

HOW TO CHOOSE AN EXECUTIVE COACH

The coaching profession is growing, with many more individuals investigating coaching for themselves, and many organisations increasing their spending on coaching. There are also more coaches in the market than ever before. This suggests two key questions: How do I select a coach that's a good fit for me? And what makes a good coach in general?

Coaching is based on purposeful conversations, conducted with skill and purpose, to facilitate change and learning.

UNDERSTAND WHAT COACHING CAN DO FOR YOU – AND WHAT IT CAN'T

Firstly, it's important to understand your goals and the exact purpose of the coaching. You'll need to know a bit about what coaching is and isn't and if it's the right approach to help you. Working with a coach means having an accountability partner, and is a relationship that has the potential to deliver lasting change for you in your working life and beyond.

Be prepared to take action and try different approaches

Coaching is all about doing things differently. The coaching conversations will help you think through what you'd like to achieve and plan the actions you're going to take. You need to be prepared to try different things and take some calculated risks. A good coach will make sure that the coaching conversations are stimulating and thought-provoking. But a lot of the impact of coaching comes from the actions that you'll take in between the coaching sessions. If you're not feeling ready to change your approach then coaching probably isn't for you.

Expect Challenge

Your coach will support and challenge you, perhaps by encouraging you to step out of your comfort zone or by questioning and reflecting on your thinking. This is all about helping you make crucial changes in how you think and act and your impact on others. You need to be prepared to be challenged so that you can bring about changes and change long-standing habits. "Nothing changes until you do".

TALK TO SOME COACHES BEFORE MAKING YOUR DECISION

Once you've got a clear idea of your goals and objectives, you'll be able to decide what key qualities and experiences you're looking for in a coach. It's normal to speak to two or three coaches before making a decision. Coaching is a very personal process, so you need to be sure you've found someone you'll feel comfortable with, who can positively challenge you to achieve your best.

A 30-minute one-on-one call with one or more coaches before you start your coaching work is a good idea. Coaches should not charge you for these exploratory conversations. You can explore the coach's background, style, approach, and experience in these calls. The coach will ask you more about what you're looking for from your coaching and start to get a sense of your coaching goals. You can choose which coach you'd like to work with based on these calls – remember to use the other points in this paper to help you decide.

At The OCM, our team will talk with you to find out more about you and your goals and then organise two/three conversations with coaches that we think are the right fit for you before you decide.

Trust and rapport

There are two essential components to a coaching relationship. The first is that you want coaching and believe it will help you. The second component is the quality of the relationship between you and your coach. If trust and rapport develop quickly, it's a good foundation for you to work on your coaching goals. So, if you have a good feeling about a coach, trust your instincts and go for it! If you're unsure about some aspects of a coach's approach, it's not necessarily a 'red flag' – but it's a sign that you should explore this with them to find out more and address any concerns.

Skills and qualifications

Ensure the coach you choose is credible by checking their credentials, accreditations/ qualifications, and asking for references. In the UK and many other countries, "Coach" is not a protected title – anyone can call themselves a coach. So you need to make sure the person you choose has the right qualifications. The coaching profession has three leading accrediting organisations: The EMCC, The ICF and The AC. It is a good idea to check that they are also working with a qualified coaching supervisor in addition to having the right qualifications.

All OCM Coaches are fully qualified and participate in regular Supervision.

Business Acumen

Good coaches need business experience and acumen, enabling them to understand how things get done in organisations so they can effectively help their clients with complex challenges.

All OCM Coaches have real-life business experience.

What's your coach's "sweet-spot"

Good coaches are versatile and adapt their approach to suit different clients and situations. But they often have an area in which they specialise. This might be working in a particular business sector or when helping their clients with specific goal areas. It's worth asking your coach about this because it could be beneficial if it aligns with one or more of the areas you'd like to focus on.

Style and approach

A coach needs to have presence and confidence in their ability to help – but they also need to be able to “get out of the way” and facilitate your development. The coaching is all about you – it's not about them! A good coach is supportive, challenging and facilitative. They are present and available to you, courageous, humble, and dedicated to your success.

Goal-focused

It can be really helpful to know what you would like to achieve through coaching or how you would like to find yourself at the end of your coaching journey. If you're unsure, your coach can help you to think this through in your first sessions. Research shows that coaching is more effective when focused on specific goal areas. This helps create a boundary around the topics that you cover and enables you to gauge the progress that you're making. Without clear goals, the coaching risks turning into a series of interesting conversations that you and your coach both enjoy but don't lead to change. Although it might be pleasant, this is a lost opportunity to make a lasting difference.



SHOULD MY COACH BE SIMILAR TO ME OR DIFFERENT FROM ME?

This is an important question. There is no right answer to it – but it's important to consider a few factors.

Firstly, a coach who's quite different from you can potentially make a transformative difference to your perspective on yourself and the world and can help you consider options that you might not otherwise have considered. These coaches can help you understand the world you're operating in and your stakeholder environment from radically different points of view. It does take more of a leap of faith to work with someone who is very different. But it can be rewarding, challenging and stimulating.

On the other hand, it's sometimes easier to build rapport with a coach who is more similar to you in approach or who has had similar work and cultural experiences. There may be the possibility to 'shortcut' to solutions because of a shared perspective and shared use of jargon and metaphor. The risk is that they might not offer a perspective that's as challenging as it could be or might not have enough diversity of ideas and approaches.

Whether you choose to work with someone different from you or someone more similar, an excellent coach will be cognisant of this and adjust their approach accordingly to be as useful to you as possible.

IN SUMMARY

How do you select a coach that's a good fit for you?

- Understand a bit about your goals and what you're trying to achieve or change. If you're unsure, then be ready to talk about this.
- Talk to a number of coaches, perhaps two or three, and ask them some questions to get an understanding of how you might work together (see below).
- Trust and rapport: did you get a sense of this during your initial conversations (often called chemistry calls for this exact reason).
- Do the coach's areas of expertise match up with what you're experiencing or trying to achieve? Is this important to you?

What makes a good coach in general? What should you be looking out for?

- Skills and qualifications: check for credibility
- Business acumen: can they understand your environment and the complex challenges you might face?
- And finally, a good coach is supportive, challenging and facilitative.

QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON IN/AFTER YOUR EXPLORATORY CALLS

- Did the coach answer your questions?
- Did the coach ask you insightful questions?
- Did they clearly explain their coaching process to you?
- Do they have a credible qualification/accreditation/business background?
- Could you trust them?

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE COACH IN YOUR CALL

- What is your coaching experience?
(number of individuals coached, years of experience, types of coaching situations, etc.)
- What is your coach-specific training?
(an accredited training program, other coach-specific training, etc.)
- What is your coaching specialty or areas where you most often work?
- What are you passionate about?
- What types of organisations do you work with most often?
And, at what levels (executives, upper management, middle management, etc.)
- What are some of your coaching success stories?
(Can you give specific examples of clients who have succeeded due to your coaching?)

COACHING IS AN AMAZING OPPORTUNITY AND CAN BE A TRULY TRANSFORMATIONAL EXPERIENCE.

Research shows that some of the benefits of coaching happen long after the coaching has finished. And some of the benefits may be at a level you're not even conscious of. So it's worth embracing the opportunity and taking the time to choose a coach that's best for you – with great coaching skills and a good fit with your own personality and situation. It might just change your working life!

At The OCM, we have a team of exceptional coaches, and our experts are ready to help find the best coach for you!

If you'd like to talk to us about coaching, please contact enquiry@theocm.co.uk.

