

The case for investing in a Business Coach

This article is for you if you have not yet invested in a business coach but have a healthy curiosity about the subject and would like to know more. It covers the business and personal reasons why individuals and organisations invest in coaching, some common myths, why people resist investing in a coach, what coaching is, why it is different and how it works, what to look for when hiring someone to deliver one-to-one coaching and finally the answer to 'what's in it for you?' if you decide to invest in a Business Coach.

Why coaching?

It is clear that professional coaching has and will continue to become a vital part of corporate life. All the major corporations we know have already used, or are investigating the use of, coaching as a pivotal ingredient of their approach to performance management.

You are in good company; 3M, Barclays, Boots, British Telecommunications, Dupont, Deloitte, Ernst & Young, Eversheds, HBOS, Kellogg's, Kodak, Shoosmiths, St James's Place, Tenon, PWC and Unilever amongst countless other micro, SME and blue-chip organisations are training their managers to coach and/or investing in external coaches for some or all of their senior people.

These are the most common reasons:

- A rapidly evolving business environment
- Wanting people to take individual responsibility for their development
- The financial cost of poor performance
- A popular development mechanism
- A popular feature of a modern organisation
- Coaching supports other learning and development activities
- Employees are demanding different delivery mechanisms
- The need for lifelong development
- Improve decision making by senior executives
- Targeted 'just-in-time' development
- Short, timely and focused coaching discussions



In an extensive survey conducted by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) in 2005 the following statistics were revealed.

Reasons why firms invest in coaching (in descending order of importance):

1. Improving individual performance (78%)
2. Dealing with under-performance (30%)
3. Improving productivity (28%)
4. Career planning/personal development (27%)
5. Growing future senior staff (26%)
6. Fostering a climate of continuous learning (<25%)
7. Motivating staff (<25%)
8. Accelerating organisational change (<25%)
9. Demonstrating the organisation's commitment to staff (<25%)
10. Improving staff retention (<25%)
11. Reducing the cost of sending staff on external courses (<25%)
12. Helping foster a better home/work balance (<25%)
13. Satisfying a demand for coaching from employees (<25%)

The survey also stated the following:

- 84% of respondents reported that coaching by line managers was either effective or very effective.
- 92% of respondents reported that coaching by external practitioners was either effective or very effective.
- 74% of respondents reported that there will be an increase in coaching by managers in the next few years (25% said it will stay the same).
- 36% of respondents reported that there will be an increase in coaching by external practitioners in the next few years (51% said it will stay the same).

In another survey by the International Personnel Management Association (IPMA) they reported a 22% improvement in productivity through training. This rose to 88% when the training was combined with structured coaching.



These are the business reasons for investing in coaching but what about you? Coaching is often an intimate and very personal affair.

It is a natural instinct to want as much as you can from this precious thing called life. All of us are natural dream machines full of hopes and aspirations for the future. Yet many of us are afraid to reach out and take the action necessary to bring these dreams into reality. Often we become constrained and held back by our fears, unhelpful emotions, self-doubts, limiting beliefs and a lack of a clear focus on what we want. Many of us have an extremely busy life yet we feel unfulfilled, frustrated and dissatisfied. Living a life that is out of balance causes, what many call, stress.

Most of us are brought up to believe that it is right to tackle difficult situations on our own; it is part of being 'grown up.' Yet for many there is a price to be paid. We can often lead a seemingly successful life without finding the time to truly enjoy the fruits of our labour. Struggling along alone unchecked for long periods can lead to many forms of physical, mental and relationship difficulties.

Our observations from countless coaching discussions with our own clients also reveal that many people have one or more 'blind spots.' These are unhelpful habits, traits or emotions apparent to their colleagues but not to the individual.

Sometimes people unconsciously live in a state of denial, which over time, if left unchecked, can have unwanted potential career-limiting consequences. Unfortunately denial often sends unhelpful messages to colleagues; e.g. *"It's everyone else that has the problem and not me."*

'When you are part of an organisation, your primary objective and focus should be on helping all the people who work for you to get out of this business, or this game, or this life, what they desire. To me, that's essential. You have to take the focus off yourself.'

Pat Riley – Basketball Coach



Some comments from some of our clients that prompted them to work with us illustrate their frustrations:

"I'm too busy being busy."

