

HOW TO CHOOSE A COACH WHO'S RIGHT FOR YOU

When choosing a coach, as with any other service provider, like a lawyer, personal trainer or financial advisor, we consider a number of factors. Many professionals have similar training, skills, experience, even results, and offer comparable packages and fees.

Most often the determining factor will be the connection the client has with the service provider. The chemistry between coach and client is particularly important because both are partners in a process that supports the client to identify and make desired changes over time. This requires mutual trust and respect.

When looking for that connection, ask yourself:

- Is this someone I'd enjoy working with
- Does he or she "get me"
- Will I be comfortable sharing my thoughts and feelings and openly exploring possibilities
- Does he or she communicate in a way that is clear to me, and
- What else is important to me in the relationship?

Regarding training, skills and experience, the coaching profession is currently unregulated. This means that anyone can call themselves a coach. To identify oneself with integrity as a certified or professional coach, or with some coaching designation, a coach will have completed a certification program from a recognized coach training organization and/or met credentialing standards set by the International Coach Federation (ICF), a non-profit professional association of personal and business coaches. The ICF also sets standards for the accreditation of coach training organizations, since "training" can vary from a one day course to a program over several months that includes supervised coaching and exams.

While coaches are trained in a process they can apply to clients in different fields, some clients may prefer a coach with more experience in the client's specific profession or industry. The coach's experience can come from coaching others and/or having worked themselves in that field. Coach options for corporate counsel include lawyers with in-house, law department leadership and/or private practice experience who have become professional coaches for lawyers, and coaches with non-law backgrounds who regularly coach lawyers.

Other factors that may influence your choice:

- The coach's process, tools and flexibility. For example, can you book coaching by the hour as desired or is it available only as a package of sessions; are assessment tools a required part of the coaching (and often billed separately)?

- Is the coaching offered face-to-face (in your office or theirs), by phone, Skype or email, or some combination, as best suits your needs? Technology eliminates travel time and expands your choice of coaches.
- Coaching fees vary from hourly rates to package rates for a set number of sessions. These professional fees may qualify as tax-deductible business expenses for firms, companies or self-employed individuals.

Most coaches offer a complimentary call to discuss what you're looking for from the coaching and what they provide – their approach, timelines and fees. Some will demonstrate their coaching skills during the call. Interview more than one coach as needed to find your fit. You can ask about:

- Their coach training and credentials
- How long they've been coaching
- Other skills and experience that inform their coaching
- Their experience working directly in your field and/or coaching others in your field
- Their process, tools, the timing and the cost
- Results their clients with challenges or goals similar to yours have achieved
- What's unique about their service – why should you choose them as your coach
- Client references

The bottom line on finding a coach who's right for you - trust your gut and then jump in.

For answers to frequently asked questions about coaching, see www.coachfederation.org or local chapter websites, such as www.gtacoaches.com.