

WHAT COACH IS BEST FOR YOU?

Coaching is now being adopted by far more UK Companies and is one of the most effective ways to develop the 'business,' the business leaders and managers. Coaching service provision includes helping businesses to be more creative in their financial management systems, improving poor performance across the business or with specific individuals or groups of managers, improving the effectiveness of decision making and increasing the levels of confidence and esteem of the company and/or individuals. There are literally thousands of people in the UK (unconfirmed figures suggest in excess of 40,000) who are now providing coaching as part of their service provision, some more professionally and effectively than others. This leads to huge variations in the level and quality of service. Presently the coaching industry isn't very well standardised or regulated which means that, if you choose poorly, then you have little or no comeback if things go wrong. So how, then, do you ensure that you get the best coaching service you can for the money you want to invest?

I've distilled a number of key deciding factors from the Chartered Institute of Professional Developments Coaching and buying coaching services handbook (<http://www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/lrnanddev/coachmntor/coachbuyervs.htm>) which, if applied appropriately as your coach selection tool will make your decision that much easier to make. I've also added a number of questions to ask. The seven deciding factors and questions are as follows:

1. QUALIFICATIONS.

Coaches should be able to demonstrate that they are competent in the provision of coaching services. One way of proving this is to demonstrate that they possess a relevant qualification/s. Has the coach been trained as a coach and was the course certificated. If yes, was it internally or externally certificated? If the course was part of an 'in-house' development programme what was the content and how was it assessed? Can they show you a certificate? Do they have any other related qualifications and how are these used to aid the client? Do they regularly update their skills, if yes, how, and if no, why not?

2. COACHING EXPERIENCE.

Different levels of coaching experience may be required, depending on the complexity of the issues being addressed, as well as the seniority of the individual being coached. The coach needs to be 'fit for purpose'. What coaching have the coaches done, over what period of time and what have been the main outcomes? Do they coach full time or part time? Who have they coached over the past two years? What have been the managerial levels or the key business areas they have coached in? What coaching models and tools do they use? They should be able to tell you if they provide a directional approach (which is based on 'telling') or a non directional approach (based on the client figuring out what it is they want to do and where they want to go without being overly guided). Ideally, as client centred service providers they should have a range of models and tools that are best suited to you – one model does NOT fit all. What is the basis, and duration, of their coaching programme? Do they provide a 'free' initial assessment meeting?

3. BUSINESS EXPERIENCE

This aspect can be debatable in coaching circles as coaches are skilled specialists in developing people and as such it could be argued that they don't need to know the business you are in. On the other hand if you have specific pieces of subject related work to be done then it could be useful to have a coach with an understanding of the key words you use. Ask them to outline their business experience, the businesses they have been in themselves, the type of coaching business they run at present and the types of businesses they have been involved in as a coach. This will give you an idea of the scope of business understanding they have.

4. REFERENCES

Coaches work on 'best outcome' for the client and should be able to demonstrate success in a number of areas. Does the coach have any written testimonials they can show you **now** and do they have clients that are willing to talk to potential clients directly? If they don't have testimonials it's worth asking why. You can ask if you can speak to a client/s directly for feedback.

5. MEMBERSHIP OF PROFESSIONAL BODIES

There are a number of professional coaching bodies available that provides a number of ethical codes that coaches sign up to. It would be worth asking the coach what professional bodies they belong to

and what codes and standards they abide by. As a minimum standard the reply should include factors such as: confidentiality; client feedback; continuous professional development; professional reputation; non bias perspectives; and client centered focus.

6. PROFESSIONAL INDEMNITY INSURANCE

Coaching is a profession and a specialism and has far reaching outcomes for those people who receive the service. Very occasionally things may go wrong – are you, as the client, and they, as a coach, protected by appropriate insurance? They should be able to show you their insurance certificate. If they don't have insurance it's worth asking why.

7. BOUNDARIES

Is the coach able to tell you what their options are if they decide that coaching is **not** the right approach for you? If they come across aspects of work with you that they feel that they cannot manage what do they do? How do they assess your 'readiness' for acceptance onto their coaching programme?

SUMMARY

You want to employ a coach to enable you to progress a piece of work or develop a new skill. This article gives you a wide range of questions to ask within seven key factor areas to help you decide who is the most appropriate coach for you. The answers to the questions will give you a range of information that you can use to assess the level of professionalism of the coaches that you want to consider employing. Prices will be variable – some very economic and some very expensive, however, there is some merit in the view that 'you get what you pay for'. Ensure you get the maximum quality for the money you want to invest.

Pete Mackechnie of Extreme Management Solutions has over 18 years experience within the coaching profession and is happy to answer any further questions you have.

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