

# Is Executive Coaching Right for You?

Many people are attracted to the field of executive coaching. After all, as a coach you are regarded as an expert with the ability to help others succeed and be happy at their game. Doing anything called “executive” sounds professional, smart, and prestigious. As an executive coach with several decades of experience and director of a graduate program in Executive Coaching, I get calls just about every week from a wide variety of people wanting to enter the field.

Exciting and satisfying as it is, this field is not for everybody. To qualify as an executive coach, you need certain attributes as well as a great deal of education, preparation, experience, continuous learning, and support. I have written this book to help—whether you are considering getting into the field; preparing to practice; or already practicing and looking for guidance, strategies, tools, and resources to build and manage your consultancy. This is not an academic study of the history of executive coaching nor does it contain a detailed discussion of the theory of executive coaching. Rather, this is a practical guide based on my experience as one professional, coupled with the advice many of my colleagues have shared with me.

## IS EXECUTIVE COACHING RIGHT FOR YOU?

### WHAT IS EXECUTIVE COACHING?

Let's begin by examining what makes executive coaching different from other forms of coaching, counseling, and consulting. In the work I have been privileged to do as a member of a number of groups of experts in the field of executive coaching, there have been several key attributes that define and separate executive coaching from other kinds of consulting. Most executive coaching is done with leaders or would-be leaders of organizations. (A leader is loosely defined as anyone working in an organization who can have significant influence on the mission, direction, strategy, or long-term success of that organization.) Historically, although the term *executive coaching* has most commonly referred to this type of work, it is not in any way restricted to coaching people considered to be "executives."

The organizations that provide executive coaching range from big businesses to small family-owned enterprises, from government agencies to hospitals, nonprofits to universities, and public and private schools to venture capital firms, law firms, and advertising agencies. Certain industries, such as high technology and financial services, began using executive coaching as early as the 1980s and 1990s. Most industry sectors have jumped on the bandwagon by now, with a good number of organizations providing coaching. The industries that got an earlier start appear to be doing more proactive, developmental coaching for people with high potential, or those entering critical roles, or expanding their leadership responsibilities.

Five to 10 years ago, executive coaching was primarily remedial in nature: "fixing" people, solving performance problems, or putting out fires set by poor leadership. Today, that pattern has reversed itself, with most organizations focusing their executive coaching on developing leadership capabilities and achieving strategic organizational results in a proactive fashion. Some industries and organizations that have only recently embraced executive coaching are just beginning to focus on proactive development and results versus remediation. But there is no question that just about

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all industries and types of organizations are providing executive coaching. Given these varied client groups and coaching mandates, the work of the executive coach often overlaps with the larger scopes of leadership development, organization development, and management consulting.

A basic definition of executive coaching is derived from the work of the Graduate School Alliance for Executive Coaching (2007, p. 1) and the Executive Coaching Forum (2004, p. 19):

Executive coaching is a development process that builds a leader's or would-be leader's capabilities to achieve professional and organizational goals. This coaching is conducted through one-on-one and group interactions, driven by evidence/data from multiple perspectives, and is based on mutual trust and respect. The coach, individuals being coached, and their organizations work in partnership to help achieve the agreed upon goals of the coaching.

This approach to developing leaders and facilitating organizational results can be provided by line managers, human resources professionals, management consultants, training and development professionals, and just about anyone in the position to help others become better leaders and achieve results. The executive coach for whom this book is written is not just someone who coaches leaders and tries to accomplish these goals. Rather, it takes a highly educated and trained professional who is well prepared to tackle any client's needs in these areas. Successful practitioners must have access to a wide variety of resources, plus a system, process, and support to provide executive coaching according to professional standards as described in this book.

### *Job of the Professional Executive Coach*

Executive coaching is one of the many approaches in the repertoire management and leadership consultants employ. Consultants assess organizational situations and help the leaders and members involved improve their effectiveness and results. Some consultants

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do a lot of one-on-one and group development, advising leaders and would-be leaders in client organizations. When they are applying those approaches, consultants are serving as executive coaches. They consider themselves, or are considered by others, to be professional executive coaches for several reasons.