"I used to be a very high earner but somewhere along the way I lost it."

"I'm being told that there is something about me that I need to change but, to be honest, I can't see what the fuss is all about or why my changing would make any difference."

"I work hard, I work long hours, I easily earn enough yet there is something missing."

"I know what I want to do but there is something holding me back."

"I give so much to my work but I know my relationships with the important people in my life are suffering."

"My time at work vs home is unhealthy."

"My success has opened many doors for me that others suggest I should walk through, however I sometimes think I should take greater control over my destiny."

"I enjoy a challenge but sometimes I feel overwhelmed and quite honestly I would feel very uncomfortable telling anyone I know especially at this office."

"I am under enormous pressure to perform but I am struggling to juggle my priorities."

The interesting observation from these comments is that they are not just confined to certain types of people, we hear them all the time from the front line to the board. We all have challenges and go through periods of uncertainty and overload where the opportunity to talk things through in a rational, confidential and sensitive manner is necessary not just to maintain and increase performance but also to keep healthy and sane!



What is Business Coaching?

Quite simply it is a one-to-one confidential relationship between a coach and 'coachee' who liaise regularly either face-to-face, on the phone or in writing (often via e-mail). The sole purpose of these conversations is to enable/cause the coachee to do whatever is necessary to get the business results that (s)he wants and the business demands in as short a timescale as possible.

The coaching profession has yet to mature and there are literally thousands of people who profess to be coaches. Life coaching, holistic coaching, career coaching, executive coaching, therapeutic coaching are just some of the many terms used. Some coaches are excellent but many delude themselves that because they have read a book, or attended a one-day training course on the subject, they are suddenly an expert coach!

The approach taken by outstanding Business Coaches is straightforward and based on the following principles:

- Coaching little and often: as an example sometimes just a few minutes on the phone each morning before work starts and again at the end of the day
- Focus on the objectives that will deliver the greatest outcome (20/80)
- Maintain a business and commercial focus
- Work with an individual's behaviours and mindset (values and beliefs)
- Quickly cut through personal interference to address any issues preventing action
- Work at pace to create the motivation and momentum for sustained change
- Being empathic and challenging
- Using, whenever necessary, unorthodox techniques to achieve a desired outcome
- Being flexible and doing whatever is necessary to achieve the result
- Delivering sustainable solutions
- Knowing that successful coaches themselves receive intense coaching
- Having fun!

"A Business Coach is someone who has an ongoing, committed partnership with a player or performer and does whatever it takes to inspire that person, or team, to empower themselves and shine. The consequence is a dramatic and sustainable improvement in levels of play or performance."

Simon Bozeat

Lead business Business Coach – Bozeat Consulting

Why invest in a Business Business Coach?

Because everyone in the business world who has risen to the top has had many of them! Nobody achieves success without surrounding themselves with a support network of talented and inspirational people. A business coach becomes part of that support network and indeed often helps the coachee create their own if they have not built one already. In this way coachees become secure in the knowledge that they have the right combination of people that will inspire, support and challenge them to do whatever is necessary to continually step out of their comfort zones and achieve success.

Here are just some of the reasons clients make the decision to invest in a coach, they:

- derive little or no value from training courses or they enjoy attending training courses but fail to follow through and turn the skills learned into habits
- know they should be following through on taking action that will stretch them but have convinced themselves that there are other 'more important' ways to spend their time. In other words they need a 'gentle yet firm push'
- are very busy people who need regular short injections of inspiration and techniques
- need to rediscover the skills and habits that helped them succeed in the past
- have some significant business goals to achieve in the future that will require a significant departure from the known
- are uncharacteristically performing at a level below the norm and either don't know why or do know why but cannot find a way through their 'personal interference' i.e. negative thoughts that prevent action
- are a peak performer and want the right techniques presented to them at the right time to give them the extra edge
- are curious to know what makes them and the people around them tick
- know they have character habits, traits and emotions that, at times, support them in achieving their goals and others that prevent them. Although they may know what the inhibitors and self-sabotaging habits are, they do not know what to do about them.

What Business Coaching isn't

Over the many years we have worked with countless executives and professionals we have heard all manner of beliefs about the profession and methods of coaching. Some are true; others are plainly unhelpful.

