

10

Steps to

Successful

Coaching



Sophie Oberstein

2nd Edition

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ATD Press is an internationally renowned source of insightful and practical information on talent development, training, and professional development.

ATD Press
1640 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314 USA

Ordering information: Books published by ATD Press can be purchased by visiting ATD's website at td.org/books or by calling 800.628.2783 or 703.683.8100.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2020930966
ISBN-10: 1-95049-620-1
ISBN-13: 978-1-95049-620-4
e-ISBN: 978-1-95049-621-1

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Printed by Versa, East Peoria, IL

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Buy This Book

Preface to the Second Edition

When I wrote the first edition of this book, I was in love—with coaching. Newly certified as a coach by the Coaches Training Institute (now Co-Active Training Institute), I loved the possibilities coaching presented as well as the bold, creative, and active approach to helping people that coaching—and the CTI model of coaching—provided. Coaching, to me, was a natural extension of the work I did as a learning and development professional, as coaching is primarily that—“an interactive process to help individuals and organizations develop more rapidly and produce more satisfying results” (ICF 2016).

For the first edition of this book, I researched numerous coaching models and wrote about my interpretation of them as an ideal. That is, without much context. I focused on “pure coaching”—how to be successful at coaching regardless of where and with whom you would be doing it. For this edition, I have attempted to directly address the environment in which most of your coaching will take place: the workplace. To do that, I have merged what were Steps 1 and 2—both about how to get yourself ready to coach—into one step called “Prepare Yourself.” This allowed me to add a new step at the end of the book: “Prepare Your Organization for Coaching.” I’ve also added pointers throughout the steps related to applying pure coaching in the work world.

In the years since I wrote the first edition, I have held a few jobs, one of which was coaching manager for Weight Watchers North America (back when it was Weight Watchers, not WW). In that capacity, I first articulated my own coaching model that is now reflected in this book.

Finally, when the first book was written 10 years ago, coaching was still an emerging tool in the workplace. A good part of the book focused on how to sell the concept and how to introduce coaching to

the world. These days, coaching is a known and desired development activity. Employers of choice help employees focus on their careers and their ongoing development through activities that include coaching as well as stretch assignments, live and virtual training, mentoring, job shadowing, and more. Coaching is a retention tool in a low-unemployment economy. I think this widespread understanding and acceptance of coaching, and the new technologies that can support coaching models, make the work of a coach even more enjoyable and allows us to push the limits of what we can do as coaches even farther.

I hope this update preserves the joy and excitement of pure coaching within the world of work. As with the first edition, the skills described in this book can be more broadly applied. Using these skills will help you not only in the workplace, but with your friends, family, and in other settings as well.

I am still enamored of coaching and all that successful coaching can elicit. I just happen to be farther along on my coaching journey. *10 Steps to Successful Coaching*, second edition summarizes what I've learned along the way, and it offers a meaningful process for embracing your existing coaching skills and interjecting more of them into your current work style and environment. Coaching uses the strengths you already have as a leader, colleague, or employee to bring out the strengths of others. As such, it's not about scrapping who you are to become someone else. It's just about connecting with others in a new way. It's about adding new exercises, processes, and questions to the work you do to produce results that are more rewarding and exciting.

My goal for the book is to help you become happier in your role as manager, employee, friend, partner, or parent by becoming more coach-like in your daily interactions.

I've experienced this process as both client and coach, and I've seen the transformations it can produce, so I'm excited for you in what you're about to undertake.

Acknowledgments

In the first edition of this book, I expressed my gratitude to all my coaches and thanked my coaching clients for giving me the opportunity to assist them with their learning and growth—and for the learning and growth I absorbed in the process. I thanked them, too, for giving me permission to share some of their stories. While my gratitude in this area is not at all diminished, as I am attempting in this book to integrate coaching into the workplace, I want to thank six amazing organizational leaders who have allowed me to do the work of helping others grow as employees and people: Maria DeGuevara, Ed Everett, and Peter Ingram at the City of Redwood City; Daniel Boockvar at Weight Watchers; Kathryn Zukof at New York University; and Aaron Vieira at Columbia University Irving Medical Center. Not only did these individuals support coaching initiatives, they were all-around amazing bosses. You'll hear more from several of them throughout these pages. I've been lucky in my career to have worked with so many inspiring and supportive leaders.

I'm so happy that ATD asked me to update this book 10 years later. Rewriting it has been a valuable learning experience for me and I want to thank Eliza Blanchard, Zaimah Khan, Jack Harlow, and Hannah Sternberg for making it possible.

As before, my indebtedness extends to my friends and family, who have supported me wholeheartedly in my various career transitions as well as helped me feel that I could be successful at whatever I wanted to do. Special thanks again to Nina and Ted Liebman, who laid the foundation by raising me in the greatest of rich and supportive environments. As is everything, Jeff, Lily, and Evan, this is—once again—for you.

In loving memory of Barry and Sandy Oberstein.

Sophie Oberstein

August 2019

Introduction

"I absolutely believe that people, unless coached, never reach their full potential."

—Bob Nardelli, CEO, Home Depot

Every morning I receive a curated list of business articles in my email inbox. And every morning at least one of those articles promotes the benefits of leaders acting like coaches. Here's a sample of recent headlines that *SmartBrief* sent me in just one week:

- "Encouragement and Connection Make Good Leaders More Effective"—which suggests encouraging leaders to bring out the best in other people to help them achieve better results.
- "Nine Ideas to Help You Lead Effectively in Pressure Environments" includes tips like "care for people" and "respect them enough to provide tough feedback and ample praise." "Good leaders," this article suggests, "challenge individuals to grow in the moment by providing opportunities and responsibilities and offering to coach."
- "13 Secret Questions That Google Uses to Collect Employee Feedback" provides the questions that Google—an organization at the forefront of leadership development—asks its employees in order to collect feedback on its managers, including "My manager gives me actionable feedback that helps me improve my performance," "My manager has had a meaningful discussion with me about career development in the past six months," and "My manager shows consideration for me as a person."
- "Good Leaders Don't Give Advice—They Coach" has the subheading, "The best managers help their employees set actionable goals, give constructive feedback, and practice compassionate directness."

As these clips show, the benefits of integrating coaching skills—like delivering feedback, creating accountability, and just talking to employees about their goals, their values, and what creates meaning in their lives—are no secret. A number of research studies report that coaching provides tangible outcomes, including enhanced learning, work performance, and business results. In 2009, the *Journal of Positive Psychology* reported on a randomized, controlled study that concluded that executive coaching enhances goal attainment, resilience, and workplace well-being. And a year earlier, the *Coaching Psychology Journal* reported on an empirical study that claimed executive coaching is an effective method of leadership development resulting in improvement in five areas: people management, relationships with managers, goal setting and prioritization, engagement and productivity, and dialogue and communication.

Clearly, coaching skills have become critical management competencies as organizations prepare a new generation of leaders, using fewer financial, human, and training resources. An explosion in the coaching market in recent years highlights the fact that the work environment continues to be complex, fast-paced, and pressured, and that employees at all levels can derive value from personalized, skilled help delivered in a structured, safe, one-on-one situation. Additionally, the past few years have seen a growing acceptance of seeking help to get more out of life and an increased attention on the importance of mental health.