Professional executive coaching has four defining factors:

1. Executive coaches often focus a great deal of their consulting practice on one-on-one and group coaching.
2. They often employ a more structured process in their coaching work, such as following a set protocol of precoaching activities, assessment, and goal setting.
3. Their clients may seek them out specifically for executive coaching, asking them to follow the organization's guidelines or other standards for coaching.
4. They may contract for coaching work differently than for other consulting projects when it comes to confidentiality, data gathering, communication, project management, payment, and other terms and logistics of their work.

Many coaches who work with people on personal, career, financial, or other issues aspire to do executive coaching. Their motivations are as diverse as the coaches themselves. Some want to make more money. Others are fascinated by the challenges of business or organizational leadership. And still others are seeking prestige or the stimulation of working with especially smart and interesting people. But just imagine that you are a financial coach with a background in accounting or investment strategies. Your ability to help your clients depends not only on your basic coaching skills but, perhaps more importantly, on possessing the knowledge and expertise each unique client needs. When you work with a young couple just starting to invest for their children's education or their own retirement, or to ensure care for their aging parents, you must be knowledgeable and experienced in all of these areas. If your client's needs require you to have special knowledge in areas in which you lack expertise, such as international bonds or

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eldercare law, then you must be able to refer your client to a reliable resource network.

Similarly, as an executive coach you must have basic knowledge and experience of what most leaders and would-be leaders know and do. You need as much education, training, and experience in the specialty areas of executive coaching as the financial coach has in finance. Whether you are a personal coach, career coach, financial coach, or training and development specialist, you will not be effective as an executive coach without the requisite education, training, and expertise.

### *Executive Coaches Are Different*

Professional executive coaches have much in common with many coaches (sports, academic, personal, career, spiritual, marital, financial, communication, parenting, and so many others). Most, regardless of their specialization:

- Work one-on-one and with small groups of people
- Help clients understand what they want to accomplish and what it will take to accomplish it
- Provide expertise and guidance to help clients improve themselves, change their behaviors, make decisions, plan to accomplish their goals, and carry through with those plans
- Reassure and help clients build and maintain self-confidence and a positive attitude in the face of difficult challenges, self-doubt, and emotional lows as well as high stress and new opportunities
- Provide focus, validate, do reality testing, and help clients think differently to break out of mental mindsets and be innovative

All coaches provide this help by bringing to the coaching relationship sound and basic coaching skills as well as a strong base of knowledge and expertise in their area of specialization. The best tennis coaches are not only good at these activities, but they also know a lot about the game of tennis and are experienced in

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helping tennis players improve their technique and develop strategies against opponents with a variety of strengths and weaknesses. Executive coaches must also have a great deal of expertise and experience in leadership, learning, organizations, people, business, and many other areas.

Executive coaches have two basic goals as they work with their clients:

1. Help build the leadership capabilities and effectiveness of the individuals coached, and
2. Help those individuals achieve organizational results.

Many other types of coaches work with leaders and would-be leaders in organizations. They do not, however, focus on these two goals. Presentation coaches, for example, improve leaders' presentation skills. Time management coaches show people how to organize their time and work. Career coaches help leaders step back and decide where to go professionally and how to get there. Life coaches help people who happen to be leaders think about their lives, plan to achieve their goals, and lead their lives with success and satisfaction. Although executive coaches often use these and other approaches, what makes their work different is their primary focus on leadership development and organizational results.

### EXECUTIVE COACHING VERSUS COUNSELING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

There is often overlap between counseling and psychotherapy on the one hand and executive coaching on the other. Counseling and psychotherapy focus primarily on helping people understand themselves, lead productive lives, and deal with personal challenges or mental health problems that stand in the way of happiness and positive relationships. The goal is to help people sort out how they think, feel, and behave—and how they would like to think, feel, and behave—before shaping satisfying and productive lives for themselves and those with whom they interact. The focus of the

## Executive Coaching versus Counseling and Psychotherapy

work is on the personal versus the professional, on what goes on inside the client's head and body, how to interact with family and friends, and how to concentrate on the positive and solve problems that interfere with life and happiness. People learn to recognize and manage their difficulties themselves, with their counselor or therapist helping them identify opportunities and capitalize on them.

