



Guide to Being Coached

What are the benefits of coaching?

Coaching requires a significant investment of time, energy and money, and should deliver value for the individual and for the organization (as applicable). This guide is designed to help you get the most out of your investment in coaching. While each coaching experience is unique, below are guidelines to achieving effective experience as well as questions to stimulate your thinking.

Coaching enables you to access more of your abilities, helps you to fulfil your potential, enables you to be more effective personally and in your work, and supports your growth and development. Coaching helps you to better understand the context in which you operate, seeing events and your behavior from new angles and gaining insight into their meaning. It provides a safe place to explore strategies and ideas, supports you in developing and articulating your goals, encourages you to be specific about how to achieve them, and maintains your drive and motivation in putting words into action. Coaching is an opportunity for much-needed reflection in a busy work schedule and for understanding what is supporting and blocking you: a time to step back and then to move forward with greater awareness and responsibility.

Coaching is built around one-to-one discussions between you and a coach, who will challenge and question you, listen, and provide feedback. The style of coaching is typically non-directive, based on the coach's belief that you can reach the answers yourself, but need time, space and encouragement to recognize them and take action. While endeavoring to open up alternative actions, the coach will resist telling you what to do, unless you specifically invite direct input. This intense interaction will be supported, where appropriate, by a range of other mechanisms and tools to draw on existing information, create greater awareness and provide alternative views, creating a richness of input, observation and challenge.

Is coaching the best approach?

Coaching is helpful when you are working towards specific goals, require a confidential sounding board, seek a challenge to your approach and views that may be difficult to obtain from colleagues, and desire honest observation and feedback. This is often the case for those leading organizations, businesses, large teams or significant projects.

Although coaching may seem right for you, it is worth testing whether you would achieve your goals more effectively through other approaches such as specific skills training (e.g. presentation or public speaking skills) or mentoring. While mentoring has links with coaching, typically a mentor shares a similar business background or experience, may be in the same organization, has expert knowledge, offers potential solutions from experience and may be seen as older and wiser. By contrast, a coach is seen as an equal with different skills and background, but a deep understanding of business. Mentoring may be characterized as putting something in whereas coaching seeks to draw something out.

Guide to Being Coached

What will be the best approach?

- What are my needs? What are the needs of the business?
- What is driving my interest in seeking support now?
- What, if any, are the specific skills I am seeking to develop or improve? How might I increase these skills?
- What, if any, specific expertise or experience would be valuable? What advice do I require?
- What is the balance of my work and personal issues?
- What other alternatives have I considered (e.g. skills training, mentoring, counselling)?
- Why is coaching an appropriate solution to meet my needs?
- What are my current personal circumstances and are they appropriate for coaching (e.g. free from clinical depression or medical trauma, not involved in major life events such as bereavement or divorce)?

When might coaching be helpful?

The trigger for coaching is often a point of transition in your life, such as role change, promotion, a new team or project, organization change, strategic redirection, external business challenges. These transitions create increasing demands and a wider range of issues to manage, often spilling over from work into personal life. Other triggers for coaching may include challenging relationships with colleagues, a sense of frustration within the current role, or feeling stuck or underused. Coaching may help you to create forward movement, manage complex demands and achieve a better work / life balance.

In its early use in business settings, coaching was often associated with situations where an individual had received poor performance reviews, was not achieving results in a specific aspect of the role, or was in a performance crisis (sometime called derailment). Now, however, coaching is recognized for providing targeted support for high performing individuals – a way of further developing strengths and helping the person to experience greater job satisfaction and achieve even better results. This positioning of coaching draws on the research in the field of positive psychology that supports the value of building from strengths. Coaching assignments often take this positive approach while also recognizing the value of addressing development needs.

What will be the focus of my coaching?

- What is driving my current interest in coaching?
- What are the business needs?
- What specific challenges do I or my business / team / project face?
- What current strengths do I want to develop further?
- What are my own development / leadership / management needs?
- What are my personal challenges in work affecting my life overall?
- What transitions am I facing?
- What results am I seeking to achieve? What overall focus will I have for the coaching?

What should a coaching contract cover?

The style, focus and structure of the coaching should be agreed before the coaching begins. The coaching contract captures the agreements between you, the coach, and, where applicable, your organization, about the intent and nature of the coaching. In business settings, coaching may involve the line manager, colleagues and HR / development director both in preparation for the coaching and in reviewing the outcomes. The contract should specify these elements.

Guide to Being Coached

As well as defining contractual terms and conditions, the contract should also clarify critical requirements around confidentiality. Providing a safe place for open discussion requires confidentiality. However, the organization may wish to hear important general messages or themes that arise particularly from multiple coaching assignments, and may specify this with the coach. The organization may also specify extreme conditions under which the coach is required to inform the organization, such as when the client is likely to be a danger to themselves or others, or when the client is contravening explicit company rules.

