

Coaching – what, when, how?

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Our society, businesses, and professional life are changing rapidly. These are changes mostly driven by new technology (e.g. Internet), changed attitudes, and patterns of life. It leads not only to a host of new opportunities, but also to increased demands for personal and professional development.

Traditional boundaries between work and leisure are dissolved. We must find and decide the work-life balance – which we are not trained for. We are used to eight-hour work days and where our salary is paid based on hours worked. However, more and more management and highly skilled jobs are unregulated regarding working hours, and your salary is based on what you achieved and not on hours worked.

The role of the leader is no longer about telling what others should do. Instead, you must create a guiding and creative environment that enables your employees to exploit the full potential.

In times of rapid change and increasing demands, it may be difficult to prioritize, understand the consequences, make decisions, and set realistic action plans. It is in these circumstances when personal coaching may come in as a tool for personal and professional development.

What is coaching?

We always have, for better or worse, endeavoured to develop both personally and professionally. Life is a constant development process, with recurrent challenges and opportunities. Our responsibility for personal growth is essential for success. Faced with complex decisions, we have shared problems and concerns with family and friends to gain new insights and guidance. And this is what coaching is all about: sharing an important matter with another person, who may help out to see both opportunities and obstacles—and how to overcome these. Hence, coaching is nothing new.

Coaching can also be compared with taking a someone from one place to another, or rather from one approach to another. The word “coach” originates from the Hungarian term “kocsi” and is the name of a wagon from the village Kocs. Then, the term was later picked up and used in the United States as a term for a wagon or a bus (coach), i.e., a vehicle transferring people from one place to another.

Personal coaching is a conversation, or series of conversations, between two persons (individual coaching) or several people (group coaching). Coaching conversations can occur in different ways and situations. You may talk to your partner, a friend, or a work colleague to get new perspectives and ideas on a matter. It is you who determines whether a conversation is a coaching session or not.

Professional coaching

Professional coaching is a structured method aimed at achieving individual goals, with dialogue as a tool for personal and professional development. Coaching should not be confused with advice or consulting, nor with a form of therapy. Coaching is based on a “healthy” situation and is considered to be a method of personal development that lies between consulting and various forms of therapy.

In sports

For a long time, professional coaching has existed and been accepted in sport. Examples here are coaching in individual sports such as tennis, golf and athletics. A sports coach has often not been a top athlete, and it may seem strange that someone who has not been at the top can help a top athlete in her/his development. But, for example, a former top tennis player cannot always help another, inferior player to reach the same level she/he achieved.

The skills of a great coach are significantly different to those of top athletes. It is mainly through structured observations, reasoned conversation and open feedback that a sports coach can make a difference for the client between being a top player or just one player in the crowd. It is simply not enough to know how to do it – a coach must also know how to coach.



In business

Coaching in sport turned out to be a successful tool for the development of athletes and spread, therefore, to other areas. During the mid-1970s, sports coaches began to use their experience and coaching skills as tools for personal and professional development within the business environment. But it did not stop there.



Coaching is today an established method for personal growth in many areas and adapted to different situations. It is a rapidly growing industry with many practitioners. There are coaches in music, singing, theatre, acting, speeches, relationships, life and career planning, just to name a few. There is basically a coach for every activity and situation; if you google coaching, you get 253 million hits!

All forms of coaching, however, seem to have one thing in common, namely, they are meant to incite personal growth and trigger change.

The primary goal is to make you, the client, successful in your development. The coach helps you to:

- See the real problem.
- Place the problems/matters in context.
- Understand opportunities for change.
- Overcome obstacles.
- Set realistic action plans.
- Go from plan to action.
- Believe in your abilities.

Coaching in business is today common and increasing, driven by the rapid changes in businesses and the society. Professional coaching is used as a tool to understand better the situation, provide new perspectives and insights regarding alternatives.

The ultimate goal for you as a client is to make it easier to take and implement important decisions. Professional coaching is a learning process where you should expect significant improvements in personal efficiency and a better balance between work and leisure.

How?

In some complex situations and certain phases of your life or career, it may be useful to have someone to share important matters with. Of course, you can turn to a close friend, a colleague, or your manager. However, it is sometimes useful to turn to a third party, such as a professional coach who is entirely independent of your situation and your relationships.



Professional coaching starts with a meeting in which you and the coach determine the date, time, and place where the coaching conversation should take place. You can decide to have only one meeting or a series of meetings. You are the client, and you decide when and how often the coaching will take place.

You can, of course, choose to meet with the coach, only once, but usually, coaching is conducted over a period, including several meetings. In practice, you maybe meet for one hour each time at an appropriate frequency. For every meeting, you should bring with you an important matter, a problem, or dilemma that you want to address.

The coach helps to define the real problem and to put it into context. You will discover both obstacles and opportunities for change to be finally able to determine your goals and your action plan. No problem is too small; you decide how important the matter is. The overall goal of a session is to give you new ideas and perspectives on the problems that you choose to share.

Trust

Your coach must have a genuine interest in meeting people in different situations and love to see the clients grow and develop. The coach is not usually a specialist in the matter you

bring to the table or its solution, but he or she will manage the process to enable you to discover your opportunities and possible actions.

Active listening is the coach's primary tool in the process to support you to take personal responsibility for your development and your learning. Your coach should not give direct advice, but with the help of powerful (sometimes challenging) questions, he or she should unwrap ingrained beliefs and give you new ideas and perspectives.

The coach must be able to build trust so that you feel confident that, at your pace, you can take the steps needed to change and achieve your goals. Your coach must, therefore, be able to create an atmosphere that allows for creative, stimulating, and productive meetings.

You should not believe that it is a passive act to be coached. It is a conscious, active, and sometimes demanding process. Development and change imply a personal growth and intellectual movement. We feel insecure in new situations; we know what we have but not what we will get. To be coached requires a great deal of personal courage to dare to explore and develop yourself.

You need to challenge your current approach, views, and attitudes. When you, as a client, become clear on what needs to be done, it requires courage, ambition, energy, stamina and time to get from plan to action. Between meetings, it is your responsibility and task to take the necessary steps towards the goal.

Choose your coach

As you can see, coaching is a concept with many practitioners, and there are both qualified and less qualified coaches. If you want to try coaching to enhance your personal development, it is important to select the right coach—it needs to be someone you can trust.

It is also vital to choose a coach with a diploma or a certified coach, *i.e.* a person who has undergone an accredited coach training that includes both theory and practice. I am a trained coach with an [ACC Diploma](#) gained after ICF-accredited training. (ACC stands for Associate Certified Coach and ICF stands for [International Coach Federation](#).)

I coach mainly business leaders in their personal and professional development. Drop me an e-mail at info@vestadil.com if case you want to know more about my coaching.

Become a coach

If you want to become a coach, the first step is to undergo coach trainings. There are many institutions that provide basic and advanced training – just perform a search on the internet. However, make sure that the training providers and courses are accredited.

Summary

As humans, all of us have a desire to develop and have the opportunity to exploit our full potential. We want to grow and be creative, and we want, with the right circumstances, to take full responsibility for our actions.



Coaching is a tool to help us become experts in our matters and utilize our innate knowledge that is necessary to see what we need to do to thrive and succeed in what we want. Coaching is about meeting your opportunities and leads, when properly delivered, to higher life satisfaction.