### *Therapeutic Challenges of Counseling and Psychotherapy*

Counselors and psychotherapists, who usually have clinical or counseling backgrounds in psychology, psychiatry, social work, or related fields, deal with such issues as helping people:

- Achieve calmness or dealing with anxiety
- Handle mood/depression
- Set personal goals or priorities
- Improve family or personal relationships
- Deal with problems sleeping, eating, or thinking clearly
- Accept and resolving difficult experiences or traumas
- React emotionally to physical illness
- Manage stress
- Learn new ways to deal with personal differences, limitations, or challenges
- Resolve personal or interpersonal conflict
- Have realistic expectations from life
- Learn positive new habits, breaking old ones, or changing behaviors
- Learn more productive ways to live life and overcome personal barriers
- Make the most of their lives

Some of these personal challenges can act as barriers to or opportunities for accomplishing the goals of executive coaching. Leaders may find it difficult to be patient with people they manage due partly to anxiety or problems with personal relationships. Key leaders on project teams may overcommit and manage time inefficiently

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because of a learning disability or personal challenges that prevent multitasking. When personal differences and problems require more long-term and clinical interventions, you as executive coach should refer the coachee to a qualified mental-health professional. If such problems significantly interfere with the ability to achieve work or coaching goals, you may not be able to help unless the problems are resolved through personal coaching, counseling, or psychotherapy.

Too often executive coaches try to take on therapeutic challenges. And mental-health professionals who try to provide executive coaching often look for, diagnose, and treat personal problems from a clinical perspective. Short coaching excursions into personal issues may help move a coaching agenda forward, but bigger, more therapeutic issues should be dealt with outside the coaching relationship by a mental-health professional.

Keep in mind that as executive coach, your primary obligation is to the organization that hired you. Your obligation is not to help executives deal with personal problems or lead happier lives, but to develop them into successful leaders capable of achieving results for their organization. There are times when you, with the permission of your coachee, can collaborate with a counselor, personal coach, psychotherapist, psychologist, social worker, psychiatrist, or other qualified mental-health worker. These professionals will keep you, and each other, informed while supporting your client's personal and professional development. The wall of confidentiality they maintain will not interfere with the rights and safety of the individual nor your obligations to the organization where the coachee works. Separating personal development goals and who helps to achieve them will avoid conflicts of interest between your commitments to the individual and the organization.

### MAJOR DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EXECUTIVE COACHING AND COUNSELING OR PSYCHOTHERAPY

- Coaching is primarily focused on practical, action-oriented goals; counseling and psychotherapy are primarily focused on



## Coaching Competencies

helping people understand themselves and change the way they manage their lives.

- Coaching is most often focused on building skills and plans and implementing them; counseling and psychotherapy focus on gaining greater self-awareness and exploring better ways to cope with personal difficulties, challenges, and opportunities.
- Coaching is usually short term, with a goal of improving or achieving a specific outcome. Although some forms of counseling and psychotherapy are short term, it usually takes many months or years to deal with significant emotional issues or ingrained personal tendencies.
- Coaching is about identifying goals, opportunities to learn, and solutions. Counseling and psychotherapy focus on identifying personal needs, opportunities, and problems. Therapists help their clients to meet needs, capitalize on opportunities, solve problems, and develop life strategies to cope with or compensate for problems that cannot be solved.

### COACHING COMPETENCIES

Regardless of the coaching specialty, all coaches must be able to:

- Build trust
- Ask useful questions
- Actively listen
- Guide
- Problem solve
- Generate creative solutions
- Provide emotional and motivational support
- Demonstrate skills and best practices
- Give constructive feedback
- Show enthusiasm
- Inspire self-confidence and encouragement
- Organize
- Plan
- Follow through

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- Establish coaching goals
- Monitor coaching results
- Develop coaching strategies and adjust them as the coaching progresses

### *Special Knowledge and Skills of Executive Coaches*

Professional executive coaches need specialty knowledge and expertise in five sets of competencies: psychology, business acumen, organization development, executive coaching knowledge and skills, and consulting practice development and management. Chapter 2 of this book describes each of these areas and shows you how to assess yourself, obtain feedback, and evaluate others. Chapter 2 will also help you identify strengths to build on and to identify gaps in knowledge and skills to fill before you can succeed as an executive coach. Let's begin with a general description of each set of competencies.