Coaching isn't just about patting people on the back or providing enthusiastic encouragement. It's a powerful management tool to help employees realize their career aspirations. When managers and supervisors master the art of coaching, their relationships with their direct reports are strengthened—and that often translates to increased company loyalty and enhanced motivation among those reports.

Tool I-1 presents some of the benefits that are generally ascribed to coaching for the the coach, the person being coached, and the organization. As you begin your own coaching journey, what other benefits come to mind? What benefits do you hope to see for yourself, your team, the people you will coach, and your organization?

TOOL I-1

COACHING BENEFITS

Benefits to Coaches	Benefits to Those Being Coached	Benefits to the Organization
• They develop coaching skills and receive tools to assist employees. • Using coaching skills enhances all their working relationships. • Their teams become more cohesive and productive. • They feel a sense of accomplishment as they reach their own goals; their performance often improves. • Employees they coach are more engaged in their organizations.	• Increased motivation and productivity result from personal attention. • They receive individualized and confidential advice on issues affecting their careers. • Morale and job satisfaction increase as they experience the fulfillment coming from doing work that honors their values. • Confidence increases. • The discovery that real choices are available to them is empowering.	• Cost-effective development occurs on the job and is customized for each employee. • Responsibility for developing employees is decentralized. • Manager-employee relationships are strengthened. • Productivity increases. • When employees explore their interests and skills, a good fit between them and their work is ensured. • High-potential employees are less likely to leave organizations that invest resources to help them meet their needs and interests.

One of the reasons coaching is so effective at increasing employees’ productivity and confidence is that it is a tool that embraces all aspects of how people learn. The Center for Creative Leadership famously asked effective organizational leaders how they’d learned what they needed to be successful. The widely adopted 70-20-10

learning model emerged from this research, where the 20 percent represents learning from coaching and feedback. But coaching is more than just a feedback and relationship-based option. Because coaching pushes people to try out new ways of doing things and to take on projects and challenges, it also taps into the 70 percent of learning that is experiential; and because it often results in coachees enrolling in workshops or getting additional education, it also contributes to the benefit of the 10 percent of education-based learning.

Who Should Read This Book?

This book is an entry point for anyone who wants—or has been asked—to do some formal or informal coaching. It's also for anyone who wants to infuse their day-to-day interactions in the workplace with a powerful new skill—development through coaching. The book also is for readers who understand that applying these skills will help them in their broader lives. Each of the 10 steps ends with ideas for using its concepts as part of a formal coaching process or informally in the daily activities of managing others.

This is a primer, so those who have been through a coaching program in the past may find it a good review and may pick up some new exercises or tools. But, chiefly, it is for people who've only just recognized—or been intrigued by—the power of coaching. Maybe you've witnessed a great coach in action; maybe you realize your direct reports aren't working to their full potential, or that you aren't working to your potential as a leader. Maybe you simply want more out of your experience at work—the chance to connect with others at a deeper level and to promote learning and growth on the job.

This book won't turn you into a coach, but it will make you more coach-like. Let me try an imperfect metaphor to show you the difference. Sometimes, when I'm feeling sick, I have to go to a trained and licensed medical doctor. She can deal with my more serious health concerns and she knows the right doses of medication for me to take. At other times when I'm not feeling 100 percent, I just need someone to make me a bowl of chicken soup or to send me to bed. Some of

the best medical advice I've gotten has been from nurses taking my temperature before the doctor comes into the room or from a fellow patient in the waiting room.

In the same way, sometimes an employee needs to work with a credentialed and experienced coach. His issues might be more all-encompassing than his manager feels prepared to handle, she might need someone who's fully trained to work with a broad spectrum of emotional responses, or he might just need the confidentiality an outside party can provide. At other times, all an employee needs to feel more balanced and in control is you—someone who can be coach-like—pulling out tools and asking questions that make him feel better.

There certainly are some purists who would say that if it isn't a certified coach using a certain coaching model, it isn't coaching. I disagree. If an employee feels and performs better as a result of the attention of someone acting like a coach, it doesn't matter what you call it. You can even call it coaching.

A Note About Naming

While we're on the subject of what to call things, I have to admit I had some trouble figuring out what to call the people you'll be coaching. Some of you will do this informally with your colleagues, direct reports, or friends. Others will do it in a more structured manner either with people you know and work with or with strangers. So I couldn't describe them all as co-workers or direct reports. I call the people I coach "clients," but that implies some sort of formal business relationship that some of you may not have. That term is also a little more clinical than I like.

So I went with the made-up word "coachee" (much to my spell-check's dismay!). If "coachee" doesn't describe the person sitting in front of you, please feel free to substitute whatever word works for you and imagine that word wherever I refer to the coachee in these pages.

Sequence of the Steps

In coaching, I try to hold what I call a “soft focus.” That is, I have a focus I need to keep my client aware of—one that the two of us create together—but I also need to be free to let go of that agenda to work with what my client is presenting to me at the moment. I can’t be rigid about what we’re doing together. I have to maintain the focus but be free to move from it.

This need for flexibility could make it difficult to put the work of a coach into a series of sequenced steps, but the more I look at the prevailing coaching models, the more I see that there is some order to coaching. Therefore, I recommend you address these 10 steps with a soft focus, following the logical and proven methods but being willing to bend when the situation requires. You’ll want to keep the step sequence in mind as an ideal way to do things—and you’ll want to remember that there will be times you won’t follow this sequence. You may complete a step and find you have to go back to it later. For instance, you may have agreed on the logistics of your coaching relationship in Step 2 but find you have to revisit them later when you’re on Step 6 and partnering to enhance growth between sessions. During your first conversation, the coachee may get stuck or may put up resistance, moving you directly to Step 7 to realign when things go bad. Once realigned, you can pick up where you left off. You may find that one step takes only a few minutes and another takes a few months. All these variations are workable when you have a soft focus—an awareness of where you want to be, but one to which you’re not wedded.

Another way to use this book is to put it right in to practice. Read Step 1 and then pick a coachee. Do the rest of the steps one-by-one with this person. Explain that you’re learning as you go so that at each step you’ll be practicing different skills and adding more exercises during your interactions.

Remember, too, that you can use the tools and ideas in each step even if you aren’t doing a formal, step-by-step process. Using what’s offered here in any of your day-to-day interactions as a manager will

produce better results from your employees and deepen your relationships with them.

Inside This Book

Here is an overview of the 10 steps covered in this book.

Step 1: Prepare Yourself for the Coaching Role

Before you can coach others, you have to spend some time thinking about what coaching means to you, what your coaching goals are, and what characteristics you need to embody to achieve those goals. Additionally, you need to determine what might get in the way of your being effective as a coach and address those issues head-on. Only after you've worked through those obstacles can you effectively help others to address theirs. (In this edition, I merged what were Steps 1 and 2 in the first edition into this step.)

Step 2: Create Your Coaching Relationship

Just as you have to ready yourself to coach others, you'll have to ready others to work with you as a coach. Often referred to as contracting, this is the step during which you'll discuss exactly how you and your coachee will work together—a very important foundation for the coaching process, as behavior change happens when people feel free to take risks and try new things. This requires attention to roles, safety, and confidentiality, some of the key considerations during this step. (In this edition, I added robust discussions of when to say no to requests for coaching, how to ensure confidentiality, and the impact of technology on coaching relationships.)

