

BIG IDEA coaching & consulting

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What is executive coaching?

Short answer I help people, and especially leaders, see themselves more clearly, recognize and use their strengths, and modify thinking and behavior to have more of the kind of positive impact they intend.

The long answer, from the Executive Coaching Forum:

“Executive coaching is an experiential and individualized leader development process that builds a leader’s capability to achieve short- and long-term organizational goals. It is conducted through one-on-one and/or group interactions, driven by data from multiple perspectives, and based on mutual trust and respect. The organization, an executive, and the executive coach work in partnership to achieve maximum impact.”

Executive coaching involves three levels of learning:

- Tactical problem solving
- Developing leadership capabilities and new ways of thinking and acting that generalize to other situations and roles
- “Learning how to learn:” developing skills and habits of self-reflection that ensure that learning will continue after coaching ends

The typical phases of executive coaching

Before the phases below, a number of steps often take place. They may include interviewing and selecting the coach, and briefing the coach about the organization and forces influencing the person who’ll receive the coaching. They also include a meeting between coach and that prospective client so that both can determine whether they believe that they can work together effectively.

- Selecting the coach** The executive typically meets with a two or three coaches that have been selected because the person leading the selection process believes that they may fit the situation and the executive. This meeting is sometimes called a chemistry check because coach and executive get personal impressions that help them decide whether they believe they can work together effectively.
- Contracting** The purpose of contracting is to agree on working principles and commitments that ensure productive outcomes, clarify roles, prevent misunderstandings, establish learning goals, and define business and interpersonal practices.
- Assessment** The assessment phase provides the coach and the executive with important information on which to base a developmental action plan.
- The assessment is customized, taking into account the needs of the executive and the norms and culture of the organization. The coach can select among a wide variety of assessment instruments, including personality, learning, emotional intelligence, interest, and leadership style indicators.
- Goal setting** Executive coaching is driven by specific goals agreed upon by all members of the coaching partnership. These goals focus on achievements and changes the executive can work toward, both for himself or herself and for the organization.
- Initial goals are established when coaching begins and revised or refined as coaching progresses. They can be divided into short-, mid-, and long-term targets.
- Coaching** The quality of the coaching relationship is a key element of success. The coach creates a safe environment in which the executive can feel comfortable taking the risks necessary to learn and develop. Drawing from a broad knowledge base and a solid repertoire of learning tools, the coach offers guidance and activities that help the executive meet his or her learning goals. Conversations explore the executive's current work situation to find practical, business-focused "learning lab" opportunities.
- The practical activity of coaching is based on principles of adult learning: awareness, action, and reflection. Using data gathered from the assessment phase of the process, the coach engages the executive in discussion and activities designed to:
- enhance self-awareness of the implications of typical behaviors
 - learn skills, build competencies, change behaviors, and achieve results
 - reflect on ways to improve and refine skills and behaviors

**Transitioning to
long-term
development**

At the close of the coaching sessions, the executive and his or her coach take steps to ensure that the executive will be able to continue his or her development.

Applying the results of the coaching in the context of the executive's long-term development is an important part of this process. It usually includes the joint preparation of a long-term development plan that identifies future areas of focus and action steps. The coach may also recommend resources that can help support the executive's long-term development needs.

In most cases, transitioning includes handing off the development plan to the executive's manager or another stakeholder who agrees to monitor future progress in partnership with the executive. The coach, executive, and other stakeholder incorporate regular review of progress into the long-term plan, followed by a reassessment of goals and objectives. A successful executive coaching process serves as a catalyst for the executive's long-term development.