**PSYCHOLOGY** Executive coaching focuses on helping individuals be effective leaders and achieve results for their organizations. To help a leader, you must understand how adults think, feel, and behave; what drives them; how they learn and change; how they interact with and influence others; and what differentiates them individually, in relationship to other individuals, and as members of groups. In addition, knowledge about the science and professional practice of psychology provides a data-based, valid, and ethical orientation. Many sets of psychological skills transfer to executive coaching, helping you assess people and situations, provide feedback, teach, advise, and collaborate with others to build capabilities and solve problems.

**BUSINESS ACUMEN** Executive coaching takes place within the context of a business organization. The business within which your client operates may take many forms; a for-profit corporation, non-profit, school, government agency, hospital or health-care practice, or small family owned business. Since executive coaching focuses

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on helping the coachee lead within the business and achieve business results, you as coach must understand how businesses operate and leaders achieve results in a variety of business settings. Knowledge and skills are essential in business principles and practices, finance, customers, management and supervision of employees, business functions and roles, technologies, current trends in the local and global marketplace, and human resources management.

**ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT** Executive coaching must take place within the context of the organization in which the client leads or will lead. Therefore it is essential for you, as a professional, to understand how organizational systems operate and develop; their structures, systems, cultures, subgroups, and leadership practices. Besides a solid grasp of the theory behind organization development, you must also possess the strategies and techniques to help your client assess, intervene, facilitate in, and develop the organization. Without these skills, you cannot help your coachee become a better leader, bring about change, and achieve results within the organization.

### *Defining and Setting Standards for Executive Coaching*

Ten years ago hardly a book or professional article was available on executive coaching; practically no research had been done on the topic. There was no agreement on what executive coaching was and little, if any, education and training for coaches. The discipline is still in its formative stages, but it is moving toward global agreement on defining and setting standards for the education, training, and practice of executive coaching. Our knowledge grows every day as experts share their theories, approaches, stories, and results. There are now hundreds of books and articles on executive coaching, with more coming out each month. To serve your clients well, you must be educated on the foundation of your discipline and keep up with emerging knowledge about theories, principles, practices, data, tools, and skills.

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Executive coaches need to understand the wide variety of multidisciplinary models and theories of coaching. You cannot help a client without forming your own theoretical model. Besides developing integrity and good judgment, learn to approach executive coaching from a systems perspective, with a focus on business and results within the context of the client organization and in partnership with that organization (Ennis et al., 2005). Also essential is the ability to manage the coaching process from pre-coaching to contracting, assessment and goal setting, and transitioning to long-term development. Equally important skills include tailoring the coaching to the individual and organization, building and maintaining client relationships, creating and implementing a coaching development plan, and measuring the success of the coaching. Finally, you must be competent at applying the many coaching tools and techniques required to meet the varied needs of your diverse coaching clients and client organizations.

### *Consulting Practice Development and Management*

Whether you are an internal or external executive coach, you must develop and manage your practice in a professional manner. The growing market of executive coaching requires you to establish your own unique value proposition to differentiate yourself in the marketplace or in your organization. You must then build your own capabilities and resources to succeed in your practice. There are eight key elements for you to develop and manage as a professional executive coach:

1. Your own education, training, supervision, and continued development in the knowledge, skills, and practice of executive coaching;
2. Strategic and marketing plans, whether you are an external or internal consultant;
3. Descriptions and marketing material for your coaching services targeted to your target markets;

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4. A professional network for referrals to you as well as from you;
5. A toolbox of resources for meeting the needs of your clients, such as assessments, guides, readings, educational materials, and media;
6. An office infrastructure, including telecommunications, a scheduling system, and administrative support;
7. Research and publication; and
8. Community service.

The rest of this book is organized to help you build and manage these eight aspects of professional executive coaching.

### TYPES OF EXECUTIVE COACHING

The goals of individual executive coaching projects are as varied as the individuals and organizations you serve. There are seven common areas of focus.

