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# Executive Coaching

How To Get More From What You Already Have



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# 1. Introduction to Coaching and Mentoring

You may be considering one-to-one support as a development method for a member of your team, or perhaps you would like to find someone to help you with your own development. You will no doubt be familiar with the terms coaching and mentoring, the two most common forms of one-to-one support relationships, but you may also be uncertain of the distinction between them. In what follows, we will investigate the topic of coaching and mentoring, outlining a set of guidelines that will help you implement support relationships within your organisation.

Sometimes coaching is thought to be the more job—and task—orientated of the two, while mentoring is thought to take a broader view, aiming to support individuals in their long-term personal and career development. However they both do essentially the same thing, and in many cases the terms are used interchangeably. Both coaching and mentoring help people to show increased initiative in their own personal and career development in the short as well as the long term. They should be seen as methods of development that compliment, rather than replace, traditional training.

## What Do Coaches/Mentors Do?

Coaches and mentors can play a wide range of roles. Some of the most common are:

- **tutor** – helping someone to acquire new skills and abilities
- **counsellor** – listening and helping someone to work out solutions to their problems
- **networker** – helping someone to develop the connections they need to gain experience, get a job or promotion, etc.
- **facilitator** – helping someone to set and achieve goals
- **critical friend** – being honest and providing constructive feedback
- **sounding-board** – giving someone the chance to try out new ideas and approaches in a safe environment
- **role model** – providing an example from which someone else can learn.

They may do this in a number of ways: by challenging the learner's assumptions; encouraging the learner to explore new ideas and different ways of thinking; setting development tasks for the learning; or simply by providing a different perspective. Whatever method the coach/mentor chooses, the important point is to empower the learner by providing them with the tools to learn for themselves.

## Benefits of Coaching and Mentoring

Advocates of coaching and mentoring cite a wide range of benefits for organisations and individuals alike.

Some suggested benefits for the organisation include:

- increased productivity
  - the recruitment, retention and development of key employees
  - provision of a stabilising factor when change occurs
  - bottom-line benefits
  - help with succession planning
  - encouragement of knowledge-sharing and transfer of skills across the organisation.
- 

For the individual receiving the coaching/mentoring, the benefits include:

- improved individual performance
  - increased motivation and morale
  - an unthreatening environment for discussion
  - encouragement to tackle difficult tasks
  - help with the transition from one level of responsibility to another
  - the satisfaction of learning for oneself
  - stress management
  - the opportunity to develop personal networks
-

Some of the benefits for the coach/mentor include:

- insight into the needs of the organisation.
  - opportunity to share valuable knowledge, skills and experience
  - satisfaction in seeing their client develop
- 

### Characteristics of the Effective Coach/Mentor

A report published by The Coaching & Mentoring Network came up with the following list of skills, knowledge, and qualities required of the effective coach: <sup>1</sup>

patience	detached
supportive	interested
good listener	perceptive
aware	self-aware
attentive	retentive
technical expertise	knowledge
experience	credibility
authoritative	

Coaching and mentoring both promote self-reliance, self-confidence, self-awareness and learning for individuals. They are effective methods of development, as people learn more than 60% of skills from 'direct association with peers and colleagues'.<sup>2</sup> Person-to-person learning such as coaching and mentoring has been quoted as having the highest transfer of knowledge. So long as the correct coach/mentor is chosen, multiple alleged benefits exist for the client and their organisation. At the same time, the coach/mentor often benefits as much from the relationship as the individuals they support.

<sup>1</sup> Somers, 2001. <sup>2</sup> Sue Mathews, 'Mentoring in Effective Staff Development', *Employee Development Bulletin* No 106 (October 1998), p 9.

## Establishing a Coaching/Mentoring Relationship

If you think that you, someone in your team or beyond could benefit from coaching or mentoring and are considering taking on a coach/mentor, consider the following questions in order to assess the suitability.

