



Hiring a Coach

If you've never looked for a coach before, here are some tips on how to go about it. First, let's look at what a personal coaching relationship looks like. You'll meet two to three times a month with your personal coach, for 30 to 60 minutes each time (different coaches offer different packages of services). You'll choose what you want to work on, the action steps you want to take, and set your own pace. The coach helps you focus your ideas into goals and action steps, offers a listening ear and challenging questions that get you thinking, and provides the support and accountability you need to follow through.

Each session begins with a progress report on your goals and action steps. Then you'll discuss next steps, generate options, troubleshoot obstacles, and develop a set of action steps you want to take before the next appointment. You are always in charge of what you want to work on!

The Contract

When you start out with a coach, you should sign a written contract spelling out what you'll receive and what the expectations of the relationship are. (A sample coaching contract is included on the CD). Usually the coach will take you through an "intake" process where you get to know each other, do some assessments and set goals for the relationship. A formal, written agreement keeps expectations clear in the coaching relationship, spells out exactly what you'll get, and is a sign of professionalism on the part of your coach. Don't start a coaching relationship without one

What to Look for

What's the difference between a great coach and a mediocre one? Below are six things to look for in hiring a coach:

1. Has the coach been through a professional training program, and does he or she hold a professional coaching certification?

Coaching has become something of a buzzword in Christian circles, and many individuals without coaching credentials or even any professional training call themselves coaches. Coaching is completely different than mentoring or counseling, and training or experience in one of these areas doesn't qualify that person as a coach. Find out what type of training the coach has. A professional coaching certification usually means your coach has been through 150 or more hours of formal coach training. Ask about your coach's credentials?

Formal training isn't everything, and yes, some people do have a knack for coaching. On the other hand, would you want to hire a lawyer with no legal training to defend you, or have your home appraised by someone who isn't certified as an appraiser? When something important is at stake, we want to work with people we can trust.

2. How much coaching experience does the coach have?

Coaching titles reflect the experience level of the coach. The standard language in the coaching industry is 250 hours of experience for a "certified coach", 800 for a "professional coach" and 2500 for a "master coach" (however, not all coaches follow these recommendations, so it's best to just ask them to



quantify how much experience they have.) The best coaching is generally going to come from more experienced coaches—but usually at a higher rate as well.

3. Does the coach's training and preferred niche fit your needs?

Do you want to be coached in business skills or in your spiritual life? In pursuing your dreams or in losing weight and getting on a healthy diet? Different training programs equip coaches to do different things. If you are launching a business, you may prefer a business coach with training in a secular coaching school. If you are a pastor wanting to grow your church, a coach trained in a Christian program built on a biblical value system may be much more appealing.

And every coach has a unique niche, the area where they are at their best. Find out what your coach considers to be his or her strengths, and be honest about who you are and what you feel you need. Most coaches are very generous about referring you to someone who will be a better fit if what you want isn't what they are best at.

4. What kind of career or ministry experience does the coach have?

While a good coach can work with almost any kind of situation (coaches are change experts, not subject-matter experts), generally a coach who knows and understands your world will be able to coach you more effectively than someone with little practical experience in that area. For instance, as a pastor you may prefer someone with extensive pastoral, pastoral oversight or Christian leadership experience. Or if you want to change your eating habits, a coach with additional credentials in the health care field may be a better fit than one who doesn't regularly coach in this area. Look for someone with a track record in the kinds of things you want to be coached in

5. Does the coach offer a free complimentary session?

Chemistry is an important part of a coaching relationship. Your coach should be someone you look forward to talking to; someone you'd naturally open up and share with. Your coach should also be someone you respect and trust. And many coaches report that a disproportionate percentage of their clientele are gift types like there own: in other words, people tend to be attracted to a "like-gifted" coach. A complimentary session that lets you "try before you buy" is a great way to check out the chemistry before you make a commitment. Don't be hesitant to try two or three coaches before you make a choice: kicking the tires is an accepted part of industry practice.

6. Does this coach walk the walk?

Find a coach who practices what he or she preaches. Ask if your coach is being coached by someone else (if you believe in the power of coaching, you'd have a coach of your own, right?) Ask if your coach is a member and regular attender at a local church. We believe in accountability, so we won't mind if you ask!