiences and a solid business background. Here are some potential questions to help you better understand a candidate's experience<sup>1</sup>:

- 1) How does the coach's business experience fit with your personal and business experience?
- 2) What methods will the coach recommend to help you determine what is important for personal and professional growth?
- 3) If the coach will use specific testing or assessment tools (e.g. Myers-Briggs, etc) in their engagement, how will the coach use that information?

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<sup>1</sup> Further exploration of this topic can be found in Wenroth Consulting's *How to Choose an Executive Coach* at <http://www.wenrothgroup.com/inthenews.html>.

- 4) Once goals have been established, how will the coach guide the sessions in order to help drive attainable progress?
- 5) What is their experience in handling the day-to-day demands of managing the operations of a business or organization?
- 6) What kinds of decision-making authority – such as hiring, managing budgets, financial and strategic planning - has the coach had?

### **Chemistry**

A successful coach will motivate, support and hold you accountable to important personal and professional goals. Furthermore, you may well need to share confidential and sensitive information with that person. For the coaching process to be effective, you will need to find a coach who has the compassion and intelligence to respect your comfort level.

In the case of one couple who contracted with Heart of Gold Coaching, seeking a coach was necessary for two people who were no longer on track toward the goals they had initially set for both themselves as individuals and as a couple. As medical professionals, the couple earned in the upper six figures, but also found themselves exhausted by the demands of their professions, as well as the demands of their two small children. One spouse was spending frivolously, while the other was attempting to be so frugal that personal needs were going by the wayside.

Knowing they needed to do it differently, they sought coaching to find a balance in their lives. First, they created a vision for their marriage. Next, they establish primary spending and savings goals, and the couple was able to pay down their debt and also create a fund for vacations and personal spending. Within a year, their debt had been reduced by \$69,000, they had taken a long-overdue family vacation, and both partners were taking better care of themselves and of each other. By creating their plan, they had gone from scarcity to prosperity.

Meeting with the coach is essential. When speaking with them, here are some things to ask yourself:

- 1) Does the coach seem authentic and straightforward in discussing their background and how they can assist you?
- 2) Does the coach appear to be a good listener - someone who is fully engaged and wants to build trust and rapport?
- 3) Does the coach ask powerful questions designed to help you reach your own answers?
- 4) Does the coach appear to have a strong level of ethics and respect for confidentiality?
- 5) Does the coach have a level of warmth and empathy that would make them pleasant to work with?
- 6) Would you feel comfortable working closely with this person on a path to significant personal and professional growth?

ICF offers several resources for finding a coach who can effectively assist you in personal and professional goal setting and help you to actualize strategies and solutions. Through its Member

Directory, ICF provides a searchable list of coaches, based on specific areas of interest. For more information, visit [www.coachfederation.org](http://www.coachfederation.org).

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Larry Gapinski is a professional coach, certified by the International Coach Federation as a Personal Certified Coach (PCC). Larry is the founder of Heart of Gold Life Coaching at [www.heartofgoldlifecoaching.com](http://www.heartofgoldlifecoaching.com).