Executive Coaching Assessment Toolkit:

Top 10 Questions You Need to Ask Before Hiring an Executive Coach

Executive Coaching can be an effective solution to a number of challenges in life and business. Unfortunately, like financial advisors, there is nothing stopping anyone from calling themselves Executive Coaches. So, it really makes sense to be well equipped with the right questions and knowledge before hiring one.

Following are the top 10 questions you need to ask and have answers to if you are considering hiring an Executive Coach, or deciding whether Executive Coaching can be of value to you:

1. What Is Executive Coaching?

This is a great question: ask 100 Executive Coaches, and you might get 100 different answers, which can be frustrating! There is no one answer to this question, and it varies dependent on the Executive Coaches’ qualifications and process. In our case, when doing Executive Coaching, we work in face-to-face and remote sessions one-on-one with CEO’s, President’s, business owners, executives, and managers, in confidentiality, to achieve clear goals resulting in improved performance. We focus on real lasting, measurable behavioral changes that make a real impact on things like individual productivity, goals achievement, and top and bottom line impact.

The relationship between a manager/executive and a coach is different from other kinds of professional relationships. A coaching relationship often focuses on enhancing performance. An executive coach is more involved in execution and outcome assessment than the typical consultant, and they work with individuals over time.
2. Who Do Executive Coaches Typically Work With?

Executive Coaches typically work with:

- Public and private organizations
- Individuals and groups
- Managers, executives, CEO’s, and business owners

*Some of the individuals, groups, and situations we work with include:*

- Successful leaders who want to improve their personal effectiveness and their results
- Leaders preparing to move into or have recently assumed new roles
- Leaders whose performance is sub-optimal due to unproductive leadership behaviors
- Leaders dissatisfied with their organizational performance and results
- Teams: When individual team members or the team overall needs to improve their effectiveness
- Group learning programs: For groups of leaders with a shared development need (e.g. broadened influence skills, more impactful communications, more effective selling of professional services). These programs are highly customized to a client's learning need, context, and culture; and they always include an application component to practice the target skills.
3. What Results Can I Expect?

That depends (don’t you just love that answer?). Due to the variety of backgrounds and the lack of regulation of Executive Coaching, you are wise to investigate what results those you are assessing promise and whether they align with what you’re looking for. You not only should understand the potential impact of Executive Coaching overall, but the successes of those you are evaluating.

The evidence is clear that relevant and focused training combined with Executive Coaching can produce significant benefits in improved productivity, client relationships, executive retention, and profitability. Of course, the levels of improvement in these areas will be dependent on the quality of the Executive Coach.

Executive and Leadership coaching can produce:

- Improved leadership skills
- Improved operational effectiveness
- Increased personal effectiveness
- Strengthened results orientation
- Relationships that work
- Effective communication style
- Priorities pinpointed
- Strategy potential realized

Research conducted by MetrixGlobal indicates that the ROI from coaching provided Booz Allen Hamilton was $7.90 return for every $1 spent.

Training and Development Journal reports that coaching is the only cost-effective way to reinforce new behaviors and skills until a learner is through the post-training "results dip." And a 2001 study indicates that executive coaching yields ROI of almost 6 times its investment. The study included 100 executives, mostly from Fortune 1000 companies. Improvements in productivity, quality, organizational strength, customer service, and shareholder value were also realized, as were fewer customer complaints.

The coaching programs delivered an average return on investment of 5.7 times the initial investment in a typical executive coaching assignment -- or a return of more than $100,000 -- according to executives who estimated the monetary value of the results achieved through coaching.
Among the benefits to companies that provided coaching to executives were improvements in:

- Productivity (reported by 53% of executives)
- Quality (48%)
- Organizational strength (48%)
- Customer service (39%)
- Reducing customer complaints (34%)
- Retaining executives who received coaching (32%)
- Cost reductions (23%)
- Bottom-line profitability (22%)

Among the benefits to executives who received coaching were improved:

