

WHAT IS COACHING?

Coaching is a one-to-one activity between a coach and coachee. It is an opportunity for you to explore issues and situations that are facing you, to clarify your thinking and make well-thought out decisions about what actions you want to take.

A coach works by asking you questions which encourage you to extend your thinking beyond that which you have done for yourself. You can think of coaching as a 'purposeful conversation'; it is structured and has an outcome, usually some kind of action that you want to take. It is important to remember that it is you, not the coach who chooses what to talk about and where to take the conversation. The coach's job is to help you get there. A coach is generally someone who has no personal investment in the outcome – their job is to help you think through what you want and help you decide how you are going to make that happen. The responsibility of the coach is to structure the coaching session, not to come up with answers or to judge you. This is because people feel most committed to taking action when they have decided for themselves what it is they are going to do. You can treat your sessions as an opportunity to say what you like, in complete confidence, to someone who is removed from the immediate situation and hence can provide a dispassionate perspective, if required. The coach's job is to help you order your thinking, make you aware of things you might be missing and reflect back their observations.

If you are new to coaching, we have provided you with some hints and tips on how to get the best from your sessions. You may find it beneficial to read this document as part of your preparation for future sessions. Other people who have experienced coaching have used their sessions in a variety of ways. Here are some examples:

- To prepare for a meeting/event where you are not sure how you are going to act or are unclear about the outcome you want.
- To practise a new behaviour.
- To develop more choices in certain situations e.g. being able to say 'No' or handling stress.
- To review your performance so that you can act differently next time.
- As a means of career planning.
- To plan how you are going to complete a complex task.
- Develop greater flexibility in working with others

If you have more than one session, you can use your sessions to monitor your progress on a particular issue. Alternatively, you might choose to use each session to explore something different. The choice is yours, you decide where you want to go and the coach will help you get there.

10 WAYS TO GET TEN TIMES THE VALUE FROM MEETING WITH YOUR COACH

1. **Create the coaching experience:** Think carefully about what you want to cover before the session begins. Make sure you get value from your investment in coaching by making every minute count. Ask yourself the question; 'If I could cover just one thing on the session today, what would it be?'
2. **Start with a full plate:** Working off the question above, make a list, not of one thing, but of 3-5 things that would be that valuable. Have more on your plate than you think you can possibly go over. Of course, you don't want to rush past something important but you may find that you have time to work through more than one issue. Some matters take time; you may only cover 1-2 items, just make sure they are important ones, so arrange your list of things to discuss in priority order.
3. **Make clear requests:** Once you have listed and priorities write down what you want to get from your coaching session in one or two short, clear statements. For example, say your number one topic is, 'How to make my business more profitable in the next 60 days?' Ask yourself, 'How do I want my coach to support me in this?' Do you want to brainstorm some new ideas, develop the ideas you already have by talking them through, get some resource information from your coach etc?
4. **Prepare yourself:** Take a few minutes before the session to mentally prepare yourself, rather than 'jamming' the session into an already full day. Book a few minutes immediately before the session begins to prepare yourself and to separate your coaching session from the rest of your activities.
5. **Cut the chat:** Keep the 'chit-chat' to a minimum. That's not really what the coaching session is for. Get down to business with your coach.
6. **Brief your coach on the history:** Handle as much of the background information as possible before the session. Email your coach so that they will have the necessary background information before you ever say a word to each other. In this way you can start the session already running rather than warming up.
7. **Be 100% responsible:** Take full responsibility for your coaching. Don't let a coach do your work for you. Don't expect him/her to 'do coaching' on you. A healthy approach to coaching is to consider yourself 100% responsible for how the relationship goes and what value you get out of each session.
8. **Train your coach:** Give regular feedback to your coach so he/she knows what works or what is most valuable to you so they can do more of it. Also, let your coach know what's not working or has less value so it can be eliminated. At first you might not know what's of most value but it won't take long before you realise that some sessions are very powerful and other sessions are so-so. Evaluate what was different about the two sessions, and train your coach.
9. **Debrief:** Take a moment after the session to make a note about discoveries, insights or themes that were explored during the session. Write down action items if you did not write them down during the session. Write these notes on the back of your preparation notes. Evaluate what you got out of the session, and notice what you didn't cover that you want to address in the next session.
10. **Maintain momentum:** If you are planning to have a series of coaching sessions, it's a good idea to put them all in your diary at the very beginning. You are more likely to benefit from your coaching if you stick to the dates you have booked, and they are more likely to feel that they have a direction and momentum when they are evenly spaced and occur every 2-4 weeks.

How to introduce the concept of coaching to your coachee

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