### Why Hire a Coach/Mentor?

Using a coaching/mentoring approach can have many benefits. As well as helping people with their personal or career development, coaching/mentoring can help to boost motivation, career satisfaction, and increase productivity.

You may be considering a coach/mentor for one or more of the following reasons:

- You have identified an individual whom you think would benefit from having a coach/mentor.
- You have been asked by an individual or department to provide a coach/mentor.
- You want to add a coach/mentor to your team and increase your visibility/profile in your organisation.
- You believe that a coach/mentor can optimise the management potential within your organisation and help achieve your goals or those of your organisations.

Coaching/mentoring involves many of the tasks managers already do. If you have not had a coach or mentor before, you will find the experience helpful in many areas you already perform.

#### Some core management skills supported by a coach/mentor are:

communication	problem-solving
intuition	building rapport and trust
delegation	giving praise and recognition
training others	goal-setting
listening	motivating and inspiring others
planning	managing performance

## **The Role of a Coach/Mentor?**

The coach or mentor will usually be more experienced than the individual. It is unnecessary for the coach/mentor to have a working knowledge of your industry. Coaches and mentors are interested in developing the executive. They are someone in whom you feel you can confide.

The success of coaching/mentoring as a development tool will, to a great extent, depend on the executive's willingness to develop and enhance their interpersonal skills and other abilities.

The following is an example of the areas of focus necessary for effective coaching/mentoring:

- help structure ideas about how to tackle career opportunities/problems
- insight into analysing why things went well or badly
- provide constructive feedback
- act as a sounding board
- offer alternative ways of looking at an issue
- direction in setting higher personal standards
- support in setting realistic learning objectives
- offer observations in a sensitive but constructive manner
- guide someone in assessing their own progress

If you think you would benefit from having a coach/mentor, you need to start by asking yourself a number of questions:

- Are you clear about what kinds of practical help you require?
- Are you prepared to enter into a relationship that will involve time and commitment?
- Do you have some ideas of what you are looking to achieve for yourself from this relationship, or what learning you might acquire from this experience?
- Are you prepared and able to allow and encourage the coach/mentor to drive the relationship and to focus only on your needs?



## **2. Effectiveness of Executive Coaching**

### **Introduction**

In order to measure the effectiveness of coaching in bringing about behavioural change, Carol Gegner, a specialist in individual and organisational change conducted a research study with a number of executives who had been coached. The objectives of the study were to gauge executives' perceptions of the coaching process, identify the most effective elements of the coaching process, and determine whether coaching is able to bring about lasting behavioural change.

Using a sample of 48 executives, the data was gathered by means of postal questionnaires. Of this number, 28 also agreed to participate in telephone interviews. The telephone interviews, structured around a set of six questions, provided the most useful insight into the executives' perceptions of the effectiveness of the coaching process. The major findings were in the following key areas:

### **The manner in which the coaching relationship was initiated**

Most individuals had a positive and receptive attitude towards the process, whether it was initiated by the organisation or by themselves. Although there was a small degree of initial scepticism, hesitation turned to enthusiasm for most participants during the process.

### **How progress was measured**

40% of the executives said that there was no form of measurement, 28% reported that 360° feedback was used, 24% reported the use of goals, and 8% stated that personal values were used to measure progress. However, although not everyone could quantify the improvement in their performance, all reported positive results.

### **Obstacles to the process**

40% named time as the largest obstacle. Corporate culture came second, with 20%; 12% identified other people in their organisation, and 24% did not experience any obstacles.

### **The most valuable learning experiences**

All participants claimed to have learned more about themselves and/or gained new skills, 35% believed that their communication with others had improved, and 16% found the objective perspective provided by the coach useful for helping them to learn.

## **How the experience affected life outside the organisation**

Again, all participants believed that the benefits of coaching reached beyond their professional life and reported positive changes in their personal life in terms of relationships and life balance.