#### *High-Potential Coaching*

High-potential individuals have not yet taken on significant leadership roles, but their organization has identified them as good prospects for future leadership or as part of a formal succession plan. Examples of coaching goals for high-potential individuals include:

- Making career decisions
- Developing basic management skills
- Refocusing from tactical management to more strategic leadership
- Refocusing from technical to managerial and leadership activities
- Identifying potential, strengths, and interests to match them with an appropriate development track

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### *On-Boarding Coaching*

Experienced leaders who have been or are about to be assigned to a new leadership role can benefit from on-boarding coaching. Goals for these individuals include:

- Facilitating an agreement between the coachee and key constituents on the charter for the assignment
- Building stakeholder relationships
- Developing an accelerated learning plan for leaders taking on new responsibilities (Betof & Harwood, 1992)

### *Continued Leadership-Development Coaching*

Experienced managers and leaders often need to develop their leadership capabilities or expand their repertoires before taking on greater responsibility or more strategic leadership roles. Their coaching goals may include:

- Building executive presence
- Demonstrating greater passion to inspire the organization
- Driving a visionary strategic planning process
- Increasing collaboration with peers or a board on key strategic initiatives
- Building emotional intelligence competencies

### *Remedial Coaching*

Leaders and managers may be having difficulty meeting their current responsibilities. Sometimes their leadership style prevents them from achieving needed results for the organization, or they accomplish short-term results in ways that are not aligned with the values, mission, vision, or strategy of the organization. These leaders need remedial coaching on such goals as:

- Stopping the overuse of independence or assertiveness that intimidates people

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- Showing greater patience with people with different styles who need more time to think and plan
- Setting priorities and focusing on key objectives
- Holding people accountable and providing coaching when delegating responsibilities to others
- Acting in accordance with the law and the policies and procedures of the organization

### *Group or Team Coaching*

With the support of a coach, small groups or teams of managers, leaders, and high-potential employees with similar development needs or shared goals learn to work together, coach each other, and build a support network for future collaboration. Their goals may include:

- Building partnerships with team members or cross-functional peers
- Developing coaching skills
- Gaining emotional intelligence in empathy and managing conflict
- Diversifying presentation style for different audiences
- Improving team dynamics
- Learning supervisory skills

### *Legacy Coaching*

Leaders in later phases of their professional careers may want to prepare their successors, leave a legacy, transition to new roles, or identify activities to pursue in the next stage of life. Legacy coaching includes among its goals:

- Putting together a retirement or semiretirement activity portfolio
- Establishing a vision to inspire growth in the organization

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- Planning a memoir that focuses on the leader's tenure at the organization
- Developing a transition plan for the senior executive who is taking over the reins

### *Targeted Coaching*

An already strong leader may want to develop or refine a particular skill set, achieve a specific result, or work on a special project. Targeted coaching includes:

- Developing a project plan for a key initiative
- Improving influence skills
- “Managing up” to senior managers in the organization
- Working with the board of directors to build a mergers-and-acquisitions strategy with accompanying funding

## EXECUTIVE COACHING CHECKLIST

On a very practical basis, professional executive coaches usually work in close partnership with the people they coach and key members of the coachee's organization. Here is a checklist of the typical steps a coach manages from beginning to end:

### **Before Coaching**

- Match-up*: Initial relationship building, sharing of needs and qualifications. Meet with representatives of the client organization to discuss the perceived needs for the coaching, your qualifications and approach, and the potential match between you and coaching needs. You and your coachee explore your styles, preferences, strengths, similarities, and differences to determine if you could work well together in a coaching relationship.
- Coachability check*: You and the coachee determine if the time is right for coaching. Depending on career, life, and work situation, is the coachee motivated, available, and capable of getting the most from the coaching?