- Working relationships with direct reports (reported by 77% of executives)
- Working relationships with immediate supervisors (71%)
- Teamwork (67%)
- Working relationships with peers (63%)
- Job satisfaction (61%)
- Conflict reduction (52%)
- Organizational commitment (44%)
- Working relationships with clients (37%)

4. Why Would I hire an Executive Coach?

- Newly appointed key people you want to onboard quickly
- Retention of talent
- After a performance review or 360° survey indicating areas of strength to be leveraged and/or developmental areas to be addressed
- Behavioral change: yours or someone who reports to you
- Improve areas of mediocrity
- Get the team aligned and pulling in the same direction
- Enhance the effectiveness of established executives
- As a perk for high performers
- To move individuals from technical or functional to leadership excellence
- Senior executive mentoring
- New teams: getting them working effectively
5. What Should I Look For in an Executive Coach?

It really depends on the outcomes you’re looking for. If you’re looking for a coach who’ll leaving you feeling positive about yourself, but without “moving the needle”, you wouldn’t want us!

Ideally, you want an effective Executive Coach with experience coaching people just like you to great success. This can include your work position, the goals you are looking to achieve and the challenges and opportunities you are faced with.

Some say that having a certification from the ICF (International Coaching Federation) is a good “seal of approval” to look for in an executive coach. While there is nothing wrong with the various certifications offered by the ICF, there is no guarantee of quality or meeting your needs with this certification. I believe the most important criteria to look for are:

- **Align Your Needs With the Skills and Background of the Executive Coach:** A first step should be getting clear on why you are hiring an Executive Coach, and the specific outcomes and results you would expect.

- **Match Your Needs and Their Offerings:** Once you understand your needs and are clear on the results you would expect from an Executive Coaching engagement, look for a resource that matches your needs.

- **Understand Process and Methodology:** Knowing the process will tell you more about the potential fit of the offering with what you are looking for. For example, our process involves using the best combination of tools, questions, coaching and focused training to improve individual and organizational capabilities, to produce the desired results. The steps in our process, for comparison purposes are:
• To identify and understand strategy and the leader's goals and responsibilities. This allows us to work with leaders to connect the future to the present by identifying the steps to success, the decisions needed to get there, and existing barriers to be overcome.

• We then get a fix on individual strengths and weaknesses using world-class tools. This provides a clear understanding of strengths to be leveraged, and areas of weakness requiring work. Together, you and your coach will assess your situation, including strengths, weaknesses, and developmental opportunities. You will work with your coach to create focused and measurable action plans.

• After you execute the plans, you and your coach will review the results and define new action plans to further your growth. Throughout this process, the level of benefits you receive from using a coach is directly related to your willingness and ability to take an active role in every aspect of the coaching engagement.

• Lasting change is key: tools and processes will be utilized to produce this outcome.

• Individual stakeholder interviews and surveys are often performed to gather input on an ongoing basis on behalf of each coaching participant. Participants can also do their own interviews. The focus of these interviews is to determine what each coaching recipient is doing well, what they could improve on and the suggestions stakeholders have for their future.

• The focus will be on one behavioral change at a time, and the individual being coached chooses a goal they are passionate about.

• **Their Track Record** You should expect to be provided with some client testimonials indicating the level of success experienced by other clients.

• **Understand Areas of Expertise:** It is key to understand the background (education, work experience, etc) of the Executive Coach you will be working with. Here is what we share with clients on our website regarding our experience.
You should be looking for this level of detail with those you interview for a coaching assignment:

- **We incorporate decades of experience at senior levels in numerous functional positions**, including sales, marketing, distribution, management, and the most senior leadership positions in Fortune 500 and smaller entrepreneurial companies in diverse industries. We have experience in business-to-business and business-to-consumer markets.

- **We have extensive training in cutting edge effective Executive and Leadership Coaching practices** through CEO Global Network, Corporate Coach U, The Executive Committee Ltd. (TEC Ltd.), and thousands of hours of practical application in one-on-one and group Executive Coaching and Leadership situations.

