



SELECTING A COACH



**Center for Coaching
Certification**

www.CoachCert.com



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The International Coaching Federation (ICF) defines coaching as “partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential.”

A coach is a professional offering a service and like professionals in many fields, coaches vary widely in their skills, expertise, and service. Choosing the right coach becomes easier with forethought.

When selecting a coach, three considerations are:

1. Your reasons for hiring a coach and their role.
2. The background of the coach.
3. The relationship with the coach.

REASONS FOR HIRING A COACH

Before seeking out a coach, consider your own reasons for hiring a coach. What is it you want? For example, coaches are hired to serve as a sounding board, develop talent, strategize transitions, build skills, or enhance results. Take the time to consider what you want to accomplish with a coach. When you know what you want, you know what type of coach to find and also whether a coach is the right professional to hire.

Coaches are broadly sorted in different focus areas:

1. Business
2. Career
3. Executive
4. Life
5. Wellness

A business coach typically focuses on small and mid-sized businesses. A career coach focuses on launching a career, changing careers, or developing a career path. An executive coach serves c-suite executives, professionals, emerging leaders, and high potentials within larger corporations. A life coach works with you in all areas of your life and may specialize in ADHD, relationships, transitions, or other niches. A wellness coach commonly niches in fitness, nutrition, health, or mind/boy/spirit wellness. There is crossover amongst these areas.

When deciding on a coach from one of the broad categories – business, career, executive, life, or wellness, consider your priorities. Coaches often define niche areas of experience and expertise. For example, a business coach knows

the questions to ask regarding start-ups, marketing, finance, employment, management, or operations. A career coach often uses expertise in resume writing, job search strategies, interviewing, or professional visibility to also provide consulting before shifting to coaching. An executive coach may offer niche areas of skill development, time management, decision making, productivity, team coaching, or serving as a sounding board. A life coach may further specialize in relationships, writing, speaking, life management, recovery, education, or life purpose. A wellness coach uses their expertise in fitness, nutrition, health care, or mind/body/spirit practices to inform their questions.

THE ROLE OF THE COACH

When finding a coach, consider whether a coach is the right professional. Are you aware of the differences between a coach, consultant, counselor, and mentor? In short, a consultant analyzes the situation, then develops and presents a plan. A counselor works to understand and resolve issues or problems. A mentor is a voice of experience sharing what they know. A coach is a strategic partner that elicits goals, challenges, options, and action steps from you based on the understanding that you are your own best expert.

As many people have a genuine desire to help others and because coaching is a self-regulated profession, an abundance of “Life Coach” businesses are available to the public. Sometimes the experience is great – the client served feels their coach did a great job. Sometimes these experiences are poor and the client gains a negative impression of coaching and shares those thoughts. Often this is because the process is counseling or mentoring rather than coaching, which leads to a distorted impression. When the coach is trained in an approved coach training program, the coach empowers the client to explore their goals and move towards creating what the client wants in their life.

Since consultants and advisors provide valuable experience and coaching is a young profession, it makes sense that experts and executives in transition look at coaching as a business opportunity. Businesses are increasingly savvy about the difference between consulting and coaching. The primary reasons companies hire a coach are transition, leadership development, and to serve as a sounding board. Long-term success results from a well-trained coach who recognizes the client is their own best expert.

The perception of a coach is often mistaken as similar to a consultant, friend, mentor, or counselor. Coaching is very different from the other fields. When finding a coach, have a conversation about their role and consider how that fits with your objectives.



BACKGROUND OF THE COACH

When you know what you want, finding a coach becomes easier because you simply focus on coaches whose specialties are a good fit. Avenues to find a coach include:

- Asking people you know who they recommend as a coach.
- Searching online with focused search words for the type of coaching.
- Using a service that matches you with several choices based on your request. For example, the Center for Coaching Certification matches your interests and focus with the experience and expertise of a graduate from CCC programs.
- Visiting Amazon and reviewing the authors of books on coaching.
- Completing a search on LinkedIn and reading profiles.

Plan to interview several coaches before choosing and hiring one as your coach. When you interview them, you have the opportunity to learn more about their professional background and process to further ensure a good fit. Prepare for the interview by deciding what is important to you in a coach.

There are three areas to consider:

1. General Background
2. Coaching-Specific Background
3. Coaching Process

After exploring considerations for these three areas, consider your comfort working with the coach.

GENERAL BACKGROUND

When hiring a coach, consider the value of experience in a similar setting. There are pros and cons to finding a coach with experience that matches your own. On the one hand, they will understand much of your world. On the other hand, that same understanding may lead to a set way of thinking. The advantage to a coach that understands your world is they know what questions to ask. The disadvantage is that they may have specific ideas on what to do and how to do it rather than eliciting your insights.

When asking about a coach's background, consider the transferability of knowledge. For example, a business coach may have owned a retail store and your business is a restaurant. Much of the understanding of running the business is transferable. A life coach with experience dealing with recovery often has insight exploring life purpose. An executive coach with a corporate background will have a knowledge base that applies to multiple industries.