## **Conclusions**

The research concludes that the coaching process has a generally positive effect on the individuals involved. All participants in the telephone interviews perceived positive performance changes. This was also reflected in the findings of the postal survey.

The common areas in which participants reported positive behavioural changes were:

- increased awareness of self and others
- a greater sense of responsibility for their actions
- increased confidence
- greater receptiveness to change.

Gegner herself points out that the study has its limitations in terms of the small sample size, the subjectivity of the methods used, and the lack of follow-up to establish whether behavioural change was sustained.

However, the study does provide a useful starting point by giving an indication of executives' attitudes towards coaching and its effectiveness, and highlighting the key areas in which it may improve performance.

### **3. How To Choose The Right Executive Coach For You**

I'm making the rather bold presumption you might be thinking of hiring an executive coach to help you with your personal development, leading to higher performance levels and greater satisfaction in your professional endeavours. What important factors can you consider in guiding you to making the correct decision on the person best able to help you reach your potential.

I often find myself explaining my approach and providing executives with an explanation into my particular style and methodology. I do this with the intention of helping them make the right choice. In truth it is a very personal decision, for both them and me. It's also a very important decision, if the experience is to be positive and achieve successful outcomes.

#### **What type of person are you looking for?**

- 
- Do you want someone who will constantly push you to find your own answers?  
Or...
  - Are you looking for a more personalised approach - meaning that you receive feedback and ideas on how to resolve your issues, but also provided opportunities to find your own ideas and make the solution your own?
- 

A great coach knows how and when to use both approaches.

#### **Five Key Questions To Determine Your Best Executive Coach Fit**

##### **1. In what areas am I seeking coaching support?**

For example, you may find yourself in a situation, (an acquisition or turnaround perhaps), where you are experiencing challenges in your leadership or that of associates. There are an abundance of 'life coaches' and many former executives, neither of whom are necessarily appropriate for business or organisational leadership coaching. Think carefully about what your needs are, and be clear on the areas you feel that you want support in.

##### **2. Does my coach have relevant professional experience?**

Identify a coach who has had enough experience that you feel that the person will add value. Make a choice not only on the breadth of experience they have, measured by the number of years of experience, but more importantly the depth of relevant experience. The number of years of coaching experience while on the surface is helpful, can not be all you will be focused on.

### **3. What results have they achieved?**

Choose a coach who can answer questions about and evidence the results that they have helped their clients achieve. Also, present an area where you feel challenged and ask your coach how he or she would approach it. Coaching should take place to some extent right there and then, during your initial “discovery meeting”. Is the coach presenting a credible and convincing approach to your challenge? If so, you’re probably talking with the right person.

### **4. Am I clear on what the contract with my coach will cover?**

Ensure there is a written contract, signed by you and the coach before commencing the program. As a minimum, this should include:

- Timelines and deliverables that work for you. Most contracts are for 8 - 12 sessions of 60-90 minutes each. Ideally, these are held on a weekly basis.
- A confidentiality clause or a non-disclosure agreement to protect your sensitive information.
- Reviews on progress against objectives. There should also be a review of coaching performance in supporting your goal achievement.

### **5. Is the chemistry good?**

This is essentially the most important question from you that requires a resounding affirmative if you are going to go ahead. This is often referred to as the “Chemistry Session”. This is the first 1-2-1 meeting that you’ll have with your potential coach. This is your opportunity to pose the four questions I’ve suggested, and measure the cohesion between your needs and your coach’s fit. If your coach has answered your questions satisfactorily up to this point, then you need to decide if you feel comfortable with this coach. Is their style compatible with yours?

Pay attention here - compatible means compatible, not necessarily the same! Most importantly, you need to feel comfortable enough with your coach to be able to arrive at a position of trust, otherwise you won’t be able to open up and you won’t get the most out of the experience. Without trust being established, the experience is likely to be of limited value to you. As we know, trust is earned, not given.