## Choosing a Coach

- Contracting:* You, your firm, coachee, coachee's boss, human resources manager, or others in the coachee's organization agree, verbally and in writing, on the goals, ground rules, roles, process, time line, fees, and working relationships related to the coaching.
- Initial goal setting:* Meet, separately and together, with the coachee, coachee's boss, the appropriate human resources professional, or others to identify and agree on general goals for the coaching. At this stage, goals may include building leadership skills, improving the performance of the coachee's direct reports, or accelerating the delivery of results for a critical project. These initial goals may change after the first phase of coaching, once data have been gathered and assessments completed to determine the coachee's developmental needs and the assistance necessary to achieve organizational results.

### **During Coaching**

- Assessment, feedback, and development planning
- Specific goal setting and agreements on how to support the coaching
- Initial coaching sessions
- Progress check
- Continued coaching sessions

### **Ending Coaching**

- Final progress check
- Long-term development plan
- Final coaching session
- Final meeting for closure and continued development and support

## CHOOSING A COACH

Organizations employ coaches from both inside the organization and outside, and often a combination of both.

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### *Internal Executive Coaches*

Larger organizations and those more experienced with executive coaching often hire and develop professional coaches as employees. There are benefits to using internal coaches: they know the culture, people, and strategy of the organization and can provide support both formally, through an established process, and informally as the need arises. But internal coaches face certain challenges. Since they are part of the culture, they may lack the objectivity, willingness, or ability to challenge the status quo. Their livelihood and acceptance into their peer group, after all, depend on fitting into the organization and staying employed.

Other difficulties concern confidentiality and conflict of interest, when internal coaches push back on or give difficult feedback to senior executives who control employment and compensation. The insider can be viewed as just another person down the hall rather than an expert with great insights and expertise from working with leaders in other organizations. On the other hand, insiders can be of great help if they are considered role models of leadership and have proven skills coaching and mentoring in the organization.

Coaching is key in supervising and developing employees and colleagues. A manager often provides coaching not as a professional executive coach but as a leader skilled at helping others identify developmental opportunities, build capabilities, and achieve results through performance management and professional development activities. Such coaching often takes place within the supervisory relationship, but can also occur as part of the organization's performance management or mentoring process. If such a process exists, it is the best way for an employee to find an internal coach or mentor. Another way is to network with others to identify leaders who can help employees develop and advocate for their development and advancement.

THE HUMAN RESOURCES PROFESSIONAL AS AN EXECUTIVE COACH  
Human resources professionals who serve as executive coaches in their organizations can achieve great success. Their roles

## Structure of an Executive Coaching Session

and expectations for their coaching services must be clearly defined. Even the most qualified and supported internal coaches may find it difficult to coach senior-level executives except in unusual situations where trust is high, confidentiality is well defined, and policies and procedures exist to reassure employees that their coaching sessions will not come back to haunt them. When it is not the best option for internal human resources professionals to provide coaching, they can still play a critical role by helping leaders find coaches and support the coaching. Many organizations establish a pool of screened, recommended external coaches who can be matched to the individual and the situation for a coaching engagement. The human resources professional can partner with leaders, their bosses, and external coaches to manage and participate in the coaching process.

### STRUCTURE OF AN EXECUTIVE COACHING SESSION

There are many styles of executive coaching. Depending on your stylistic tendencies, the activities of coaching can vary widely. Some styles are based on teaching and verbal dialogue. Others are more structured around solving problems, accomplishing work, rehearsing new behaviors, and practicing new skills. Still others treat the coaching session as a catalyst for learning and getting things done between the coaching sessions. Many coaches are eclectic in their approach, combining various styles and activities to tailor their coaching to the needs of each coachee. The following agenda for coaching sessions is very basic, focusing on a balance of different coaching styles and methods:

#### **Agenda Topics for a Coaching Session**

- *What's new?* The coachee updates you, as coach, on what has happened since you last met. Together you discuss implications for the coachee's role, priorities, activities, and what to focus on in coaching.
- *What has the coachee worked on and achieved since the previous coaching session?* The coachee reports on progress toward

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goals, assignments, and activities associated with the coaching and how the learning from previous sessions has been applied on the job. This is your opportunity to reinforce learning, leadership competencies, new practices, and results. It is also an opportunity for further coaching to meet stated goals.