Step 3: Facilitate Discovery

A coaching relationship can be a powerful engine for growth and change, but only if there is a deep sense of trust between coach and coachee and if the coachee truly feels known by the coach. You'll use this knowledge of your coachee and how he “works” over and over again in the later steps. More importantly, your coachee will realize which of his strengths can propel him toward a desired outcome, even

in the face of obstacles. (In this edition, I added more sample coaching conversations throughout the book, beginning in this step. I also beefed up the discussion of how to provide feedback.)

Step 4: Agree on What You Want to Accomplish

Even some of the most eager coachees sometimes enter a coaching relationship unsure about their focus issues and goals. Coaching goals need to focus not only on what coachees want to accomplish but also on who they want to become as they accomplish these things. As such, agreeing on what the two of you want to accomplish through your work together is more than just standard goal setting. To ensure that coaching actually is closing the gap between where the coachee is and where she wants to be, accountability that comes from establishing these expectations has to be built into the relationship. (In this edition, I added content related to goal setting and accountability to this step.)

Step 5: Use the Power of Possibility

Coaching comes from an expansive rather than a limiting place. Coaches need to help their coachees think more broadly about themselves and what they're capable of accomplishing. Responding to powerful questions posed by their coaches, coachees come to recognize their own greatness and the possibilities that are available to them. (In this edition, I added a discussion of some common obstacles—or “blocks”—to good listening.)

Step 6: Partner to Enhance Growth Between Sessions

A goal of coaching is to help your coachee become self-sufficient. You can jump-start this process with assignments for coachees to complete between coaching sessions. In fact, most of the work of coaching happens outside of the coaching session. Assignments serve to help the coachee notice what is happening for him, try out new approaches, or take action toward achieving specific goals. The way these assignments are created and given is quite different from the way you remember

getting homework! (In this edition, I added content on how to create accountability in the coaching relationship.)

Step 7: Realign When Things Go Bad

Coaching relationships can unleash more emotion than your standard manager–employee conversation; so, by their very nature, they have the potential to hit potholes. This step will help you recognize the signs that coaching is derailed and then help you learn how to realign the relationship and troubleshoot a variety of problems that can crop up in the coaching process. (In this edition, I added a list of tools for viewing situations from alternative perspectives to help when you are coaching individuals who are “stuck.”)

Step 8: Maintain Positive Changes

The beginning of a coaching relationship can be exciting and invigorating for both parties. There comes a point, however, when the initial energy is wearing off; when the coachee, who’s made significant changes early on in the process, starts to revert to the way she used to be or used to do things. Knowing how to coach at this step helps keep your time together from growing stale and helps your coachee continue to move forward. (In this edition, I added more content on the importance of recognizing success.)

Step 9: Complete the Coaching Cycle

Many coaching relationships continue long after they’ve ceased being beneficial. Knowing when and how to end a coaching relationship ensures that the progress you and your coachee have made together is integrated into how the coachee lives and works going forward. Likewise, from each coaching relationship you complete you learn much that will help you continue to be engaged and excited about yourself and your coaching. Bringing an appropriate end to the coaching relationship will help both parties confirm achievements made and lessons learned. (In this edition, I added more content on how to notice when it’s time to end but also why it’s so difficult to actually let go.)

Step 10: Prepare Your Organization for Coaching

While most of the steps in this book focus on the how-tos of coaching, this new step helps you to consider the environment in which you will likely provide the majority of your coaching: the workplace. You'll need to think about how your coaching fits into a broader organizational context and how to create a coaching culture.

After reading and working through these 10 steps once, review them periodically. They'll inspire you with new questions to ask and new tools to use in your coaching.

• • •

Being a coach to the people you work with can be a very powerful experience. You have the opportunity to help people realize some of these outcomes, which Coach U, one of the premier coach training organizations, cites as reasons that individuals might seek out a coach to:

- Set better goals.
- Reach goals faster.
- Make significant changes.
- Design and live their best life.
- Get ahead professionally.
- Make better decisions.
- Improve relationships.
- Become a better manager, executive, or businessperson.

Who wouldn't want to be a part of helping individuals achieve those results? As a coach, you can inspire those around you to achieve great things for themselves—at work and outside of work—and to experience greater happiness. And, in the process, you'll become more self-aware and effective. If you're ready to experience those benefits, read on!

Step 1

Prepare Yourself for the Coaching Role

STEP 1

Overview

- What is coaching?
- What isn't coaching?
- What makes a great coach?
- What stands in your way to effective coaching and how can you address those obstacles?
- Why coach?

In writing this book, I contacted people who had been coached at some point in their lives or careers and asked them what they got out of the experience. Here are some of their responses:

- “My coach was my supervisor at the time. He saw raw talent in me—not formed, not educated—and nurtured that. The biggest thing he taught me is self-awareness, which has made a permanent stamp on me.”—Stacey R.
- “Many years ago, as part of an organizational coaching program, I was asked to develop my own leadership philosophy. I still use it in my interactions with team members every day.”—Danny B.
- “I was certified as an internal coach and, in the process, was observed by a coach several times and received feedback on how I was doing in that role. Not only did the feedback make me feel more and more confident as a coach, the skills I picked up made me a more effective change agent in the organization.”—Debbie R.

- “He hired us, groomed us, and then pushed us to get promoted and take on positions and roles that were higher than his in the corporate world.”—Hassan R.
- “There was a lot of value in completing a 360-degree evaluation process. The results were eye-opening. The feedback I got from my supervisors, colleagues, and direct reports was validating and, at the same time, helped me become aware of a few things I needed to focus on improving as a leader. I found it to be so helpful and I would do it again.”—Jo A.

While all these people pointed out some of the enduring positive effects of coaching, none of their experiences was the same. Some were coached by people who were their managers; some received coaching from an external coach or through a formal coaching program. Some remember a specific exercise or lesson while others remember the overall encouragement or support they got from their coach. Some learned through observation and feedback, some through 360-assessments, some through a coaching exercise, and some through conversation.

What does all this tell us? Quite a bit. First, there simply is no right way to coach—and we wouldn’t want there to be. A one-size-fits-all approach to coaching couldn’t be effective for the diverse interests and experiences of individuals in the workplace. That means that you could be the very best coach for one person and a less-than-ideal coach for someone else. It means that if you coach several people, you might have to do it differently for each one of them. Second, you don’t need to be trained as a coach to be effective as one. More broadly, it says that anyone can be like a coach to others and that demonstrating an interest in nurturing another person will be appreciated. And, finally, it points out that coaching can really make an impact—on organizations, on teams, and, in a lasting way, on individuals.

So, how do you get started as a coach? Prepare yourself by considering some common characteristics of good coaches and how you measure up against them, some of the things that get in the way of

good coaching and how you can avoid them, and, underneath it all, what's in it for you to be a good coach.

What Is Coaching?

Asking this question is like asking “What is leadership?” The answer depends on whom you ask and where you look. Definitions abound. As is true in defining leadership, the important thing in defining coaching is to find which voices in the field you agree with and trust. Find a definition that works for you and stick with it.

Here's the definition I use: Coaching is a meaningful, confidential, accountable relationship created by having routine one-on-one conversations about the coachee's full experience and the power of possibility.

