

A Career in Coaching Ministry Leaders

By Tony Stoltzfus

Many Christian coaches or coaches in training want to coach pastors or ministry leaders as part of their practice. How do you get into this niche? And what makes a successful ministry coach? Here are some answers.

The number one thing you need to know about ministry coaching is that *it is all about networking*. Because ministry is by nature relational (it is about producing people, not a product), ministry leaders tend to heavily favor resources that come to them through their network of relationships.

There are many different philosophies of ministry and value systems in this arena. In addition, bringing in someone with different values or a character problem can cause conflicts or relational fallout that is very costly to a ministry organization. Therefore, most ministry leaders want a recommendation from someone or some organization they know and trust before they will sign on for coaching or training. It's all about who you know. So before you launch into this niche with high hopes, ask yourself: *do I have an existing network of relationships with ministry leaders who know and trust me that I can leverage to meet others?* If you don't know many pastors, or you aren't involved in ministry in a way that will give you significant exposure, building a ministry coaching practice will be an uphill climb.

Second, think through what kind of person a pastor, missionary or para-church leader would want as a coach. If you were an executive, would you tend to hire a coach from a management level several tiers below you, or with much less or no experience in your industry? Or would you want someone who has functioned at your level, knows your world and has tools and experience relevant to you to bring to the table? Most people would want the second.

So take an honest look at yourself. Are you a peer professionally to the leaders you want to coach? Do you have leadership experience on par with theirs and relevant to their world? You don't have to have been a pastor to coach pastors, but you do need to have a life that they respect and want to draw from. Experience as a small group leader or having preached two or three times doesn't qualify you as a pastor's peer – remember, this is an individual leading a large volunteer



organization (the most difficult kind of organization to lead), often with a graduate degree and years of experience. What has God put into your life that pastors, missionaries and para-church leaders want and need?

Third, if you want to coach ministry leaders, you need to take a ministry approach. If you are pursuing ministry coaching in order to make a great income from home, do significant work and lead the ideal life you want, you are in it for the wrong reasons. With the average pastor's salary in the US under \$50,000, you aren't going to get rich coaching pastors. They are not in it for the money; they are doing this out of a sense of call. You need to come into their world and have the same heart to coach them. Are you willing to coach as a faith walk with God as well? Is this about you fulfilling your own sense of call, or about you helping others fulfill their destinies?

The church is the place where God brings up all our hurts, character issues and problems, so we can deal with them in a redemptive environment. That means you will meet with more failures, disappointments and difficult situations coaching here than you will working with business clients. Coaching ministry leaders is not a safe place where you can just work with other Christians like you who will treat you right and pay you on time so you can have a safe, comfortable life. Ministry coaching is a calling to sacrificially contribute to the Kingdom of God. Are you ready for that?

If this article challenges you and fires you up instead of feeling like a wet blanket, then maybe you do have a calling to ministry coaching. If so, rise up! We need more ministry coaches!

To see our five-star resources for launching a successful coaching practice, visit www.Coach22.com/practicebuilding.html