A coach with experience in multiple areas of interest offers broad perspective and the opportunity for focused exploration. The number one indicator of success in a coaching engagement is the rapport between a coach and client. This means the most significant consideration in choosing a coach is comfort level with them and trust.

COACHING-SPECIFIC BACKGROUND

A coach is different than a consultant, a friend, or a mentor. *Different coaches play different roles while calling it coaching.* Coaching is a strategic partnership in which the coach empowers the client to clarify goals, create action plans, move past obstacles, and achieve what the client chooses. Coaching-specific background includes training, ethics, competency, and experience. When you are thinking of hiring a coach, it is important to understand there is a wide variety of coach training programs available – so ask questions about the type of training a coach has received.

TRAINING

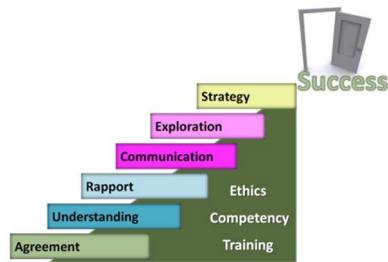
Achieving and sustaining excellence in coaching requires hard work. Coach-specific training and practice for coaching are both musts for excellence in coaching. If you are thinking of hiring a coach, it is important to understand the wide variety of training programs available so you can ask questions about the type of training a coach has received. Currently, there are well over 300 ICF-approved coach training programs.

When hiring a coach, ask them about their training and whether it was approved by ICF. Also ask if they are a member of ICF. Coaches who have completed 60 hours or more of ICF-approved training and are members subscribe to a standard of professionalism and commit to developing competence as a coach through ongoing training.

In addition to ICF membership coaches may have a credential, ACC, PCC, or MCC. To provide an analogy, high school graduation is comparable to a coach that has completed only an initial program of 30 training hours. As associates degree is then equated to ICF membership. A coach with the ACC credential is then similar to having a degree while the PCC is much like a masters degree and the MCC like a PhD.

ETHICS

Find a coach that has and uses the Code of Ethics. An amazing fact is that



there are coach training programs that do not discuss ethics. Another amazing fact is the number of coaches offering services that do not have the Code of Ethics. The ICF publishes a Code of Ethics and all members subscribe to it and agree to be held accountable.

If a coach is coaching within an organization, they will review the company ethics and determine in advance how the company Code of Ethics and the coaching Code of Ethics work together. For example, one of the biggest challenges is confidentiality because if notes are taken on a company computer or sent via a company email address, the notes are not confidential. By considering this before beginning, the coach and client choose an option for note-taking and email that is appropriate.

Coaching agreements ideally include either the full Code of Ethics or a link to it online. This supports excellence in coaching because then the client is educated on both ethics in coaching and the integrity of the coach.

The Code of Ethics becomes part of the foundation for trust in a coaching relationship. As a client, read the Code of Ethics and ask the coach your questions. By providing the Code of Ethics, the coach is advising their coaching clients on the parameters of the coaching relationship and the guidelines for their professional conduct. The Code of Ethics is a tool to protect both the coach and the client.

Ethics go deeper than having a Code of Ethics – it requires walking the talk. While this seems obvious, it is worth addressing specifically. Some of the challenges that occur include:

- Knowing when it is acceptable to list clients for marketing purposes and when a client prefers to keep the coaching relationship private. *Walking the talk means obtaining permission before listing a client.*
- Knowing what may be disclosed to a client's boss or company and what must be kept confidential. *Walking the talk means defining what is disclosed before beginning coaching and obtaining approval before disclosing information.*
- Knowing when there is an actual or potential conflict of interest and how to handle it appropriately. *Walking the talk means coaches ask themselves if they can be effective and inform the client of a possible conflict so the client has the choice of whether or how to continue.*
- Knowing when they are effective for clients and when the client is better served by someone else. *Walking the talk means referring the client to a different coach or other professionals when it is in the best interest of the client.*

Find a coach that is committed to the Code of Ethics.

COMPETENCY

Core competencies are the skill set for a professional. Since a professional coach is deeply engaged with the career and life of their client, learning these skills is preparation for offering coaching services. Developing competency takes time. Many coaches have a high level of experience and education before transitioning to professional coaching. An effective training program builds on existing knowledge and provides the perspective on the difference in applying skills as a coach versus in other career fields.

The ICF details Core Competencies for coaches. This provides an excellent tool for coaches to evaluate their skill set, recognize their level of effectiveness, and consider expanding their abilities. When looking for a coach, ask about their core competencies.

The application of core competencies as a coach varies based on training, individual difference, and experience. Consider each of these influencing factors in turn.