Every word in that definition is important. Let's break it down:

- **Meaningful**—Coaching is not a superficial conversation. It's not your weekly project check-in or one-on-one meeting (although, if you have no other time, these are good places to sneak in a little coaching). Coaching is an opportunity to step outside the day-to-day pressures of work to focus on deeper issues, such as what makes the employee fulfilled and productive at work.
- **Confidential**—Effective coaching relies on a foundation of trust and safety that can only come with iron-clad confidentiality. Step 3 will delve more deeply into the concept and challenges of confidentiality in coaching, especially in the workplace.
- **Accountable**—Without accountability, coaching conversations are simply that—conversations that may not lead to any lasting change or to growth and development. Coaching includes check-ins on assignments and measurements of progress toward goals.
- **Relationship**—A relationship needs more than one person to make it work. Coaching is a two-way model built on trust and mutual respect.

- **Routine**—Coach and coachee should get together with some regularity—and this doesn't mean at annual performance review meetings! You and your coachee will decide what frequency makes sense, depending on your schedules and on the coachee's goals. Regular meetings enhance trust, accountability, and progress.
- **One-on-one**—Just by taking the time to be alone with your employee, you show her you value her and are invested in her growth and development. Deeper, more intimate relationships are formed when two people work together as coach and coachee. Group or team coaching does also exist, but the focus is usually a little narrower in those situations, as, instead of being about an individual's full experience and range of possibilities, it is usually more focused on how team members can work together more effectively for desired results, or on a specific skill that multiple people need to develop at the same time.
- **Full experience**—When you come into the office, you don't check your outside life at the door. Whatever is going on for you at home comes to work with you and vice versa. Wherever you are, you're a whole person living a full experience. When a coach shies away from allowing the coachee to share his full experience, the coach is discounting that person's values, background, and motivations. Therefore, there are practically no limits on what can be included in a coaching conversation.
- **Power of possibility**—Coaches have to encourage their coachees. When a coachee doesn't believe in herself, or when no one else believes in her, the coach has to help illuminate the power of possibility for the coachee—help her understand what choices actually are available and let her make conscious choices. Uncovering possibilities helps people get out of situations in which they feel stuck or are in conflict. This component of coaching often requires coaches

to show coachees the greatness within them that makes their success possible.

That's my definition. If it doesn't resonate with you, try some of the following ways to arrive at your own definition:

- Think about someone who's been a good coach to you. This need not be someone who was acting officially as your coach. They need not have been in the workplace; maybe they were a teacher, a sports coach, or someone from well in your past. Make a list of this person's best qualities. What did they do that was coach-like? Pose the same questions to people around you to get their input. Use the characteristics and examples on your list to craft your own definition of coaching. So, if you remember that your high school guidance counselor was a great coach to you because she displayed good listening skills and she created a plan for you that was completely individualized, you might come up with a definition something like this: "A coach is a person who listens intently to guide you on a personal journey."
- Enter the keywords *coach* and *definition* in Google or another search engine and see what comes up. Look for themes among the definitions and words or phrases to which you relate. Use all these pieces to craft a definition that works for you. Here are a few of the definitions for *coach* that I found in a recent search:
 - a railroad passenger car or motor bus
 - a person who trains or directs athletes or athletic teams
 - someone who supports, explains, demonstrates, instructs, and directs others via encouragement and questions; may include lifestyle advice, such as nutrition, exercise, behavior, and more
 - facilitator of a professional relationship that helps people produce extraordinary results in their lives, careers, businesses, or organizations
 - an individual who helps others develop their own resources and solution-finding capabilities.

From those definitions, you might come up with something like this: “Coaching is moving people from one place to another in support of ongoing training or a specifically desired result.”

Regardless of what definition you come up with, it is important to have one because it can guide you in each coaching conversation you have with your coachee, and help you set overall expectations with potential coachees and their direct supervisors about what they can expect from a coaching relationship.

What Isn't Coaching?

Although I allow for much latitude in defining what coaching is, I am pretty passionate about declaring what coaching is not. I'd like to debunk a few common myths about coaching. You've probably heard them before—you may even ascribe to some of them.

Myth #1: Coaching is giving advice.

Actually, coaching involves asking the questions that the coachee wouldn't think to ask himself so that he can access his own answers. It's intended to help people whose perspectives are so ingrained that they can't see their blind spots or come to a new awareness of themselves. A coach needs to get rid of her own inclinations to give advice or to solve problems, even when the coachee is asking what he should do.

Why is that? Why don't coaches give advice? First, providing advice builds dependency when you really want your coachees to solve their own problems and make their own decisions. Second, the advice you give may not be the advice that the coachee needs or that works for him at that moment. It may be something he's already tried that hasn't produced the results he wanted, or it might not inspire him to action. Third, there is no shortage of advice in people's lives. As talent management consultant Kathryn Zukof explained to me, “Individuals are seeking lots of input before making decisions. They might send out a question to their 100 closest friends on social media, in addition to asking their parents, their manager, and maybe a mentor. They are having multiple conversations to get

input.” What’s missing is a technique to process that advice and to figure out which advice makes the most sense to the coachee. That’s where a coach comes in. Finally, coaches should not be wedded to any one solution or technique. When the coach offers advice, there is sometimes an unspoken, unquestioned expectation for the coachee to take it. A good rule of thumb: Give advice and you’re an adviser or consultant; help someone discover his own best advice and you’re a coach.

Myth #2: The coach’s knowledge and experience of the coachee’s situation is what makes her valuable.

In fact, you can get great coaching from someone whose experience is completely unrelated to your current circumstances or from someone who is your junior in chronological age or working years. A coach’s value lies in helping the coachee access her own knowledge and experience and bring them to bear on current circumstances and future goals. The spotlight is on the greatness in the coachee, not on the greatness or expertise of the coach. That’s what sets a coach apart from a mentor, whose value *is* based on his knowledge and experience and how he can impart them to his protégé. (More on the difference between coaching and mentoring can be found in Step 10.) And sometimes it takes an external perspective to see a situation more clearly; knowing too many of the technical details of a person’s situation might bog down the coaching. It actually can be an asset if you don’t know much about what a coachee is facing.

Myth #3: Coaching is just like therapy.

If you listen in on an individual coaching session, it may sound like therapy. Deep issues are being discussed and emotions are welcome. But there are two primary differences between coaching and therapy. The first difference relates to the severity of the presenting circumstances in the coachee’s life. The second difference is the absence of any in-depth analysis of how a coachee came to be in his current circumstances. Most coaches won’t ask “What happened in your past to bring you to this situation?” Instead, they’ll take it at face value that

this is where the coachee is. It's rather like saying you're here and you want to get over there, so let's get moving! Coaching has a present and future focus, and it doesn't delve into the past as therapy might.

Myth #4: The coach drives the coaching process.

