

Can You Benefit From an Executive Coach?

How coaches partner with talented leaders to attain career success.



By [Arnie Fertig](#), Contributor Jan. 30, 2018, at 12:35 p.m.

DO YOU NEED AN executive coach?

Whether you love or hate the New England Patriots, it's virtually impossible to argue with their success, season after season, by the pairing of exceptionally talented players like Tom Brady, Danny Amendola, Rob Gronkowski, Malcolm Butler and many others with the coaching staff led by Bill Belichick.

It's inconceivable to imagine any team, no matter how talented its members might be, fulfilling its potential without [exceptional coaching](#).

In recent years, coaching has taken off in many directions from sports. You can easily find coaches dedicated to everything from helping you deal with relationships, diet, health, learning issues or disabilities to "life." In the world of business, executive coaching has become an accepted way for people to [advance in their careers](#).

Often, companies will engage a coach to work with employees at key points in their careers. Sometimes, people will engage a coach on their own to help work on areas of weakness or gain new skills and insights that can produce the change in workplace actions necessary to get ahead. Just as a highly talented athlete benefits from a coach, even C-level [executives can up their game](#) by engaging in the coaching process.

If your employer foots the considerable bill for coaching, it will understand the need for you to be able to speak to the coach in absolute confidence. However, it will likely also want to receive status updates about where you are in the process from the coach.

David Peck, principal and senior executive coach at Goodstone Group LLC, contends that executive coaches "work at the intersection of what the organization wants for the leader and what the leader wants for the leader." His company, which includes many coaches, often works with top-level executives in major companies worldwide.

Alternatively, you can find independent practitioners like career coach Kim Meninger, of Executive Career Success, who works with professionals at all organizational levels. She says "many people don't recognize that the best time to hire a coach is when things are going well. A coach can be a great thought partner and trusted advisor as you develop within your organization."

Both Peck and Meninger emphasize the importance of working one-on-one with an executive for a period of time when they are at an [inflection point in their career](#) to help them get to the next level, or when they have been promoted, to help them integrate into that level and perform at their highest and best manner possible.

However, if you are looking for someone with whom to develop a long-term, ongoing mentoring relationship, you will likely do better with another form of intervention than coaching.

You might think of coaching as something like project management for your career, in that it should have an initial period of defining expectations and goal-setting, followed by the actual work of coaching and concluding with planning for what you will do post-coaching. Peck puts it this way: "We believe that good coaching brings someone from A to B and then goes away."

Coaching itself might take on many forms, depending on the situation. It can involve meeting in person or virtually, employing a range of personality, aptitude and other testing modules. At times, a coach might shadow his or her client at their workplace and sit in on meetings to observe a client in action and discuss that situation later on.

What to look for when engaging a coach. At the executive level, typically coaches have their own solid business achievements under their belt before entering the coaching profession, or else they come to it with a strong background in psychology and counseling. Ask about their background, and above all, seek someone to whom you can relate.

If you are seeking a coach, you should be aware that while the industry is not currently regulated or licensed, some colleges offer executive coaching programs, and organizations like the International Coaching Federation offers training courses and certifications for coaches. Be certain to inquire about a coach's training, background and credentials.

Be aware that coaching fees are both competitive and vary widely, based on the level of the individual being coached, whether the coach is paid by the company or the individual and the length of the coaching engagement. Often, companies will consider their fee structure to be proprietary information.

Do you have clear objectives of what you want to achieve through coaching? Do you need to scale up your leadership? Do you have a strength you want to build on? Do you have a gap or weakness you want to address? Do you [need someone you can talk to](#) other than your boss or others in your company about what is going on with absolute confidence?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, and you are willing to commit to the coaching process, it may well be time to speak with your boss or human resources about obtaining a company-paid coach, or else making the investment yourself in furthering your career success.

Happy hunting!