

**How do I choose
the right coach for me?**

1 - find the right coach

The correct match

There are many routes for people to become coaches, and as of yet, the coaching market is not regulated. We provide this information as a means to help you choose the right coach for you. The quality of coaching and the results you want to see depend significantly on the selection of the coach you make, and the correct match between coach and client.

When selecting your coach, some of the areas you need to consider are:

- Level of coaching experience
- Business and Industry experience
- References
- Coach Background
- Supervision and Professional Development
- Tools, techniques and models
- Understanding their boundaries
- Relevant qualifications and training
- Membership of Professional Bodies

Read on and learn what to look for.

Level of coaching experience

It is important that you match your level of experience and skill set with the coach you are choosing. For example, if you are a senior manager you need to determine if the coach has the appropriate skills to coach you and achieve results.

You should ask your coach how many hours of coaching have they delivered, how many coaching assignments have they worked on, and what kinds of issues are they used to working with? Also, what level of seniority do they usually work with?

Business and Industry experience

Do you need specific technical advice from your coach? Do you think they should have specific experience in your work area? These are issues you need to think through before you select your coach.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) recommends that coaches have business

3 - find the right coach

experience, and not necessarily experience within your field, the coach should instead focus on your development and learning.

References

Ask your coach for some references from previous clients. Have those clients achieved what they wanted to achieve? Note how the coach takes credit for the past coaching results, for example beware of coaches who state 'I fixed this guy'.

Coach Background

Think about why you are searching for a coach. What are you trying to achieve? Coaches come from a variety of backgrounds like occupational psychology, training and development, HR, or sport to name a few. Try and match your specific needs to that of the coach's background so they can provide the best service for you.

Supervision and Continued Professional Development and learning

Ask your coach how do they keep up to date with developments in the coaching field and also if they partake in supervision? Supervision is the practice whereby a coach gains support and professional supervision from a trained supervisor, which is an independent formal process of reflection, one which aims to increase the coaches self awareness and professional development. Supervision will also focus on critiquing the coach's work with their clients.

A seasoned coach may require less supervision than a newly qualified coach. However the practice of supervision is strongly advocated by all the leading professional associations for coaching and mentoring. For example the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) states in its Code of Ethics:

A coach/mentor must maintain a relationship with a suitably qualified supervisor, who will regularly assess their competence and support their development.

5 - find the right coach

The Association for Coaching (AC) states in its Code of Ethics:

Coaches are expected to have regular consultative support for their work.

Ask your potential coach how many hours of supervision do they have in relation to their practice hours. These tend to vary from 1:8 to 1:15 hours supervision to practice. Coaches in training or coaches who are newly qualified typically require the lower ratio. (Peter Bluckert, see www.pbcoaching.com).

The CIPD outline the following questions to ask your potential coach:

- 1. How do you maintain your objectivity and perspective during coaching assignments?*
- 2. Do you think coaching supervision is important for coaching professionals?*
- 3. What formal supervision arrangements do you currently have in place?*
- 4. Do you have your own coach or supervisor?*
- 5. What are their credentials?*

(Jessica Jarvis, Coaching and Buying Coaching Services, CIPD)

Tools, techniques and models used

Coaches will use a variety of approaches depending on the situation and individual. Ask your potential coach what approach they will use. The coach should be able to clearly explain their favoured approach. Coaches will use techniques and frameworks from a wide range of theoretical backgrounds. The CIPD state that clients should beware of coaches who are unable to explain the model they use (*Ibid.*).

Understanding their boundaries

Coaches should understand the boundaries of their expertise areas. They should not knowingly accept a client if they need support beyond their expertise. Coaches should refer the client onto another professional who can provide the appropriate tools and techniques for helping the client with their specific situation. The coach should be able to state what they can do and also what they can't.

Relevant qualifications and training

Coaches should be able to demonstrate that they are competent in the provision of their coaching services. One way to prove this is to demonstrate that they possess a relevant coaching qualification. At present the field of coaching is not regulated and coaches can take a number of training routes from short courses to masters-level qualifications. The depth of study, level of qualification, practical extend of coaching experience, expertise and also support received throughout the study will defer from course to course. A qualification that is specific to coaching is obviously the most relevant qualification to have. However, these qualifications have only been available for a short period, therefore you should look at the coaches experience and other formal qualifications; focusing on how they continue with professional development and which professional bodies they are members of.

A key debate is whether coaches should be fully qualified as a chartered psychologist with the British Psychological Society (BPS), as they would have a good solid background in psychological processes.

However, coaching qualifications should cover relevant psychological theories in enough depth to allow the coach to operate satisfactorily.

Membership of Professional Bodies

This is an important part of your selection criterion. Good practitioners are more likely to be a member of a coaching related society. Professional bodies also demand that their members follow codes of conduct and adhere to the ethics set out by that professional body. Membership would also provide the coach's client with some avenue for complaint if the services are deemed unsatisfactorily.

Professional Indemnity Insurance

Holders of professional indemnity insurance prepare for any situations where they may unintentionally have a negative impact on their client. You should ask a potential coach if s/he has indemnity insurance and who it is with and for how much.

Other qualities

There are some general skills that can be said to characterise an effective coach which include giving honest, realistic and challenging feedback. Other skills such as

- being a good listener
- rapport building skills
- knowing how to motivate

It is important for coaches to also process these skills, so try and assess if your potential coach has some of these qualities too. Try and assess if the coach would inspire trust and motivation for you.

The logo for CoachEye, featuring the word "coacheye" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font. A white speech bubble icon is positioned to the left of the "c" and to the right of the "e".

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