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Executive Coach

What coaching is

Coaching for senior executives in all walks of life has become increasingly popular in the last twenty years, with a growing body of evidence that it can improve both individual and organisational performance.

A coaching session is a safe, supported space in which you can explore thoughts and feelings, plans and anxieties, in ways which we are seldom able to do elsewhere. A coach can help you find new ways of working through situations, and to loosen established blocks and habits. A few sessions may be enough to navigate through a period of transition, or you may find it beneficial to continue over a longer term. Typically a coaching session lasts 90 minutes to two hours, and takes place about every six weeks: but this like everything else is always negotiated between you and the coach.

While there are no set rules, coaching generally focuses on helping you find your own way forward rather than proffering advice or direction. It's not therefore necessary for the coach to know a lot about your field of work – sometimes it even helps if they don't.

When you might find it helpful.

Senior leaders in all walks of life increasingly deal with a volatile and uncertain world, in situations which can easily create stress, anxiety and unproductive conflict in the workplace. Coaching can provide support to deal with all this more creatively and effectively.

Other particular times when coaching can be especially valuable are:

- taking on a new role, or promotion
- starting in a new organisation
- dealing with a merger or takeover, or any other time of radical change in the organisation

My background

I worked for over thirty years in an international advertising agency, in roles that included strategic planning and market research, managing a department, and global training and development. I became interested both in how advertising works (and wrote a book about it), and in the ways people work together to make things happen – sometimes frustrating each other, sometimes creatively succeeding, and sometimes a mixture of both. To explore this further, I gained a Master's Degree from Ashridge and a Postgraduate Diploma from the Metanoia Institute in Organisational Consulting. I found my consulting practice was most effective when it used elements of individual and team coaching and so am now working to develop my experience in this specific area, studying relational coaching with Simon Cavicchia.

My approach to coaching

I suspect every good coach is unique in that they bring all of their own, unique, experience to their work. I notice that my own history includes non-judgmental listening as a qualitative researcher, looking for new patterns and possibilities as a strategic planner, enabling people to find better answers to their own questions as a teacher. I also have a set of strong theoretical perspectives on human and organisational behaviour from my studies (including holistic, relational, gestalt, complex responsive processes, psychodynamic, and action research) – and I have also worked extensively in and with complex organisations myself, in both line management and staff roles.

What you should look for in choosing a coach

There are many schools and theories of coaching, but the main fact that has been empirically established is that successful coaching outcomes mainly depend on one simple factor – the quality of the relationship between the coach and the client (as rated by the client). It's therefore a good idea to meet with a potential coach for an exploratory session and just find out how you get on together (and you will get a good idea if their approach feels like what you need).

Having said that, anyone can call themselves a coach – and as it can be a powerful intervention for good, in the wrong hands it can do some harm. You should only trust a coach who

- has a background of relevant training and experience
- has a clear ethical framework (such as subscribing to the an established coaching code of practice)
- has regular supervision themselves from an experienced coaching supervisor

(I believe I tick those three boxes!)

Would you like to talk further?

I've tried to answer some of the commonest questions people have about coaching (and about me), but I realise this still gives little idea of what coaching with me is actually like. Probably the only real way is to get together and find out.

So if any of this sounds of potential usefulness to you, I'd be very happy to meet for an hour and see how we get on. There would be no charge for this initial meeting and no obligation to continue.

Oh, and I am interested not just in meeting potential 'coachees', but also managers or HR professionals (in any type of organisation) who might be looking to meet a new coach.

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