

The Four Questions You Must Ask to Decide if the Coach is a Good Fit

By Jessika M. Ferm

If you are interested in working with a coach or hiring one for your organization, here are a few questions that may help you determine if the prospective coach is a good fit.

- ***What is your coaching specialty?*** Because “coaching” services such a range of needs, most professional coaches specialize. If you are looking for a coach to help your organization and its people develop skills to gain a competitive advantage, an executive or business coach would be appropriate. If, on the other hand, you are looking to realign your life with your passions, a life or personal coach may be a better fit. Beware of coaches who say they can coach on whatever your needs are. Great coaches will refer prospects to other coaches who are experts in the area at issue.
- ***Where were you formally trained?*** This question becomes increasingly important as the field of coaching gains popularity. Today, there is no formal “coach sanctioning authority” and anyone is free to call him or herself a coach. You can dramatically improve your chances of finding a good coach by considering only those who have made the investment to receive formal training at one of the major coaching schools (such as Coach University and The Coaches Training Institute) and have received more than 200 hours of formal coach training. In addition, coaches who are certified (carrying the acronyms MCC, PCC, ACC, CUCG, or CCAC) have also logged numerous paid coaching hours (250-2,500) to earn their designations. There are, of course, exceptional coaches without these credentials and if they have chosen not to become certified, ask why. You will find that they are probably formally trained, but have chosen a different approach to showing value to their clients.
- ***What is your coaching style?*** Coaches have unique styles and coaching approaches. Since you will be working closely and intensely with your coach, it is important that you feel comfortable and trusting of your coach. Some coaches are more to-the-point and assertive where others are gentle and more supportive. Still, others combine a direct approach with a supportive style. You have to decide what will work for you. Some clients hire a coach who is opposite of them in style, because they are hoping to learn a different set of skills. Some hire a coach who most resembles them. Most professional coaches will know as early as the interviewing process if you will be a good fit. You, the client, may have to go with your gut instinct.
- ***What can I expect when working with you?*** This question will give you an idea of the coach’s approach to the relationship. Some will speak about the coaching process and some will give you more information about their individual coaching approach and philosophy. You want to listen for key words that resonate with you and critically assess if the coach uses language that makes sense to you. For example, some coaches may take a more holistic approach to coaching and may share that they go deep to get you the results you want. Other coaches may be more focused on strategic action steps to get results and meet goals. Try to leave this question as open ended as possible to get a good sense of the coach’s coaching style.

Coaches and trainers play key roles in helping individuals and organizations reach higher level of performance. It is important to ask the right questions to gain a solid understanding of what you are “buying.” Don’t hesitate to ask for a “test run” to determine if the coach or coaching organization is right for you.