The training includes skills taught in the work place and coach-specific training hours. Many coaches have years of work experience prior to becoming a coach. Professional development training is focused on workplace application, which means the focus of the training is different than when it is coach-specific training. At the same time, the skills are part of the core competencies of coaches. For example, skills commonly taught in the workplace that are also taught to coaches include:

- Ethics
- Interpersonal Rapport and Trust
- Listening
- Communication
- Planning
- Goal setting
- Accountability

In the workplace, the intention is to develop each individual for the greatest contribution to the team and organization. As a coach, the skills are used to enhance effectiveness working with an individual as their strategic partner.

The competencies as a coach are focused on creating a positive and productive relationship with the client, which is the number one indicator of a successful coaching relationship. A coach uses their skills to empower their client in developing their own skills and achieving their desired results. A coach explores perspectives, opens and expands thinking, and strategizes with clients using their developed coaching competencies.

In coach-specific training programs, the skills are taught with the application during coaching as an inherent component of the learning focus.

When hiring a coach, awareness of the competency is possible through their training, how they present themselves online, the content they provide on coaching, and by experiencing a free introductory session.

The Core Competencies identified by ICF include:

1. Demonstrates Ethical Practice
2. Embodies a Coaching Mindset
3. Establishes and Maintains Agreements
4. Cultivates Trust and Safety
5. Maintains Presence
6. Listens Actively
7. Evokes Awareness
8. Facilitates Client Growth

As you interview prospective coaches, reflect on their competency in these areas.

COACHING PROCESS

The well-trained coach serves the client with a process that creates focus on possibilities and follow-through. Coaches have a process and adjust their process to the client appropriately.

To start, many coaches offer a free 30-minute session to provide you with the opportunity to experience coaching, gain a sense of their coaching model and process, and decide if they are the right coach for you at the right time.

Checkpoints for when you talk with the coach include: do they discuss their Code of Ethics? Do they have a written agreement? Do you feel comfortable with their fees and scheduling process?

What is the coaching process? A coach will explain their approach. Some begin with getting to know the client and exploring their big picture, and then develop the specific focus. Others simply start talking about one area of concern for the client. The advantage of a coach that explores the big picture is that both you as a client and your coach are aware of all of your considerations and influencing factors. This means that as you develop your strategy for your primary objectives, you are more effective.

Coaching is an investment of time and money with a high return on investment. Finding an excellent match in a coach enhances outcomes.



RELATIONSHIP WITH THE COACH

The ICF research shows that the top indicator of success in a coaching relationship is the rapport between the coach and the client. This requires the skill of the coach to flex to the client's preferred style and connect effectively while earning respect.

When hiring a coach, ensure you feel comfortable, trust them, and are confident with their expertise and process.

BENEFITS OF HIRING A COACH

Have you ever gotten in to an elevator and pushed the button for the floor you were already on? Without thinking, I got on at the first floor, pushed one, and waited... then pushed one again, and waited. My friend noticed and said, "Aren't we going to the fourth floor?" Amazing how much more effective it was when I pushed the right button! Often our thought process functions in the same manner – we focus on where we are, the problem, or what we wish was not. It is when we choose to focus on what we do want that we see how to make it happen.

Coaching is a hot topic – people who know what it is understand the benefits and often want a life or business coach, to be a coach and build a business, or to have an executive coach within their organization. Studies show that the return on investment (ROI) is high. Metrix Global LLC found coaching produced a 529% ROI and the financial benefits from employee retention boosted the overall ROI to 788%. Triad Performance Technologies cites 1000% ROI for coaching in sales. Personnel Management Association says coaching combined with training leads to an 88% improvement in productivity.

For a coach to be excellent, they must have the appropriate experience and skill with a process that effectively serves the client. Coaches achieve and sustain excellence by ensuring they have a solid foundation in these areas:

- **Competency** – Coach-specific training that develops the 11 Core Competencies of a coach is essential. Competency is a starting point because coaching is a learned skill and excellence requires continuing to learn and develop coaching skills.
- **Ethics** – Ethics in business ensure growth and long-term sustainability.
- **Defining Coaching Services** – Developing focus by defining coaching services means coaches have the foundation for a consistent effort and coaching clients know what they provide.
- **Coaching Service Quality** – Quality of the coaching services is a deciding factor for whether people continue using a specific coach's services and whether they will recommend those services.



When you know what to look for, finding the right coach at the right time is easier. Follow this quick checklist:

- Consider what you want from a coaching relationship
 - Professional development – skills, career, leadership
 - Business growth and management
 - Personal development – life legacy, relationships, balance
- Explore what skills, experience, and training matter to you
 - Experience in a similar setting
 - Experience in your areas of interest
 - Coach-specific training
 - Competency as a coach
 - Coaching process
- Review the resources for finding a coach
 - People you know
 - Human resources department
 - Authors on Amazon
 - LinkedIn
 - www.FindaCertifiedCoach.com
 - www.CoachCert.com

The process for hiring a coach is to decide first your reasons, next find a coach with the expertise that fits with your objectives, and then interview prospective coaches and find one whose style is comfortable for you and that you trust.