

What to look for in a Coach

In its current state, coaching is at best cloudy, as to who is or what constitutes a professional coach. It seems the term is generic and often misunderstood as to what it can, or will, deliver. The expectation may be that a client will be taught new skills, receive business advice, financial advice, career advice, learn to live life more fully, be mentored, etc.

Yet for those who are defining the profession and those who are more versed in what coaching is and does, the following are some guidelines when considering a coaching relationship.

- A. Education: Preferably underpinned with a bachelor's degree with some graduate work in applied psychology, a professional coach has completed advanced coaching education by an ICF (International Coach Federation) accredited program and has been certified by the ICF. A minimum of 60 hours of coach training, mentoring, testing and coaching dyads for review and feedback.
- B. Experience: A professional coach should have experience in coaching, not necessarily in a particular industry or job. While they may not have specific industry experience, the experience should be associated with coaching practice and application to ensure a client centered approach. Industry experience can provide context and a depth of understanding, yet the coach must have the awareness not to bring their biases into the engagement – they're role is as a coach, not a consultant.
- C. Methodology: A professional coach has a clear methodology associated with the coaching process. From induction to close, understand their approach and alignment with your expectations.
- D. Chemistry: The connection between you and your coach should be comfortable. A coaching relationship is rather intimate in that trust is paramount and the ability and willingness to challenge and be challenged are necessary for growth.

Remember, a professional coach calls upon their training as a coach and their experience as a coach to facilitate the coaching process of establishing goals, understanding opportunities and barriers, and coaching toward your defined objectives.

An individual who represents themselves as a professional coach must have coach specific training, credentials, experience and a proven methodology; otherwise, while they may be able to offer value in some capacity, but they are not a professional coach.