

What is a business coach?



Smith

The scenario: I've been reading the Career Coach column for close to two years and I appreciate what I've read. One of the terms I have seen used is "business coach". I would like to know more about what a business coach can do for me.

Coach: Harvey Smith.

Let's start with a definition: The primary worldwide organization that certifies coaches – the International Coach Federation – says, "Coaching is partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential."

Coaches help each individual understand and capitalize on personal strengths. Coaches don't dictate what a client should do. We help that person gain clarity about his or her vision and then help that person define the ways to make the vision become reality.

When it comes to the workplace, if a person is doing what he or she does best: 1) That person is more satisfied as an employee, and 2) More productive and valuable to an employer.

According to Susan Whitcomb, founder of the Career Coach Academy, career success is: "Being radically rewarded and enthusiastically engaged in work that adds value to others."

Why do people seek a business coach? It runs the gamut. The kinds of business coaching activities are varied - Talent Management, Career Coaching, Executive Coaching and more. I work with entrepreneurs in over their heads, executives with issues about their bosses or subordinates, small firms that want to grow but don't have the know-how, competent workers passed over for promotions, transitioners looking at their next career, people who want to develop more confidence, managers who don't hire effectively, family businesses in turmoil...

The list is as diverse as it is expansive.

Here's one example of coaching in a business situation (I have client permission to cite this). I coach someone who owns a service and distribution company for the automotive industry. He felt that he had a great concept but wasn't executing it according to his own "success schedule." He was frustrated. He wanted a better connection with employees. He had few systems in place. The business limped along; he didn't enjoy going to his own office. We identified, then prioritized specific areas to improve. Each was analyzed and a remediation plan was put in place. In six months he was able to build his infrastructure and an accountable staff.

This dedicated client worked hard. He has told me that "working with a coach is like having a business partner without paying half the profits." Today he is landing national accounts and expects to double his business by the end of 2007.

A coaching relationship can be developed in-person or by phone. The

coach and client agree on the frequency of meetings and key issues to address. Usually, each meeting results in action steps for the client. Activities can include behavioral assessments, exercises to identify personal strengths, analyzing results of informational interviews ... there are many activities coaches use to encourage new thinking and education in a client.

Coaching is problem solving. Coaching drives clarity. Coaching can open up new paths for success. A coach is a fresh set of eyes. A coach can see in you what you may not be able to define on your own. A coach brings a cumulative base of experience of many previous clients who have successfully made significant transitions.

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