



Why Your Executive Coach is Overrated

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I recently Googled the term "executive coaching" and received nearly 1.5 million hits.

Frankly, I was a bit surprised. I was expecting more, because it seems like everyone and their uncle and aunt is a coach these days. (Full disclosure: Count me in; I too have worked with numerous executives and managers, one-on-one, for periods ranging from several months to over a year.)

The array of coaches is a bit staggering, approaching the diversity of doctors. There are: Business coaches, Career coaches, Sales coaches, Leadership coaches, and even certifications for life coaches, passion coaches, success coaches, personal development coaches, goal attainment coaches, motivational coaches, transformational coaches, solutions-focused coaches, and self-esteem coaches.

Notwithstanding the presence or lack of a certification, the success of a coaching relationship is never guaranteed, just as a doctor's license doesn't guarantee a 100% success rate with patients. Understandably then, a lot of time, and I would argue a disproportionate amount of time, is spent on evaluating the coach.

I'm certainly not suggesting that evaluating the potential coach is a waste of time. Similar to evaluating a doctor, you want to ensure you know: what they do, whether they're competent, what they've achieved with their clients, and if anyone you know has had a good or bad experience with them.

That being said, that's still insufficient.

What frequently gets left out of the evaluation equation is the "coachee", or the person being coached.



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When I've worked with an executive over a sustained period of time, and there's been exceptional progress and success, the leading factor for that difference in performance is usually not me. It's the person I'm working with. More often than not, the key differentiators for exceptional success in a coaching relationship are the coachee's commitment to his development, her courage to be transparent with colleagues and to try new behaviors, and a tenacious engagement throughout the coaching process.

Did I have an impact as well? Sure. Can I take credit for the exceptional success? Yes, some of it, but not the lion's share of it; for whenever there's been outstanding success, I've noted I've worked just as hard as when there's been good success. Similarly, on the few occasions where there's been limited or no success, I've worked just as hard, if not harder, as those times when there's been exceptional success.

Which is the reason why the executive coach is overrated.

Certainly make sure she's competent and successful. And ensure he has a track record of getting results. But those are table stakes.

Equally important issues, though, are whether the coachee is 110% committed to his development over a prolonged period of time and that she has the courage and tenacity to see it through.

So go ahead and vet your coach, but don't forget to vet your coachee too.

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What examples, good and bad, have you observed regarding coaching, coaches, and coachees? Post your [comments](#) on our Ideas page on our [website](#).

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Best regards,

David Harper, Managing Principal



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