- *During this session, how can we work on current and future goals in the coaching plan?* This is the coachee's real-time work: learning and practicing new skills; trying, shaping, and changing work habits; building self-awareness and restructuring assumptions, beliefs, and ways of thinking that interfere with success; developing strategic plans; analyzing data and learning new ways to develop solutions to work on problems.
- *How can we plan for the next coaching sessions and upcoming activities?* Together, explore and agree on what the coachee will do to apply the learning from this session. Determine how you and others will support these activities. Then set the specific agenda for the next coaching session and agree on what each of you will do in preparation.
- *How can we continually improve the coaching as we move forward?* Debrief the coaching process with your coachee. To maximize both the process and its results, identify which strategies are working successfully and what should change. Explore ways to inform and involve the coachee's boss, board, and others who support the coaching.

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND ORGANIZATIONAL RESULTS OF EXECUTIVE COACHING

Over the past few decades, I have had the privilege of coaching hundreds of leaders and would-be leaders at just about every level in every function, industry, geographic region, and organizational situation. In each case, I have analyzed the findings from objective assessments and self-evaluations, plus feedback from the coachee's boards, superiors, peers, subordinates, customers, vendors, and others. I have identified the most frequent leadership development

## Leadership Development Goals and Organizational Results

goals and organization results on which the executive coaching focused.

The following list is not all-inclusive, but rather an evidence-based, representative sample of many of the most common areas addressed in executive coaching:

### **Leadership Development Goals**

- Appropriate sense of, and expression of, humor
- Assertiveness
- Collaboration
- Conflict management
- Customer management
- Decision making
- Delegation
- Demonstrating passion
- Emotional intelligence (awareness of and managing emotions and relationships for oneself and with others)
- Executive presence
- Giving positive and constructive feedback
- Hiring talent
- Influence
- Innovation
- Listening
- Managing one's own career
- Managing positive politics
- Managing up (to bosses and other superiors)
- Mentoring, coaching, and developing others' talents and careers
- Negotiation
- Performance management
- Presentation skills
- Problem solving
- Project management
- Strategic planning
- Stress management
- Tactical planning

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- Team building
- Time management, setting priorities, and managing according to priorities
- Work-life balance

### **Organizational Results Goals**

- Achieving more results with less effort
- Aligning with the board of directors
- Building a learning organization
- Building a talent pool for succession planning
- Building employee morale and loyalty
- Cutting costs
- Cutting product-development cycle time
- Developing a compelling organizational vision, mission, and strategy
- Diversifying sources of business and revenue
- Doing more with less resources
- Ensuring consistent compliance with ethical, legal, and professional guidelines
- Growing the organization
- Improving customer satisfaction, loyalty, and retention
- Improving investor relations
- Improving organizational communication
- Improving quality
- Increasing cross-divisional/functional cooperation
- Increasing organizational efficiency
- Increasing productivity
- Increasing revenue
- Increasing the success rate of newly appointed leaders and key players
- Maintaining organizational stability during significant change
- Reducing turnover in human resources
- Restructuring the organization
- Seeking and achieving successful mergers and acquisitions

## Is Executive Coaching Right for You?

### IS EXECUTIVE COACHING RIGHT FOR YOU?

Whether you are already practicing executive coaching or are considering the field for the future, the following questions can help you decide if your needs, interests, abilities, and tendencies are a good match with professional executive coaching.

The more you answer each question positively and with confidence, the more executive coaching may be right for you. Chapter 2 will help you assess your knowledge and expertise and begin to use your strengths to build your practice.

#### **Your Needs**

- Is it important for you to change people's lives: both the leaders you coach and the people they lead and interact with?
- Do you care about the success of organizations, their business results, and their return to key constituents?
- Are your income needs aligned with executive coaching fees? Are you prepared to provide significant coaching services for lower fees as a contribution to the mission or purpose of the organizations you will serve?

#### **Your Interests**

- Are you fascinated by leadership, organizational systems, and the intensity of the leader's role in organizations?
- Do you like to deal with high-pressure situations in which major organizational issues and key work relationships are dealt with openly and practically?
- Do you enjoy working one-on-one and in small groups with smart people? Do you have a deep desire to learn continually as you help others learn, change what they do, build their skills, and work more effectively?

