



# *How to select an executive coach*

*“What matters is finding a coach who is a great fit – both in method and style – for you.”*

There are a lot of different kinds of coaches out there. Some operate as “strategic thinking partners,” acting primarily as sounding boards and offering new ideas. Others focus on helping their clients set goals and stay accountable. Still others concentrate on helping clients make deep and lasting individual change. Each type of coaching has its place; what matters is finding a coach who is a great fit – both in method and style – for you and what you want to achieve. Here are some guidelines to help you find a coach that is right for you.

## *Define Your Goals*

Before you start “shopping” for a coach, concretely define what outcomes you want from coaching and how you would measure success.

## *Get Referrals*

Get the names of several coaches who have delivered results for people you know and respect. If you don’t know anyone who has been coached, you can contact the International Coach Federation (“ICF”) at [www.icf.org](http://www.icf.org) for a listing of coaches. This organization is the certifying body for professional coaches, and can give you a listing of coaches by region or specialty.



## *Interview prospective coaches*

*Competence, trustworthiness and chemistry* are the primary ingredients to look for.

Interviewing a few people will give you a good feel for different styles and approaches, and thus help you determine the best fit for you. Here are some questions you may want to consider asking in your interviews:

*What is your training? Are you certified?* Many practicing coaches have no formal coaching-specific education. We recommend that you select someone who has undergone coaching training and is certified by the International Coach Federation.

*What is your experience in coaching people with issues like mine?* Listen carefully for the coach’s understanding of the issues, as well as his or her ability to speak meaningfully to your particular situation. Beware the one-size-fits-all solution.

*What is your philosophy of change?* The goal of coaching is change. Asking your potential coaches how they think change comes about can give you a lot of insight into how they will work with you.

*Have you ever been unsuccessful with a client? What happened and what did you learn from that?* If a coach claims 100% success - run! You want to hear the conditions, issues and types of clients that a coach may not be successful with.

*How will we work together?* A coach should be able to describe how he or she will approach the coaching process. This process comprises several components, including : a) helping you identify goals, b) assessing you, c) help you develop competencies, d) monitor and gauge the coaching's progress, and d) help you sustain new learnings and behaviors after the coach is gone.

*What happens if we find that we are not well suited to each other?* A successful coaching experience is dependent on a relationship that works for both of you. A professional coach should stress this and be amenable to terminating the relationship if it is not working. He or she should also be willing to offer you referrals or other alternatives.

## *Then, Trust Your Gut*

After you've done your research and analyzed the pros and cons of each potential coach, I recommend making the final decision intuitively. If no one feels right, then keep looking. But if you've interviewed a couple of viable candidates, you'll find that one of them felt like more of a fit for you. Perhaps one person « got you » in a way that the others did not. Perhaps you found one coach's questions or insights particularly stimulating. Or maybe one of them said something that really got under your skin. This intuitive sense is one of your best allies in the process of deciding on a coach for you.

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