

EXECUTIVE'S TOOLS

<http://www.theexecutivecoachingforum.com/executives-tools-success>

What You Can Do to Increase the Likelihood of Success in Executive Coaching

Members of The Executive Coaching Forum have found these resources helpful, but we did not formally reviewing it for complete accuracy and we don't necessarily endorse the claims made by the creators.

1. Be clear about the reasons you are seeking coaching and the outcomes you hope to achieve.

Once you make the decision to participate in executive coaching, identify the objectives and specific outcomes you hope to achieve through coaching. Make sure you are seeking coaching for the 'right' reasons. Some wrong reasons for seeking out executive coaching are because everyone else seems to have a coach, or you think coaching will replace your needs for therapy, or because you wish to use it for your personal growth only and not related to your success in your organization. Coaching outcomes vary by individual, but coaching is most effective when the outcomes are related to key competencies you hope to achieve to enhance your current effectiveness or to prepare you for a future role.

2. Select a coach that you trust and can learn from.

Trust is fundamental to forging a partnership that yields successful results. The ability to trust the coach is based, in part, on whether you believe the coach represents him or herself authentically, has your best interests at heart, will speak the 'truth,' and will adhere to agree upon confidentiality guidelines. Whether you can learn from the coach is based on whether the coach has the necessary training and experience to assist you in the issues you want to address and has a perspective and style you can work with. In addition, learning involves stretching beyond your comfort zone. A coach's ability to give you feedback and difficult messages regarding your effectiveness in the organization in a manner you can hear is often critical to the success of executive coaching.

3. Build support with relevant stakeholders to the coaching process.

For coaching to be successful in your organization, a partnership is important with stakeholders such as your manager, your human resources partner, your leadership development partner, if applicable, and your coach. Your role in creating support for your coaching is to ensure all parties reach agreement about their roles and degree/type of involvement in your coaching process in a manner that supports your development. If stakeholders are not partnering effectively, you have partners working at cross-purposes. Just as your medical internist coordinates care with specialists, so should you and your coach ensure your support is coordinated among all relevant stakeholders.

4. Take ownership and responsibility for the coaching process.

The coaching process is what you make of it. It is not a process that happens to you. It is up to you to take responsibility for establishing objectives, scheduling and keeping coaching sessions, updating the coach on changes affecting your work together, following through on agreed upon actions, and monitoring results.

5. Ensure coaching objectives are aligned with your organization's objectives.

Coaching exists to support you in achieving your organization's objectives. Your objectives in coaching should fit within the context of the organization and/ or core work you are in, key drivers of success, and metrics on which your performance is measured in your current role. In addition, the coaching objectives must be relevant to the stage your organization is in and the leadership needs of that stage, whether start-up, growth, turnaround, or steady state.

6. Be fully present in the coaching process.

Coaching involves bringing your whole self into the room and being fully engaged in the process. This means different things to different people, but it may mean leaving your cell phone and pager off while in coaching, making sure you are not interrupted by others while meeting with your coach, and attempting to balance what may be most urgent for you at the moment with what is most important as you partner with your coach in dedicated time together. It also may mean rescheduling a coaching session-not to avoid confronting a difficult issue, but to be more 'available' to deal with it.

7. Take risks in your learning.

Coaching is a process of discovery and learning, which is sometimes counter to the performance orientation of many organizations. If you are in an organization in which you feel you need to know all the answers and never make mistakes, you will find yourself in a different 'gear' in coaching. Coaching is where you can be a learner and not have to be a performer. In coaching, you can take the time to truly take in feedback, self-reflect, experiment with new leadership strategies and tactics, and admit to and learn from mistakes. The success of coaching is based on your willingness to be open and receptive to learning and to take risks in experimenting with new behaviors.

8. Be honest with your coach about what is working and not working for you in coaching.

Your coach has a repertoire of approaches and some will work for you and others will not be as impactful. By providing feedback to the coach on an ongoing basis about what you find most useful, you will increase the likelihood of success and accelerate your learning. One critical factor in the success of coaching is having the coaching delivered in a manner that fits with your particular learning style. For example, if you learn by doing, then a coach who gives you conceptual models and frameworks and asks you to apply them on your own will not serve you as well as one who proposes dry-runs, role plays, or low-risk real-time practice sessions. You must take responsibility for sharing with your coach how you best learn.

9. Make a practice of monitoring results with your coach and other stakeholders.

As you progress in your coaching process, you will begin to monitor the success of the work you are doing with your coach. Seek out feedback, observe different responses and impacts of your leadership, and ultimately, assess the impact of your learning on organizational results. By doing this regularly, and in concert with your coach and key stakeholders, you will have a very real sense of your development as a leader. It is not uncommon to ask for additional 360° feedback following coaching.

10. Aim for early successes in areas you are confident you can achieve.

In order to 'get traction' in your coaching, especially in a newly appointed leader or succession scenario, identify the areas or ways in which you can achieve early or visible wins. For example, a successful launch of a key initiative will go a long way toward success, even if the results of the initiative may take months or years to determine, or a shift in a previously 'difficult' key relationship may be immediately appreciated.

11. When there are setbacks in your leadership, persevere in your coaching.

In coaching as in life, there will be setbacks, which, for example, can range from an unexpected loss of momentum in your role to an inability to get necessary support for your strategy to an error in judgment resulting in loss of credibility or diminished opportunity. You may be tempted to terminate your coaching or to project blame on your coach. These are the times when you can achieve the greatest gains in coaching if you stay in the game and focus on lessons learned. Coaches know that in times of setback or failure leaders often make the greatest gains in their coaching if they are willing to persevere.

12. Be committed to long-term development in your leadership development process.

Your learning doesn't end when your coaching ends. Commit to a plan of long-term development, and discuss with your coach how you can continue in your progress on your own or through the help of other stakeholders. Consider arranging for 'check-in' sessions with your coach, three to six months into the future.