I once was looking for individuals to become coaches in an organization and was met with very limited response. As I tried to understand why, I was told that in the company's previous coaching program, the people who'd volunteered as coaches had gotten burned out. They'd worked really hard on their coachees' behalf—some had been doing such things as writing résumés or presentations for their coachees. It took me a long time to break through this mindset and help the potential coaches in my program understand that the actual driver of the coaching process is the coachee. She sets the agenda for meetings, she works in concert with the coach to craft the assignments she will complete, and she takes action in her situation. It's also true that what she puts into coaching is in direct proportion to what she gets out of it. When the coach calls the meeting, determines the agenda, and gives assignments, the coach is acting as the employee's boss. Workplace coaching is especially challenging in this regard. How do you go from being someone's boss in some situations to being her coach in others? (This will be addressed in Step 3.) Coaching is a delicate two-way relationship, and the coach does have an important role to play in keeping to the focus the coachee has set, providing feedback on how the process of coaching is going, and checking in for accountability. It's just that coaching is for the coachee, so she gets to create it and be responsible for it.

Myth #5: A coach must be 100 percent successful in his personal and professional life.

Coaching others isn't about your work, or your life; it's about theirs. What's happening—or not happening—for you shouldn't affect your coaching. You do not need to be a role model in the areas that the coachee is working on. You are not there to resolve his issues, only to help him access answers for himself. Additionally, if your life were

perfectly ordered, you couldn't relate to the challenges and setbacks that your coachees face. More often than some coaches would like to admit, they are struggling with the very same issues that the coachee struggles with, and they are learning as much from the coachee as they are facilitating.

What Makes a Great Coach?

Now that we've covered what coaching is and isn't, let's look at the characteristics, skills, or competencies that make for a great coach.

Maybe you are a natural-born coach, or maybe there are some skills that come less easily to you. Tool 1-1 will help you determine how you measure up against several competencies important for coaches. Please note that the list of competencies is not comprehensive. As much as I'd like to, I can't provide an exhaustive list of qualities or characteristics that a coach needs to have. However, the list in Tool 1-1 takes into account the competencies put forth by the International Coach Federation (the authoritative source for all things related to coaching) and several other existing programs and models, as well as my own experience. Competencies are not listed in order of importance.

TOOL 1-1

YOUR COACHING COMPETENCIES

Instructions: For each competency listed in the first column (and described in column 2), consider how your employees or co-workers would rate you—poor, fair, good, or excellent. Circle the appropriate term in the third column. Feel free to also ask a few people to complete the survey for you. Tell them you’d appreciate their honest responses because it’s part of your development as a coach.

Showing Up

Competency	Description	How Am I Doing in This Area?
Being present	Can you put the rest of the day’s urgencies out of your mind to be there for your coachee? Can you shut off calls, texts, emails, and all other distractions? Can you be in the moment?	Poor Fair Good Excellent
Being vulnerable	Are you as transparent as you are able to be in your dealings with others? Do you know your own strengths and weaknesses and are you willing to share those? Will you not shy away from emotional people and reactions?	Poor Fair Good Excellent
Establishing trust and intimacy	Do people come to you with their problems? Do you have friends in the workplace? Do people trust you to do what you say you will do? Do people trust you with things they don’t want shared?	Poor Fair Good Excellent
Keeping confidentiality	Do you treat confidentiality as essential? Do you keep private what you hear in private? Do you get permission before sharing someone else’s experience?	Poor Fair Good Excellent

Advocating

Competency	Description	How Am I Doing in This Area?
Respecting and appreciating the coachee	Do you view your employees as partners and see them as critical to your own success? Would you be happy for them if their accomplishments were greater than your own? Do you see their greatness and believe in them? Do you know the strengths of each of your employees and capitalize on those strengths? Do you look for the good in your colleagues and direct reports?	Poor Fair Good Excellent
Thinking big for the coachee	Do you push people to do more than they think they are capable of doing? Do you encourage big ideas and dreams? Do you say yes more often than you say no? Do you see work as just one domain in your own or your colleagues' lives?	Poor Fair Good Excellent
Refraining from giving advice	Can you hold your advice back to let the coachee discover his own best answers? Can you refrain from butting in when the coachee's own answers aren't what you had in mind for him?	Poor Fair Good Excellent

TOOL 1-1 (CONT.)

Remaining Open

Competency	Description	How Am I Doing in This Area?
Reading a situation	Can you read the energy in a room? Can you decipher what is actually behind a request? Do you have strong intuition?	Poor Fair Good Excellent
Being flexible	Are you willing and able to switch gears as needed? Can you think on your feet and make new decisions as new information becomes available? Do you provide freedom for your employees to do their jobs?	Poor Fair Good Excellent
Being curious	Do you want to know all that you can about people? Do you ask questions to uncover what the people you are talking to are experiencing? Do you have a natural curiosity?	Poor Fair Good Excellent

Communicating Effectively

Competency	Description	How Am I Doing in This Area?
Listening actively	Do you practice the skill of active listening by focusing on the speaker and reflecting the essence of what she's said? Do you "listen" to nonverbal communication?	Poor Fair Good Excellent
Asking powerful questions	Can you stop people in their tracks with a question that gets them thinking? Do you know the benefits of questioning rather than providing answers?	Poor Fair Good Excellent

Competency	Description	How Am I Doing in This Area?
Giving constructive feedback	Do you have a healthy attitude toward feedback as a development tool, and do you offer feedback that is specific and helpful? Do you provide regular feedback about your employees' job performance? Do you hold postmortems at the end of projects or at other significant milestones?	Poor Fair Good Excellent
Providing recognition	Do you give your employees credit when they deserve it? Do you celebrate successes? Do you balance your constructive feedback with positive reinforcement?	Poor Fair Good Excellent
Providing Structure		
Defining roles	Are you explicit about the roles you play with your employees? Do you establish mutually acceptable agreements about how you will work with someone? Do you clarify how each of you best communicates at the start of a work relationship or project?	Poor Fair Good Excellent
Planning and goal setting	Do you create and use action plans? Do you work with a timeline? Can you create goals that are specific, measurable, appropriate, realistic, and time-bound? Can you think creatively about what your coachee might do to move toward his goal?	Poor Fair Good Excellent
Establishing accountability	Do you set and communicate standards of excellence and expectations? Do you create accountability around those expectations? Do you follow up with those to whom you've assigned work or projects?	Poor Fair Good Excellent

After assessing your current coaching competencies and with the definition of coaching fresh in your mind, it's time to consider some questions as you clarify and commit to your coaching role. The questions in Tool 1-2 will highlight your existing coaching strengths to increase your level of confidence as you embark on coaching. Enhancing skills in which you are already strong can have a deeper impact than working on areas that are not your natural talents. Other questions will help you identify the skills and characteristics you'll want to bolster to be more effective as a coach to your employees.

TOOL 1-2

YOUR COACHING DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Instructions: Respond to the questions that follow. Questions 1 and 2 highlight your existing coaching strengths. Feel free to include those competencies rated highest on Tool 1-1 here, or other skills you possess that will make you effective as a coach. Questions 3, 4, and 5 focus on areas of opportunity. Focusing on improving in these areas ensures that there are no gaps in your skill set.

1. What skills or characteristics do you possess that will serve you well as a coach?
2. How can you further leverage these strengths in your coaching relationships?
3. What coaching skills will be a stretch for you?
4. In an area that's going to be a stretch for you, what does excellence look like? What would be happening if you excelled at this aspect of coaching?
5. What is something you can do today to move closer to a rating of "excellent" in that area?

Coach Training

Concepts from this book will make you more coach-like in your day-to-day interactions. Enrolling in a coach training program will turn you into a bona fide coach. This doesn't necessarily mean that you need to earn income as a coach (although it can lead to that), but that you'd add value to whatever job you hold as a credentialed coach.