What should the contract cover? (and see What does a coaching program include? below)

- What is the intent and nature of the coaching?
- What is the involvement of other organization personnel in the coaching process?
- What feedback and learning will be provided to the organization?
- How will personal confidentiality be protected?
- What are the contractual terms and conditions? What are the implications (e.g. cancellation of a session)?

How do I choose a coach?

Selection of the coach is an important step as the relationship between coach and client should encourage openness and honesty. Though expert knowledge is not required for an effective coaching relationship, you may feel more comfortable working with someone familiar with your business, sector or function. Or you may deliberately choose a coach from a different background who is able to challenge your basic assumptions, often a source of illumination.

It is normal practice to arrange an initial meeting with a coach to assess how well you might work together. This is a chance for you to learn more about each other, understand the needs that initiated coaching, and discuss expectations and approaches. Coaches are able to work effectively with most clients, but it is important that you both feel comfortable about proceeding. This meeting is sometimes referred to as a chemistry meeting, and it is acceptable at this stage for either party to say a polite 'no' to proceeding.

Is this the right coach for me?

- What are the coach's coaching qualifications, experience, continuing development and supervision arrangements?
- What are the coach's areas of special interest, business background and expertise?
- What are the coach's connections with me or my organization (e.g. recommended by someone you trust, on a coaching panel for your organization, already working with your organization)?
- What coaching examples / case studies or references is the coach able to share with me?
- How does the coach measure the success of a coaching assignment?
- What are the consequences of choosing this particular coach (e.g. chemistry, budget, conflicts of interest)?

What does a coaching program include?

Coaching programs should be tailored to provide maximum value and benefit to the individual (and to the sponsoring organization). Most will specify a preparation phase (sometimes including elements of performance assessment), a coaching phase (which includes face-to-face meetings and other activities), and a review phase (to test that you have achieved the results you hoped for).

Guide to Being Coached

How should I prepare for coaching?

- What are my current / future job and personal challenges? What are the links between them?
- What are my current strengths? What are my areas for development?
- What are my overall goals for the coaching program? How might I measure success?
- How do these goals relate to those of the organization?
- How might I involve others in achieving the best results from the coaching?
- What information might be valuable to my coach (e.g. job responsibilities, performance goals, performance appraisals, 360° feedback, psychometrics / profiles)?

What is the nature of the coaching itself?

- How long will the coaching last?
- How often and for how long will we meet?
- What other activities might be included?
- Where will we hold coaching sessions?

How will the coaching be reviewed?

- How will we close the coaching program?
- Who else will be involved?
- What information will be shared? With whom? How? (see “What should a coaching contract cover?” above)

What does a typical coaching session involve?

Coaches will structure a coaching session to ensure that you achieve something of value, rather than simply have an interesting conversation. You should expect your coach to ask you questions, challenge your responses, give you feedback, listen deeply, push for clarity on your goals, help you to identify new options and explore which of the alternatives are best, assist in creating a resilient action plan, test your commitment to action and encourage you to complete work between sessions.

What will I think about in a coaching session?

- What is currently bothering me? What do I want to work on? What immediate issues am I facing?
- What challenges and excites me about my current (or potential future) role? What strengths could I use more? Where could I make a stronger contribution?
- What am I ready to address? What do I still need to contemplate further?
- What do I want to achieve in this session? How does this relate to my overall goals?
- At the end of the session, how will I know that it has been worthwhile?
- What is actually happening around this issue?
- How does my behavior in this area reflect a pattern of behavior in other contexts? Where has this behavior been relevant and significant in my life?
- What solutions / approaches have I already considered? What else might I consider? What are the best ideas?
- Who or what in my work and personal contexts could support me in achieving the change I want? What could prevent me?
- What would I be prepared to give up in order to pursue my desired goals? What do I wish to retain?
- What will I put into action? How committed am I to doing this? What will I do next?

Guide to Being Coached

Coaching with The Bodai Group

The Bodai Group offers coaching programs which are tailored to meet specific needs and provide maximum value. For individual coaching assignments, these programs typically include:

- Preparation activities, such as review of information from the organization, 360° data, interviews, observation
- A series of one-to-one coaching sessions (often six to twelve sessions of about one to two hours each), held regularly (weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly)
- Other activities as required e.g. telephone support between sessions, three-way meetings with the client and line manager, live-action coaching (within a real business situation), psychometric profiling and feedback (e.g. MBTI®, FIRO-B®, etc.)
- Review of coaching results against agreed goals.

The Bodai Group also undertakes coaching-led assignments with leadership, business and project teams to achieve improved performance with stronger trust and mutual support. These assignments may include team-based and individual components.

Adapted from Alliance Coaching Limited, UK