It is the coach’s job to facilitate the relationship with you to reach a point where you can trust each other completely during the coaching program. Once secured, then with all of the other five boxes ticked, the coaching experience will become a true partnership that can continue beyond the completion of the coaching program. The result? A phenomenally rewarding partnership for both you and your coach.

## **4. Code of Practice for Executive Coaching**

### **Introduction**

What follows is my code of practice or standards of conduct that I adhere to as a professional and an executive coach. It adheres to a form of coaching that honours the client as the expert in his/her professional life and believes that every client is creative and resourceful. Standing on this foundation, my responsibility is to:

1. Discover, clarify, and align with what the client wants to achieve
2. Encourage client self-discovery
3. Elicit client-generated solutions and strategies
4. Hold the client as responsible and accountable.

### **Approach to Workplace Coaching**

Executive coaching is an ongoing partnership that helps clients produce fulfilling results in their professional lives. Through the process of coaching, clients deepen their learning, enhance their performance and improve their quality of life.

In each meeting, while the coach may have an agenda, the client often will choose the focus of conversation, while the coach listens and contributes observations and questions. This interaction creates clarity and moves the client into action.

Coaching accelerates the client's progress by providing greater focus and awareness of choice. Coaching concentrates on where clients are today and what they are willing to do to get where they want to be tomorrow.

### **Pledge of Ethics**

In my capacity as a coach, I acknowledge and align to ethical obligations to coaching clients and colleagues and to the public at large. I ensure my compliance with standards of conduct and openly commit to treating people with dignity and respect.



Ches Moulton, The Stress Master, is the UK's leading authority on stress management.

He is the author of 'How To Get Control Of Your Stress - Instead Of Stress Controlling You', and the international best-seller 'Choice and Change - How to have a healthy relationship with ourself and others'. He is also a contributor to 'Fit For Leadership #3'.

His career has spanned more than 25 years, during which time he has been a much sought-after executive coach, psychotherapist, and trainer. His most recent work has focused on helping those with elevated levels of stress overcome their problems and enjoy productive lives, free from both the physical and mental consequences of chronic stress.

During his time as a business performance consultant, Ches has served as an advisor to both private businesses and government in Canada, the Caribbean, United Kingdom, Africa and the Middle East.

Ches Moulton is the consummate executive coach and psychologist, self-motivated, reliable and loyal. He is an effective communicator with a high degree of inter-personal and relationship building skills. His ambition and enthusiasm has made an enormous contribution to our organisation.

Paul Whitnell  
President  
British and Irish Trading Alliance

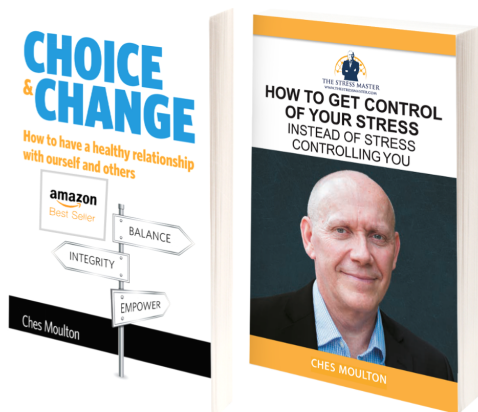
The management of Crannull Consulting Ltd encourage any organisation or company to engage with Ches, as the insight, delivery, and experience he brings to the boardroom and offices is without doubt an essential component of the training necessary to produce, happy and productive employees who benefit from being able to control their stress and get on with their agenda.

James Maguire  
Director  
Crannull Consulting Ltd

Mr. Moulton executed his work in a timely and professional manner. Indeed, the methodology used in presenting the information was such that it allowed the participants to immediately apply it to their individual businesses.

It is on this basis that I would recommend the services of Mr. Moulton to any organisation that may be interested in training its staff on this important area of business. I am sure that Mr. Moulton will continue to provide a value for money experience where the benefits would redound to the organisation.

Francine Blackman  
Chief Business Development Adviser  
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