There are hundreds of coaching programs available from universities, professional associations, and private consulting and coach

training organizations. The first question to consider is whether you want to become a credentialed coach, or if you just want to take a couple of workshops that might provide you with good coaching tools and some ideas. As coaching is a non-regulated industry, a credential isn't a necessity, but it can help you establish credibility and feel more confident.

If you decide you want to become a credentialed coach, make sure the program you're considering is accredited by the International Coaching Federation (ICF). Each of the ICF-accredited programs is described in some detail on the ICF website, coachfederation.org.

Look carefully at the materials for any program you are considering, including their websites or any published texts. Do they speak to you? Do you agree with their general philosophy and approach? Some programs are more academic in nature, some more experiential. Some programs take a business approach to starting your own coaching practice. Many concentrate on a specific type of coaching, like relationship coaching, corporate coaching, or group coaching.

If the program you're considering offers a free teleclass to introduce you to its curriculum (and many do), sign up for it. Speak to graduates with backgrounds similar to yours to see how they're using what they learned. These programs' administrative staff and counselors are trained to help you make this decision.

Finally, of course, you'll have to factor in your logistical needs. Programs vary greatly in their cost, location, schedule, class size, and flexibility.

What Stands in Your Way?

You've identified the skills and characteristics that will help you to be successful as a coach, but the picture is incomplete until you factor in those obstacles or qualities that are hindering your ability to coach. Noticing and managing your own barriers to coaching is an important part of the process of preparing yourself.

Addressing your obstacles to coaching means coming face-to-face with them—not always the most fun thing to do. Who wants

to deal with the “dark side” of something that they are anxious to do? You’re on a roll—you’re ready to coach. I know that many of you will want to skip this aspect of preparing yourself, but please don’t. This exploration will set apart an effective workplace coach from someone who simply does a good job creating relationships and motivating enhanced performance.

Besides, at some point in your coaching relationships you are going to ask your coachees to address their own obstacles. To be authentic in doing so, you’ll want to know that you’ve been willing to do it yourself. Your openness to dealing with challenges in your own life often can come across to coachees in implicit or explicit ways.

And here’s the other positive outcome of this exploration. When you’re more self-aware, your relationships with others are enhanced—both in and outside work. You come to know yourself and what you’re capable of accomplishing as well as what your shortcomings are and what you’d prefer not to handle in a coaching format.

Here’s a formula for removing your obstacles: Notice the barriers and then consciously decide what you want to do about them. It sounds simple, but it turns out not to be so easy to execute.

A Failure to Notice

One of the first obstacles to stellar coaching—or stellar anything, for that matter—is the inability to slow down and notice what’s actually going on. *Noticing* is the first step in your plan to overcome obstacles.

The inability to slow down and notice is ubiquitous in work environments. It’s present when something about you is holding you back, and although others can see it, you can’t. It’s there when you’re really nervous about doing something but you plunge in anyway and produce results that are less than you’d imagined. It’s even present when you’re simply so busy rushing from one fire to another that you have no appreciation or understanding of how you’re feeling in the moment.

Here are some simple things you can do to slow yourself down and get in touch with how you feel about coaching, how you’re doing as a coach, or how you want a particular coaching discussion to go. These techniques are helpful to share with your coachee

as well when he needs to slow down and become aware of what's needed in a given circumstance.

- **Breathe.** Nothing slows us down, centers us, or calms us like a good deep breath. It's so simple, yet when was the last time you took a deep breath in your workplace? Deep breathing can connect you to the present moment and allow you to get your emotions under control; it's a critical component of mindfulness. Breathing is associated with more expansive thinking and better problem solving. Breathing also brings oxygen into your bloodstream, which has been shown to make you feel calmer and to improve your health. Breathing is a quick and easy tool that goes with you wherever you go. I learned a wonderful breathing exercise from my clarinet teacher when I was in junior high school and feeling nervous about an upcoming performance. Try this exercise and see how well it calms you: Get comfortable wherever you're sitting. Focus your eyes on your lap or at some indistinct point in front of you. Start by breathing in through your nose for three seconds and out through your mouth for six; or in for five seconds, out for 10—whatever numbers feel right for you (where the exhale is twice the length of the inhale). As you inhale, be sure the air goes down to the bottom of your lungs and expands your belly. Repeat the inhale-exhale pattern at least four or five times and do this type of breathing four or five times a day.
- Close your eyes and do a **head-to-toe inventory** of how your body is feeling. There's no need to do anything about what you notice. Don't judge what you're feeling or try to "correct" it—just become aware of what is going on in your body. Is your forehead relaxed or scrunched up? Are there butterflies in your stomach or is there a knot in your gut? Do you feel heavy or light? You can also try activities like grabbing tightly onto your chair as hard as you can to connect physically to where you are at a given moment.

Notice the sensations and the experience.

- Try the **5-4-3-2-1 grounding technique**. To do it, respond to the following questions:
 - First, list five things you see in the room.
 - Next, name four things you can feel right now. For example, “my feet on the floor,” or “the air across my face.”
 - Then, notice three things you hear right now, such as “traffic outside.”
 - Now, list two things you can smell (or two smells you like).
 - Finally, come up with one good thing about yourself.

You should feel calmer and more at ease by the end of the exercise. Repeat the five steps more than once if needed.

- Find some time to **sit quietly**. Just sit still, especially if it’s difficult for you. Spend five to 10 minutes consciously not thinking, just noticing. What do you see, hear, or smell around you? If your mind starts solving problems, analyzing issues, or doing anything other than consciously noticing, go back to merely sitting still. I’m not suggesting meditation here—though the benefits of meditation are numerous—just sitting and being aware of your surroundings.
- Get in the habit of asking yourself some **reflection questions**, like “What just happened? What did I learn from what just happened? How do I feel about this? What is making me feel this way? How might someone else look at this?”

Being able to slow down in highly pressured, fast-paced work and social environments will enable you to notice what’s happening for you and to be there for others as a coach. In that way, slowing down removes the obstacle of being disconnected from others as you become present in the current moment and with the coachee sitting in front of you.

POINTER

You don't need to wait until you're in a stressful situation to slow down. Before your next coaching session, sit quietly for a moment and think about your intentions for that conversation. For instance, do you intend to use two or three powerful questions during the discussion? Do you intend to put aside any nagging concerns and be fully present? Taking a moment before embarking on a conversation, a presentation, or a physical challenge is a great way to slow down.

A Lack of Confidence

In some coaching models, there's a term for those voices inside your head that keep you from excelling or from trying something new: *gremlins*. You probably have some coaching-focused gremlins right now. Are any of these voices in your self-talk right now?

- “Who am I to say I’m an expert or a coach?”
- “[Fill in a name here] is better at coaching than I am.”
- “I’ll make a fool of myself.”
- “I can’t handle it when they ask questions I can’t answer.”
- “I’m OK coaching around performance issues, but not personal issues. Those don’t belong in the workplace.”

