

DEVELOPMENT

Personal Coaching

This coach's for you!

By Teresa O'Neill and Brooke Broadbent

Pat is an ambitious training manager. Several of her colleagues and friends have told her that personal coaching has given them focus, clarity, and self-confidence. Pat has seen the difference in those people—new lilts in their voices and beaming smiles—so, although her personal and professional lives are satisfying, she wonders if they could be better. Could she benefit from hiring a personal coach?

Personal coaches, also known as whole life coaches, executive coaches, productivity coaches, and by a host of other names, support clients in a variety of ways. After determining the areas in which the client would like assistance, the coach draws on a multitude of skills and techniques to help the person move towards his or her personal and professional goals. Along the way, the coach

helps the client celebrate successes and deal with setbacks.

Engaging a coach can help.

Define values. When we're in touch with our values, we feel less stressed and more fulfilled. When we align our lives with our values, we can experience joy daily.

Create synergy between your personal and professional lives. The whole life approach of coaching helps create synergy between diverse elements of your personal and professional lives. Doing well in your personal life can help you do well professionally and vice versa.

Personalize and self-direct learning. Having a coach is like having a learning program tailored to your personal and professional development. And coaching

may help you with. Bonnie, a world-class athlete, explains how this process works with her personal (not athletic) coach: "Every time my coach asks me what's important [to me], I feel energized and focused. When I decide with my coach what I really want, I get a huge burst of energy to focus on what counts to make me happy and fulfilled."

By asking simple, powerful questions, a personal coach can help you set new standards for yourself. You'll make commitments to your coach, report on your progress, and receive feedback. Coaches help clients move beyond individual events to see the big picture of their lives.

According to a survey by the International Coach Federation, clients use their

standards helps to ensure your coach's competence.

Some employers use personal coaching as a perk to reward high-performing employees. Although the benefit was once limited to executives, more organizations are using training budgets to hire employee coaches. If your organization doesn't have coaches available, check whether they'd be willing to pay for a coach you find.

Select a coach you feel comfortable with. Here are some characteristics to look for:

- coaching skills. Does he or she break new ground with you?
- respect. Do you feel heard and respected?
- spontaneity. Are you comfortable being spontaneous with the coach?
- training. Has he or she received training through a reputable school?
- safety. Does your coach create a feeling of safety for exploring your deep-seated thoughts and feelings?

The benefits

Coaching is an investment: The more time and energy you devote to it, the more you'll get out of it. Respondents to the ICF survey reported a wide range of benefits, including

- increased self-awareness, 67.6 percent
- better goal setting, 62.4 percent
- more-balanced life, 60.5 percent
- lower stress levels, 57.1 percent
- enhanced self-discovery, 52.9 percent
- increased confidence, 52.4 percent
- improved quality of life, 43.3 percent
- enhanced communication skills, 39.5 percent
- increased project completion, 35.7 percent
- improved health or fitness level, 33.8 percent
- better relationship with co-workers, 33.3 percent
- better family relationships, 33.3 percent.

The whole life approach of coaching helps create synergy between diverse elements of your personal and professional lives.

is the ultimate self-directed learning experience because you identify your own issues, performance gaps, and obstacles.

How it works

Using words to explain the magic of coaching is like trying to describe a breathtaking acrobatic performance of the Cirque du Soleil. To really get it, you need to be participating in the performance, or at least in the audience. The best way to understand how personal coaching works is to take a complimentary sample session, which will enable you to experience whole life coaching's impact on your ideas, actions, motivation.

Determining your personal values is one of the first steps a personal coach

coaches in a wide range of roles, including as a

- mentor, 50.5 percent
- business consultant, 46.7 percent
- teacher, 41 percent
- taskmaster, 30.5 percent
- spiritual guide, 29.5 percent.

Choosing a coach

Most professional coaches are self-employed. A good way to find one is to contact coaching organizations (see sidebar), which can refer you to people who have graduated from their programs. The International Coach Federation has introduced training standards and a code of ethics that guide the profession. Hiring a coach trained to ICF

Additional Resources

- CoachU. Tools and training for coaches; www.coachinc.com
- Coachville. Help finding a coach, free coaching resources; www.coachville.com
- Coaching FAQ from the International Coach Federation; www.coachfederation.org/aboutcoaching/about.htm
- Glossary of coaching terms; www.interlinktc.com/definitions.html
- The Academy for Coach Training. A coach referral service; www.coachtraining.com
- The Coaches Training Institute. Certification courses and resources to find a coach; www.thecoaches.com
- The International Coach Federation. Coach referral service, links to coach training organizations; www.coachfederation.org

It's likely that you'll establish a relationship with your coach like you've never experienced before. So, be ready for an intense experience. You'll gain the most if you explain clearly to your coach what you want, accept honest feedback, are open to new behaviors, and follow through on homework assigned between sessions.

For a Web-only article on coaching versus psychotherapy, see *T+D* online, November issue. www.astd.org/virtual_community/td_magazine

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