

Frequently Asked Questions About Coaching

[Return](#)

What Is Coaching?

Professional Coaching is a professional partnership between a qualified coach and an individual or team that supports the achievement of extraordinary results, based on goals set by the individual or team. Through the process of coaching, individuals focus on the skills and actions needed to successfully produce their personally relevant results.

The individual or team chooses the focus of conversation, while the coach listens and contributes observations and questions as well as concepts and principles which can assist in generating possibilities and identifying actions. Through the coaching process the clarity that is needed to support the most effective actions is achieved. Coaching accelerates the individual's or team's progress by providing greater focus and awareness of possibilities leading to more effective choices. Coaching concentrates on where individuals are now and what they are willing to do to get where they want to be in the future. ICF member coaches recognize that results are a matter of the individual's or team's intentions, choices and actions, supported by the coach's efforts and application of coaching skills, approaches and methods.

What are the benefits of coaching?

Individuals who engage in a coaching relationship can expect to experience fresh perspectives on personal challenges and opportunities, enhanced thinking and decision making skills, enhanced interpersonal effectiveness, and increased confidence in carrying out their chosen work and life roles. Consistent with a commitment to enhancing their personal effectiveness, they can also expect to see appreciable results in the areas of productivity, personal satisfaction with life and work, and the achievement of personally relevant goals.

How can you determine if coaching is right for you?

To determine if you could benefit from coaching, start by summarizing what you would expect to accomplish in coaching. When someone has a fairly clear idea of the desired outcome, a coaching partnership can be a useful tool for developing a strategy for how to achieve that outcome with greater ease.

Since coaching is a partnership, also ask yourself if you find it valuable to collaborate, to have another viewpoint and to be asked to consider new perspectives. Also, ask yourself if you are ready to devote the time and the energy to making real changes in your work or life. If the answer to these questions is yes, then coaching may be a beneficial way for you to grow and develop.

What are some typical reasons someone might work with a coach?

There are many reasons that an individual or team might choose to work with a coach, including but not limited to the following:

- There is something at stake (a challenge, stretch goal or opportunity), and it is urgent, compelling or exciting or all of the above
- There is a gap in knowledge, skills, confidence, or resources
- A big stretch is being asked or required, and it is time sensitive
- There is a desire to accelerate results
- There is a need for a course correction in work or life due to a setback
- An individual has a style of relating that is ineffective or is not supporting the achievement of one's personally relevant goals
- There is a lack of clarity, and there are choices to be made

- The individual is extremely successful, and success has started to become problematic
- Work and life are out of balance, and this is creating unwanted consequences
- One has not identified his or her core strengths and how best to leverage them
- The individual desires work and life to be simpler, less complicated
- There is a need and a desire to better organized and more self-managing

How is coaching delivered? What does the process look like?

The Coaching Process—Coaching typically begins with a personal interview (either face-to-face or by teleconference call) to assess the individual's current opportunities and challenges, define the scope of the relationship, identify priorities for action, and establish specific desired outcomes. Subsequent coaching sessions may be conducted in person or over the telephone, with each session lasting a previously established length of time. Between scheduled coaching sessions, the individual may be asked to complete specific actions that support the achievement of one's personally prioritized goals. The coach may provide additional resources in the form of relevant articles, checklists, assessments, or models, to support the individual's thinking and actions. The duration of the coaching relationship varies depending on the individual's personal needs and preferences. *Assessments*—a variety of assessments are available to support the coaching process, depending upon the needs and circumstances of the individual. Assessments provide objective information which can enhance the individual's self-awareness as well as awareness of others and their circumstances, provide

a benchmark for creating coaching goals and actionable strategies, and offer a method for evaluating progress.

Concepts, models and principles—A variety of concepts, models and principles drawn from the behavioral sciences, management literature, spiritual traditions and/or the arts and humanities, may be incorporated into the coaching conversation in order to increase the individual's self-awareness and awareness of others, foster shifts in perspective, promote fresh insights, provide new frameworks for looking at opportunities and challenges, and energize and inspire the individual's forward actions.

Appreciative approach—Coaching incorporates an appreciative approach. The appreciative approach is grounded in what's right, what's working, what's wanted, and what's needed to get there. Using an appreciative approach, the coach models constructive communication skills and methods the individual or team can utilize to enhance personal communication effectiveness. The appreciative approach incorporates discovery-based inquiry, proactive (as opposed to reactive) ways of managing personal opportunities and challenges, constructive framing of observations and feedback in order to elicit the most positive responses from others, and envisioning success as contrasted with focusing on problems. The appreciative approach is simple to understand and employ, but its effects in harnessing possibility thinking and goal-oriented action can be profound.

How long does a coach work with an individual?

The length of a coaching partnership varies depending on the individual's or team's needs and preferences. For certain types of focused coaching, 3 to 6 months of working with a coach may work. For other types of coaching, people may find it beneficial to work with a coach for a longer period. Factors that may impact the length of time include: the types of goals, the ways individuals or teams like to work, the frequency of coaching meetings, and financial resources available to support coaching.

Within the partnership, what does

the coach do? The individual?

The role of the coach is to provide objective assessment and observations that foster the individual's or team members' enhanced self-awareness and awareness of others, practice astute listening in order to garner a full understanding of the individual's or team's circumstances, be a sounding board in support of possibility thinking and thoughtful planning and decision making, champion opportunities and potential, encourage stretch and challenge commensurate with personal strengths and aspirations, foster the shifts in thinking that reveal fresh perspectives, challenge blind spots in order to illuminate new possibilities, and support the creation of alternative scenarios. Finally, the coach maintains professional boundaries in the coaching relationship, including confidentiality, and adheres to the coaching profession's code of ethics.

The role of the individual or team is to create the coaching agenda based on personally meaningful coaching goals, utilize assessment and observations to enhance self-awareness and awareness of others, envision personal and/or organizational success, assume full responsibility for personal decisions and actions, utilize the coaching process to promote possibility thinking and fresh perspectives, take courageous action in alignment with personal goals and aspirations, engage big picture thinking and problem solving skills, and utilize the tools, concepts, models and principles provided by the coach to engage effective forward actions.

What does coaching ask of an individual? To be successful, coaching asks certain things of the individual, all of which begin with intention.

- *Focus*—on one's self, the tough questions, the hard truths--and one's success
- *Observation*—the behaviors and communications of others
- *Listening*—to one's intuition, assumptions, judgments, and to the way one sounds when one speaks
- *Self discipline*—to challenge existing attitudes, beliefs and behaviors and to develop new ones which serve one's goals in a superior way
- *Style*—leveraging personal

strengths and overcoming limitations in order to develop a winning style

- *Decisive actions*—however uncomfortable, and in spite of personal insecurities, in order to reach for the extraordinary
- *Compassion*—for one's self as he or she experiments with new behaviors, experiences setbacks—and for others as they do the same
- *Humor*—committing to not take one's self so seriously, using humor to lighten and brighten any situation
- *Personal control*—maintaining composure in the face of disappointment and unmet expectations, avoiding emotional reactivity
- *Courage*—to reach for more than before, to shift out of being fear based in to being in abundance as a core strategy for success, to engage in continual self examination, to overcome internal and external obstacles

Adapted from the ICF Website, © 2007 International Coach Federation DEVELOPED BY: Branding and Marketing Subcommittee, (Jan Austin, MCC, Val Williams, MCC, Nora Klaver, MCC and Ariane Cherbuliez, PCC)

[Return](#)