You may have more than one of these voices speaking up right now—and maybe a few I haven’t included. If a whole chorus of gremlins is going on inside you right now, that’s natural. Before you can coach others, you need to determine how you’re going to respond to these gremlins (also referred to as saboteurs or simply as obstacles). Here are some techniques that coaches use to help coachees handle their internal challenges—techniques that will help you as well:

- **Recognize that these internal voices are stating beliefs, not facts, and that beliefs can be changed if you notice them and decide you want to change them.** Maybe you notice that you believe this: “I’m OK coaching around performance issues, but not personal issues. Those don’t belong in the workplace.” At this point, you are simply noticing that you

are holding on to a belief. You do not need to do anything with it yet.

- **Name your beliefs.** Giving something a name bestows power on the person naming it. For example, your belief might be: “Jim, my supervisor, is a better coach than I am. I’ll call this belief ‘inferiority.’” Just naming it helps you recognize when it’s present so you can decide how you want to respond to it. Naming it takes away its power because you’re no longer just blindly responding to it. You’re calling it out. Now when you catch yourself thinking, “So-and-So is much better than I am,” you can just swoop right in and say, “Oh, there’s that darn inferiority again! I’ve dealt with this belief before.” (And when inferiority about your coaching abilities does come along, remember that your unique background, skills, awareness, and knowledge make you the very best coach for someone who needs just that mix.)
- **Decide what’s true** about the belief and be grateful for it. For example, maybe it’s true that you’ll look like a fool at first. Thank your gremlin for trying to protect you and help you save face. Gremlins are sneaky because they aren’t necessarily malicious, and they’d always say they have your best interests at heart. But the way they want to protect you is to keep you from changing or from trying anything new. The truth is you might feel like a fool, and the coachee—so involved in his own thoughts at the time—might not even notice. Plus, you can’t learn something new without looking like a fool at times. (When learning to ski, the first thing you’re taught is how to fall—and get back up.)
- **Decide what’s untrue** about the belief. For instance, you may know that you’ve handled challenging questions in many situations other than coaching, and that you can do the same thing here. Counter the gremlin’s message with this: “When I’m in the public eye and challenged, I can compose an articulate response.”

- **Know that limiting beliefs about coaching often are related to myths.** Debunking those myths debunks the troublesome internal voices. For instance, the voice that says, “Who am I to say I’m an expert or a coach?” may be related to the myth that the value of a coach is her knowledge and experience from earlier in this step. Which myths are you still carrying with you?
- **Decide whether you want to honor, and live by, the limiting beliefs, or heed the call that is drawing you to try something new—in this case, coaching.** In other words, is your limiting belief more important than whatever is inspiring you to coach? If you want to overcome this obstacle to your coaching, tell yourself this: “I’m ready to take on this challenge because I really want to help people be more satisfied and productive at work.” (Other reasons you might want to use to convince yourself to try out coaching can be found later in this step.)

POINTER

You remove obstacles to coaching by noticing them and consciously deciding what you want to do about them.

Controlling your self-talk during coaching is immensely important. This includes knowing your limits and how you want to manage them. Then you can listen intently to what your coachee is saying rather than to the voices inside your head that are criticizing you for not doing it “right.” Tool 1-3 will help you identify and overcome the internal voices that are keeping you from excelling as a coach.

TOOL 1-3

MANAGING COACHING BELIEFS THAT MAY BE LIMITING

Instructions: Answer the questions below to identify your own limiting beliefs and decide how you want to handle them.

Question	Description
What belief am I holding about my effectiveness as a coach?	

TOOL 1-3 (CONT.)

Question	Description
What will I name this belief?	
What's true about this belief?	
What's untrue about this belief?	
With what belief do I want to replace this one, if any?	
What do I want to honor instead of this belief, if anything?	

Incidentally, if your coaching gremlins are like those of many other coaches I've met, the countering responses offered in Tool 1-4 might help you manage them.

TOOL 1-4

RESPONSES TO SOME COMMON LIMITING BELIEFS ABOUT COACHING

Limiting Belief	Countering Response
You don't have time for coaching.	Although it may be time consuming to provide one-on-one coaching for your employees, ultimately the coaching they receive will help them take initiative and do more—and that will save a great deal of time.
This isn't what you get paid to do.	Your performance as a manager is measured by how your employees perform. In a sense, you're getting paid to do whatever it takes to help them succeed.
Your employees don't like this management style.	You won't be fooled by some resistance to your acting like a coach. Expecting to be managed in a certain way isn't the same as preferring it. There may be natural resistance at first (especially when employees don't trust that your new coaching style is here to stay), but many of them will embrace the idea if they believe it's an actual long-term possibility.

Limiting Belief	Countering Response
You'll lose authority.	It's hard to lose your authority when you're gaining the respect of your employees. Actually, you'll be shifting the type of authority you have from authority based on your position to authority based on your relationships and who you are as a leader.
People at this level in the organization should be able to figure things out for themselves; coaching shouldn't be necessary at a certain level.	Coaching is necessary at executive levels precisely because so many people hold this belief. Senior managers have no place to share their concerns or perceived inadequacies because they or those around them feel it shouldn't be necessary—hence, the expression “It's lonely at the top.” And research has posited that many executives are derailing because they're relying on the competencies that got them to their current positions rather than on new skills they need to perform effectively. Coaching can help instill those needed skills.
You're uncomfortable with confrontation.	Nowhere on the list of coaching competencies is conflict resolution listed. That's because coaching isn't confrontational. As a coach, you may have to be outspoken, and you can't be afraid to share a hard truth, but you do it to help and support your coachees. Sometimes a coaching conversation may sound confrontational to an outsider, but both parties in a strong coaching relationship know that it's not.
You're not in management.	Coaching can be done by anyone. It's not about your level of experience or your position in the organization. All you need is a desire to help people through coaching.
Your employees don't need coaching.	Just looking at employees' performance doesn't show whether they need or want it. How do you know? Have you asked? Have you considered how much more would be possible for your unit or division if team members were coached?

An Inexperience Being Coached

One of the best ways to remove your obstacles is to get your own coach. I'm not saying this to drum up business for coaches, nor am I

saying that your coach must be a paid, external one. I'm simply suggesting that you may want to make finding a coach part of your own preparation to become a coach. Coaches are really well-suited to help you honor what you want to and to put aside the doubts or obstacles that might limit your possibilities.

When my first coaching mentor, Caryn Siegel, and I were creating a coaching curriculum for managers, she told me that the two ways she'd learned most about being a coach were by coaching while being observed and getting immediate feedback, and by observing another coach. We made sure our program included both of those components. You can get these two experiences from a coaching relationship too. Often you can find a coach who is willing to have you coach her then give you feedback. You also can observe what your own coach is doing and ask questions about why she did what she did.

The biggest reason I know that other coaches get coaches of our own is to walk our talk. How am I going to coach others if I'm not willing to address issues and move toward greatness in my own life? Walking your talk adds credibility and shows that you truly believe in the power of coaching—so much so that you are sticking with it yourself.

As master certified coach Marla Skibbins says, “A coach who is coached knows how difficult it can be to move toward the life one envisions, which enables her to be compassionate and understanding with her own clients' difficulty. She knows when a client is getting slippery or avoiding and when the client has more to give. She has insight into what may be going on with her client that she wouldn't otherwise have.”

Should you decide to become a coaching client, the best source of coaching referrals is someone who has worked with a particular coach. Sherpa Coaching has been conducting an annual coaching survey for the past 14 years. Their 2019 survey reports that people find coaches through personal references a vast majority (79 percent) of the time. That kind of personal connection, however, isn't always available. Tool 1-5 provides some other resources and tips

for finding your own coach. Most coaches offer free sample sessions. Take advantage of these because it's a great way to gather some tools and techniques and to see different styles of coaching.