- **We have had the privilege of exclusive training in the new science of Positive Psychology**, the study of optimal human functioning, with one of the world’s leading psychologists, and a past President of The American Psychological Association, Dr. Martin Seligman. Dr. Seligman and Positive Psychology have been featured on the cover of Time Magazine.

- **We have senior executive experience with the world’s leading research-based consultancy**, Great Place to Work® Institute, dedicated to building a better society by helping companies transform their workplaces. Their work, based on the major findings of more than 20 years of research finds that trust between managers and employees is the primary defining characteristic of the best workplaces. Great Place to Work® Institute produces several Best Companies lists in North America, including FORTUNE Magazine's "100 Best Companies to Work For,"® and the Best Workplaces in Canada

- **We understand strategy**, have created, implemented and executed effective strategy, understand why more than half of those engaging in strategic planning are dissatisfied, and know how to prevent this.

- **We have decades of successful experience running organizations**, and know what it’s like on your side of the table. We pride ourselves on providing effective and lasting solutions to our clients.
6. How Often, For How Long, and Where Will We Meet?

It is important to know how frequently you will meet, whether remotely or in face-to-face sessions, and for how long, with each session and the total length of the engagement. Some studies indicate no decrease in client benefit when Executive Coaching is done remotely, versus on-site and in-person.

Behavioral change takes time, and regular practice and reinforcement are critical to altering long-ingrained behavioral patterns. While brief coaching engagements seem to produce changes in behavior, these changes often fail to stick under day-to-day pressures. We therefore ask clients to make an initial commitment to at least six months of coaching, with an understanding that the engagement may be extended or terminated early, if desired. This allows sufficient time for the coach to help the leader through a sustained, iterative process of testing new behavioral patterns across a wide variety of business circumstances and challenges.

We usually meet with our coaching clients twice a month, particularly initially, usually at their office, when assignments are local. The frequency, duration, and type of meeting depend on the leader's needs and travel schedule. The initial months of an engagement generally require more time together to establish a baseline, and gain momentum.

7. What Tools and Assessments Will Be Used?

You should ask what, if any, assessments and tools will be used, and what the costs will be. You should also look for the rational and the quality of these assessments. We use only world-class assessment tools.

8. How Will Results be Measured?

We measure client success based on their assessment, and often with the input of peers, subordinates, and superiors. In some cases, we gauge success based on the stakeholders' evaluation of how well the leader has progressed against his or her selected goals at the completion of an engagement.
9. Will They Put it in Writing?

There should be no surprises when hiring an Executive Coach. Any coach with integrity will spell out the terms, conditions, and details of the coaching assignment in writing.

10. How Much Will This Cost?

Like most services, there is a range you can expect to pay for an Executive Coach. I would be wary of any Executive Coach charging less than $250/hr. Our fees are typically $300/hr. We know that we provide multiples in value to our clients, and have the testimonials to prove it, and a money back guarantee.

At this stage, you might be wondering whether Synergy Work Solutions might be able to help you. Answering “yes” to any of the following questions means it probably makes sense to contact us to explore things further Contact Us!. There is no cost or obligation.

- Are you or someone in your organization having communications or other behavioral issues causing stress and impacting individual and/or organizational performance?
- Are you dissatisfied with your results, either personally, with a team, or organizationally?
- Would you like to get a new executive team member “up to speed” quickly?
- Are you or someone on your team concerned that a promotion might not occur due to a behavioral concern?
- Is your performance being held back due to a lack of leveraging individual and/or team strengths for maximum productivity?
- Are you concerned that you or key team members’ leadership skills might not be adequate?
- Are you spending too much time working “in the business” versus “on the business?”
- Is your personal life suffering because of work demands?
- Could our strategy and/or team be improved to make us more competitive?

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If you want to learn how Synergy Work Solutions might be a fit for what you’re looking for, Call us at 1-877-949-8453 or 416-452-4987, Contact Us! or email us at http://www.info@synergyworksolutions.com/

I hope this has been helpful to you!

To your success!!

Michael Craig