

Promoting Success from the Inside Out

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Coaching is the fastest growing motivational approach worldwide for achieving personal and professional success. Coaching is quickly becoming the leading tool that successful people use to live extraordinary lives.

According to the *Harvard Business Review*, annual spending on coaching in the United States is estimated at roughly \$1 billion. Why? Consider this.

Margaret is a high-level executive at an international company and she is used to keeping a rigorous pace: Up at dawn to exercise, extensive travel for work, door always open to her staff. She had no time for herself or her own daily work-related tasks. She was always canceling meetings and was rarely on time. In addition, she spent almost no time on the things she enjoyed outside of work, including being with her husband. She was overwhelmed and her company knew it. They hired a coach to work with her.

Three months later, Margaret now spends more time with her husband. They exercise together every evening and have planned dates to look forward to. She keeps her office door closed for several hours a day so she can complete tasks. She even finished this year's performance reviews early for the first time ever. She no longer cancels meetings. Instead she models the personal organization, punctuality and caring she wants her managers to show their staff. She feels happier, more optimistic and more in control. She has earned a raise and a promotion, and has planned the vacation to Hawaii she has always dreamed about.

What could be so powerful to change a person's entire life in such a short period of time? Ask Margaret and she says: "My coach has taught me that I have

only begun to see my potential as an executive. The adjustments I have made thus far have contributed to a recent promotion, an improved home life and unbelievable sense of new found control. I am not only motivated to be better, I am better — everyday. My time with my coach is my favorite part of the week!"

Creating a Forum to Develop Goals

The coaching relationship is a unique one. Coaches and clients should be a good fit, because the coach becomes the client's confidante, partner, buddy, cheerleader, and the facilitator of the client's dreams and goals. Building trust quickly — within the first few sessions — is important if the relationship is to succeed.

The ongoing coaching conversation — usually conducted in weekly one-on-one sessions over the telephone — is about what the client really wants. Not what he or she "should" want but what he or she "really" wants. It is so easy to get caught up in day-to-day obligations and responsibilities that months and years go by before people look back and say, "Where did the time go?" Coaching works because people rarely make time to think about what they really want, much less how to get it. How often do you take an hour to think about your personal or professional goals? A coach gives clients time to think, to dream, to plan. For many coaching clients, it is the only hour of the week in which they can indulge in this thinking time.

Most clients hire coaches to accomplish specific goals, and much of the time is focused on these objectives. Yet, with coaching, many clients discover new parts of themselves, and find they can adjust their goals to be more in line with who they really are. For entrepreneurs and small business owners, a coach is especially valuable. As someone who is not part of the client's business or family, a coach is an objective sounding board. A coach is someone who can help move business or projects forward. With coaching, the time is "now" to complete that project and the time is "now" to create the life or business you really want.

Starting at the End

The typical coaching conversation starts with "the end in mind" and begins by looking at what the client ideally wants life to look like. Some clients can easily describe their ideal life, for others simple exercises like visualizing a movie of their life in the future helps crystallize the vision. The coach then re-winds the film and works with the client to change things today so that tomorrow is what they want it to be.

Early in the conversation a coach talks to clients about values. Gaining clarity on values enables more meaningful choices and consistent action. What do clients really value? Often, it is family, health and spirituality. A look at clients' calendars reveals that work is what they value most. It must be, because that's how they spend most of their time. There usually isn't enough time scheduled for family, exercise, and worship. They are so busy "doing" what they always do that they don't have time to "be" the person they want to be. This exercise alone is often a wake-up call that it is time to make some changes. For example, clients often say they don't have time to play tennis or do photography or any of the other things that give them energy and joy. In coaching, we say you don't have time not to do those things. Doing things that bring you joy adds to your creativity and increases your effectiveness.

Identifying Energy Drains

The coaching conversation then turns its attention to what is getting in the way of the client creating his or her ideal life. Where are the energy drains: clutter, disorder and procrastination? The client and coach co-create a plan

with clear action steps to eliminate these roadblocks. Co-creating the plan is the key. A coach isn't a consultant. Coaches don't tell people what to do nor do they do it for them. In coaching the goal is for clients to come up with their own answers. After probing and asking good questions, coaches certainly share their wisdom and experience, but it is the powerful questions and the listening that gets the client to access their own wisdom or unique abilities.

Support and Accountability

Take a look at Hal, for example. He is a manager who needed to add to his staff, but he had no confidence in his interviewing skills. His coach asked him, "What would it look like if you conducted a good interview?" "I'd have good questions prepared," he replied. That simple, but powerful exchange was the catalyst for a plan to prepare for the interview process. What's more, Hal realized that even in college he couldn't wing it. He was much more successful when he was prepared. He struggled with interviews, because he didn't have a plan and that caused him great anxiety.

Coaching sessions are about giving support so the client follows through. Most people have the best intentions to do the things they plan, but life gets in the way. Weeks fly by and nothing changes. With support and accountability, the client takes action and changes happen. And that's what happened for Hal. He created a script and a list of questions, and his confidence grew. He hired two excellent people and no longer dreads the interview process.

Providing support and accountability are particularly powerful when coaching busy executives or entrepreneurs to complete a project. Books have been written, new products developed and businesses launched with the weekly support, accountability and feedback of a good coach.

Looking at the Client's Needs

After a client's values and wants are defined and some of the roadblocks are eliminated, coaches support clients in looking at their needs. This is where change can happen very quickly.

Just as the physical needs for food and water must be met, emotional needs must also be met. It is not an option. Margaret, the executive, never had time for herself because she worked very long hours, her door was always open

and she was constantly interrupted during the day. In identifying her needs it was obvious that she needed to be liked and appreciated. She was proud of the fact that she was always available to her staff. This need was driving her and costing her more time than she could spare. She agreed to a plan to close her office door for two hours every day. It wasn't easy for her to do that but after a few days she was more effective and agreeable to take further steps. She had never looked at her emotional needs and how they affected her life.

Some common needs that drive us are: to be appreciated, accepted, heard, loved, needed, independent, in control, secure, and perfect. We must set up a system to get our emotional needs met. Meeting our needs is not an option. We either get our needs met or we get cranky. A coach works with a client to identify needs and to create a plan to get them met. When people get their needs met they have more self-confidence and they are happier. This often requires setting boundaries. Our executive Margaret had a need to be appreciated and she sacrificed her own time by always being available to her staff. When she realized she had to keep the door closed for several hours a day, she worked on setting that boundary.

People come to coaching because they want to improve their lives, increase their business or get support needed to complete big projects. But, to be successful at anything is an inside job. Coaching is effective because within this powerful relationship, clients are allowed to express their deepest wants, receive support in living their values and get permission to get their needs met. Coaching conversations are client driven. The effective coach asks powerful questions, listens deeply and gives honest feedback. With that kind of support, people can do great things.



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