You don't even need to ask someone who is technically a coach to coach you. When I asked Evan Marcus, co-founder of DillonMarcus, how to select a coach, he suggested to look for "someone who has something you want and who you feel comfortable with. Find someone who you look at and how they live their life and how they are at work and say to yourself, 'I want more of that.'" That doesn't have to be someone who has hung up a coaching shingle.

Even if you don't choose to find a coach of your own, spend some time thinking about how you'd like to manage your gremlins. And realize that even the "best" coaches battle with gremlins from time to time.

TOOL 1-5

HOW TO FIND YOUR OWN COACH

Resources

- Visit coachfederation.org, the International Coach Federation's website, which includes a database of coaches. All coaches listed there have ICF credentials certifying they have coached a required number of hours and have been recommended by other certified coaches.
- Accredited coaching programs listed on the International Coach Federation's website likely will have their own searchable databases of graduates as well. For instance, the Co-Active Training Institute maintains a referral list of coaches certified in their Co-Active coaching model. Go to thecoaches.com and search for "find a coach."
- Join a coaching exchange. Find a group in which several people want to coach each other for the experience (or for a small fee). You can create one of your own exchanges or find existing ones online, like thecoaching.exchange.
- Ask someone you admire or someone who possesses qualities you aspire to possess if she would be willing to coach you.
- Individuals in coaching certification programs are looking for clients and often are willing to charge lower-than-usual rates to log the number of coaching hours their programs require. Contact the training programs listed on the ICF's TPSS Service to learn how to engage a coach-in-training.

TOOL 1-5 (CONT.)

Tips

Who will be the right coach for you is a personal decision. I don't believe that any selection criterion should be so rigid that it excludes someone who might be just the right fit. You can find out about a coach on his website, or you can ask a potential coach directly about:

- With whom do you like to work?
- Where were you trained? Or, what model or philosophy of coaching do you subscribe to?
- Have you graduated from your coach-training program? If not, where you are in the process?
- What certifications do you hold? (Remember that some coaches without any official training are exceptionally competent.)
- How long have you been coaching, either in an official coach capacity or informally in or out of the workplace?
- What does working with a coachee typically look like?
- On average, how long does a coachee work with you?
- What does your long-term vision of your practice look like?
- What are the areas of your experience and expertise?
- What initially attracted you to coaching or the coaching profession?
- How much do you charge?
- What can you tell me about yourself? (Recognize that a background similar to your own may help you relate more easily to each other, a background different from yours can foster innovation and new ways of looking at situations you face, and a background in which she used skills you're seeking might be especially inspiring.)
- Would you mind putting me in touch with a few current or past coachees to check your references (as appropriate, considering confidentiality)?

POINTER

If you're tempted to ask a potential coach if he has any results or success stories he is at liberty to share, the response you should really be seeking is that he doesn't promise any results. There are no guarantees in coaching, and you should be wary of people who make them.

Why Coach?

In the introduction, I touched on the benefits of coaching to a coach who manages her coachee(s) and to the organization in which she

works. But there's more that you can derive from coaching than the benefits to you as a manager. What are the benefits of coaching on the coach herself?

Tool 1-6 is an exercise to help you determine the benefits you will reap from coaching. The worksheet presents a list of many possible—and real—benefits of coaching. It's important to know what drives you to coach so that when the going gets tough—when you just can't imagine how you'll fit coaching into your already busy day or when one of your coaching gremlins is plaguing you—you can refer to the list of motivations and benefits you find most compelling. There are no wrong answers to the exercise. It's simply your personal reminder of why you want to coach.

TOOL 1-6

WHY DO YOU WANT TO COACH?

Instructions: In this exercise, you'll distribute 200 points among your top motivations for coaching. First, select your four top reasons and place a checkmark to the left of each one. Then give each of those four reasons one of the following point values: 100, 50, 25, and 25. Assigning points thoughtfully prioritizes your coaching motivations and reveals what benefits you expect to realize from the endeavor.

Motivation/Benefit	Points
Incorporating coaching is an opportunity to advance my own career.	
I can help others grow professionally or personally.	
I have a passion for learning.	
I can give people skills that can help them.	
I will become a better communicator.	
I will become a better partner, parent, family member, or friend.	
Coaching will promote a more productive workplace.	
I'd like to make coaching a business opportunity someday.	

TOOL 1-6 (CONT.)

Motivation/Benefit	Points
It encourages me to interact with people in the way I want to interact with people.	
I will become more efficient in my own work practices.	
I will get better results from my staff.	
I will be a better leader.	
I want to help an employee who needs his rough edges refined.	
If I integrate coaching skills, our team will get along better.	
Coaching is part of my job description.	
I want to further my own learning and growth.	
I want to become more open to feelings—mine and others’.	
I want to be available to others; everyone needs someone to talk to.	
I want to improve the world.	
I want to give to others.	
Other [add your own motivation/expected benefit]:	

The Next Step

Executed with care, coaching is an intimate, significant relationship that truly will affect two people deeply and produce measurable results for organizations. As Tathagata Dasgupta, PhD, adjunct professor of data sciences and advanced analytics at the USC Marshall School of Business, describes, “I personally do not think of my own benefits when I coach. The sparkle in a student’s eyes, the text message from a client who got a promotion, or the improved deliverable from a subordinate are rewards. But there is a learning process involved—I learn as much as I coach.” Taking time to prepare yourself will expedite and assure that process.

Now that you're ready to coach, it's time to initiate conversations with the person who is ready to work with you.

Applying the Learning

"The thing to do, it seems to me, is to prepare yourself so you can be a rainbow in somebody else's cloud. Somebody who may not look like you. May not call God the same name you call God—if they call God at all. I may not dance your dances or speak your language. But be a blessing to somebody. That's what I think."

—Maya Angelou, poet, author

- How do you define coaching?
- How are your coaching skills? Review your ratings on Tool 1-1. This week, try to implement the item that will propel you toward excellence (identified in Tool 1-2, item 5).
- Slow yourself down and sit with your thoughts about coaching. You'll not only gain some clarity about venturing in to this field, you'll enjoy health and productivity benefits, and you'll be exposed to techniques that you might want to have a coachee try out one day.
- What myths or negative beliefs about coaching are you carrying with you? What do you want to do with them? Use Tool 1-3 to identify and manage any limiting beliefs you're holding on to.
- What is drawing you to coaching? Review the point totals you assigned to the coaching motivations and benefits in Tool 1-6. This will help ensure that you always know why you're taking the time and energy to do this.
- Have you seen any great coaches at work? Ask around and do some research to find three or four coaches with whom you can have sample sessions. You might use your coaching gremlins as a topic during the sample sessions. Even if you aren't looking for a coach in the immediate future, sample sessions can be great learning and growth experiences.

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About the Author



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Sophie Oberstein is an author, coach, adjunct professor, and L&OD consultant. As the founder of Full Experience Coaching, a leadership and personal coaching practice, she works with individuals across the country who are seeking increased effectiveness and satisfaction at work, and those exploring their power to bring fulfillment and joy to their lives.

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