

Do business owners really need executive coaching?

Executive coaching is as popular as personal training these days. Of course, not every business officer or executive may need such intensive instruction.

If you are getting done what you want to get done in a timely fashion, are able to sleep at night, are satisfied with your life, aren't stressed out, are enjoying your work life, are sufficiently challenged and are making enough money to be comfortable (we're not talking about greed here), then you probably don't need coaching. Are there such people? Absolutely! If you're one of those fortunate people, you can stop reading right now.

If, however, any one of these topics strikes a chord, hits you in the gut or capsizes your balance among business, personal and family life, you may be a candidate for executive coaching.

After all, the great leaders of history, including presidents, tycoons, kings, queens and prime ministers, all have had trusted advisors. Why not you?

Many of New Jersey's small business leaders often use executive coaching to achieve a major goal; implement a project; initiate and install major changes in a company or department; and train key employees. Executive coaching is a weapon for individual executives and businesses because it enables companies and individuals to move at

warp speed and to make strategic changes that outmaneuver the competition — whether the competition is an individual or another company.

Hiring an executive coach also can be cost efficient because the "coachee" is guided by an experienced professional (via telephone or in person), while the

"coachee" does most of the work. Sometimes the coach also is a management consultant, who can switch into a management consultant's role based on client needs. The secret benefit of having a personal business coach is that the coaching can be done without anyone else's knowledge.

Here are 12 questions to ask yourself and your potential coach *before* you hire one:

1. What are the specific goals (or problem areas) of your focus — or do you need help in defining the goals or issues?
2. Does the coach have the in-depth experience and the specific credentials required? Do the experience, training, degrees and positions held match the areas of your goals?
3. Is the coach a member of the International Coach Federation, the New Jersey Professional Coaches Association or another reputable organization?
4. Has the coach taught, lectured, run seminars, written, or experienced the areas of your focus, thereby indicating that the coach is a recognized expert?
5. Does the coach have specific techniques and methods that fit in with your style?
6. How much does the executive coach charge?
7. How much do extra coaching sessions cost?
8. What results has the coach achieved and in what timeframe? Was it a reasonable time frame?
9. How will the coach teach you new ways to do things, help you make permanent changes and accelerate your goal attainment? Can this particular coach help you?
10. What type of results can you expect in goal attainment, solving your problems, clarifying your issues and in what time frame? Is it realistic?

11. Is this particular coach a good match in meeting your needs?

12. Will you be able to work effectively together (i.e., how's the chemistry)?

Carefully choosing the right business or personal coach for you and establishing clear goals, objectives, and a realistic timeframe are the keys to increasing income, accelerating your career, and rapidly improving job performance and personal growth.

Because executive coaching is becoming the secret weapon for many small business owners in the 21st Century, celebrating Coach Appreciation Week (May 13-19) seems appropriate. With the Small Business Administration (SBA) defining a small business as "a company with fewer than 500 employees," many businesses also will be celebrating the 34th National New Jersey Small Business Week, May 6 through May 12.

In celebration of Small Business Week in the Garden State, an event will be co-hosted by the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce and the SBA on May 11 at the Hyatt Regency, New Brunswick. The event features workshops, more than 40 exhibitors, speeches by experts and networking opportunities. For more information call Kevin Friedlander at (609) 989-7888.

The next executive coaching article will provide contact information on how to locate the ideal coach for you and other helpful free information, such as free coaching newsletters, directories and Web sites dedicated to the coaching profession.

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