#### **Your Abilities**

- Do you have mature self-confidence, humility, assertiveness, openness, and flexibility in what you do and how you do it?
- Do you have a reserve of positive energy, optimism, and resilience?

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- Do you process information quickly, envision scenarios, understand how you and how others think and feel, and build and manage relationships easily?

### **Your Tendencies**

- Are you comfortable being independent while still collaborating with others to support shared goals?
- Are you geared to use data and evidence to help people make decisions?
- Do you have an action orientation to solving problems, capitalizing on opportunities, and getting things done?

## FINDING CLIENTS BEST SUITED FOR YOU

Each executive coach is best suited to serve certain clients with specific needs and styles in certain industries and kinds of organizations. Before hanging out your shingle, determine what type of client to seek.

### *Marketing Yourself*

Chapters 3 and 4 will help you decide what you have to offer as an executive coach, whom you can best serve with your unique value proposition, and how to build and market your practice to attract and retain the right clients for you. Those chapters are based on five assumptions about marketing yourself as an executive coach:

1. You can't attract the right clients before you decide what type of client you want to serve.
2. You can't decide which clients you want to serve before deciding what differentiates you in the market and how to build on your strengths and goals to achieve personal, professional, and business success.
3. You can't decide on your value proposition and the goals for your practice before you are truly aware of who you are, what you care about, what you want to achieve, and what is realistic as a practice in your target market.



## This Book Will Help You Build and Manage

4. As a professional executive coach, the most important building block of your practice is you. You need to know your strengths and development needs to position your practice, fill and compensate for gaps in knowledge and skills, and use your attributes and abilities. Chapter 2 of this book will help you to complete that self-assessment.
5. Finally, you don't sell executive coaching like you sell cars. As a professional, relationship-oriented service, people select you as a coach because someone they trust has recommended you or you build trust and respect quickly when you first meet with potential coaching clients. To accomplish that, you must demonstrate that you understand their situation and will succeed in developing them as leaders and achieving organizational results.

### *Getting Selected as the Right Executive Coach*

Once you identify your target market, follow four steps to convince organizations and their leaders to select you as a coach. These steps are applicable for both the external coach and the internal human resources or organization development professional:

1. Make yourself known in the market.
2. Stand out from the competition.
3. Develop referral sources so potential coachees and the people who find coaches for them will contact you when the need arises.
4. Serve your clients and potential clients extraordinarily well—they will recommend you to others and turn to you again.

### THIS BOOK WILL HELP YOU BUILD AND MANAGE YOUR EXECUTIVE COACHING PRACTICE

This chapter has provided a framework for executive coaching. Now turn to Chapter 2 for your executive coaching self-assessment. It will help you identify your strengths, knowledge and

## IS EXECUTIVE COACHING RIGHT FOR YOU?

skills to develop, and attributes and abilities to use or compensate for in your practice.

With Chapter 3 you'll begin building and marketing your executive coaching value proposition. You'll decide what you want to accomplish through your practice, target the market and types of clients you can best serve, and begin to develop a step-by-step plan for establishing your practice.

Chapter 4 is your guide to building and managing a professional executive coaching practice. You will learn about referral and resource networks, a coaching toolbox, office infrastructure, coaching project-management systems, professional and peer supervision, research and publication, and community service.

Are you transitioning from a specialty in mental health, business management, management and organization-development consulting, personal/life coaching, human resource management, or another area of coaching? Chapter 5 will help you manage the transition to executive coaching.

Chapter 6 helps you put it all together and build your professional executive coaching practice plan. We focus on the form your practice will take, your professional development plan, a marketing plan, the building blocks of your practice, a management plan, and a transition plan from your current area of work.

The Appendix provides practical resources for building and managing your professional executive coaching practice: a bibliography of useful readings, Web-based resources, tools and materials, professional organizations, and other sources.

Executive coaching is an exciting and challenging field. As a professional discipline, it is just beginning to define itself and establish professional standards. If you are prepared to learn continually, work hard, and build a practice on a foundation of knowledge, skills, tools, and useful and practical service, executive coaching will reward you amply. Best of luck as you use this book and continue on your path into the field of professional executive coaching.