Here are five of the most common myths:

1. ***“Coaching is just another perk”***

This can be a dangerously subjective judgment. Coaching will not work unless the participant is 100% committed to their own growth. It is not uncommon for ambitious and driven people to push themselves too far. Whilst with a coach you have to be honest with yourself. To be able to raise your own potential you must put your whole self back into your work and personal life. This for many will be a tremendous challenge but the payoffs can be extraordinary.

2. ***“Coaching is easy/a jolly”***

Great coaches help people to become the best they can be and that involves the coachee stretching themselves which requires effort, dedication and above all, persistence. A simple analogy for spending time with a Business Coach is becoming a master musician.

Here is what you would probably do if you chose to learn an instrument (if you haven't done so already):

- You would find the best teacher available in the area and would start taking lessons.
- You would practise like mad! - all the time - as many hours per day as your life would allow.
- You would join a band or group so you could play with your peers.
- You would read anything you could get your hands on about techniques and stories about great masters.
- You would go to as many concerts as you could to observe and listen to players practising the craft.
- You would take your fellow player friends along so you could talk together about what you heard.
- As soon as you were good enough you would play for friends, family and colleagues.
- Finally, you would play in recitals and concerts and get feedback on your playing from educated players.

This is how a Business Coach will operate with you to ensure you master whatever it is you need to get the results you want and your business demands.

3. “The best coaches are those who have been to the top”

Not necessarily but it can obviously help with credibility. There are countless people who have risen to the top but never made it as a great coach. The world of business and sport is littered with failed managers and leaders. The difference is this, when becoming a top player the focus is on yourself, the focus of a top-performing coach is on the coachee. When a Business Coach looks into the eye of a client our mindset is simply this: *“I know there is a vast reservoir of untapped potential in you. It is my job to search for it and do whatever it takes to cause you to unleash it.”*

4. “Coaching is just having someone listen to you”

Yes a Business Coach will give you a ‘damn good listening to!’ but there is so much more to it than that. There are a host of techniques that are deployed in a timely and sensitive way to inspire you to do whatever needs to be done. All our coaches are trained in NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming), psychometric and 360 degree assessment tools. These techniques, many of which have been popularised by the likes of Darren Brown and Paul McKenna, are proven to deliver extraordinary results in a fraction of the time traditional methods take.

5. “Coaching discussions are just pink and fluffy”

We used to hear this all the time but have yet to understand exactly what people mean by it. People use expressions like ‘pink and fluffy,’ ‘hugging trees’ and ‘soft skills’ to dismiss coaching and personal skills training as if it is either mumbo jumbo or not worth bothering with.

This is a terribly damaging belief and thankfully now confined to the minority of people who have either no idea of what coaching entails, have heard some negative comments about coaching from their colleagues or down the pub or may have had a bad previous experience with an inexperienced/poor coach.

Anyone who has worked with a great coach will tell you that they are exactly the opposite. Business coaching discussions are focused, challenging, timely and first and foremost about delivering results.



The most common reasons why people resist working with a professional coach

It can be a combination of many factors illustrated by the following comments:

'I have to do this on my own'

This is not an uncommon belief that people share. The internal dialogue of *'I have to prove myself'* is common but in the majority of cases particularly unhelpful, especially if the *'Lone Ranger'* method continues not to deliver results. Consider why it is that the largest and most successful corporations hire consultants. Should Louis Hamilton, Andy Murray or any other sports star be able to do it on their own?

'I can't afford it'

Hiring a coach is a significant step to take for many people and the case for investing in one must be made. It is only worthwhile if it produces solid results. There is only one way to know whether it is right for you and that is to give it a go! People only truly believe in something when they have had direct experience of it. Consider having a trial period of just 30 days. You will know then if it is right for you.

'My weaknesses will be exposed'

Inevitably a confidential conversation with a Business Coach will uncover what you want, what you have now that will help you and what it is that is preventing you from reaching your goals. Sometimes the conversations are uncomfortable and so they should be! If facing up to 'blind spots' and doing something about them is something that you fear, then that is an even bigger reason why you should invest in a Business Coach!

'I don't know if I will get on with my coach'

Absolutely right, the chemistry must be right as a professional coaching relationship is often intense and intimate. It is worthwhile checking out a coach's credibility and results through people who have used him before. At the end of the day a trial period of 30 days will be the only true test to see if the relationship will deliver what you want.

How Business Coaching works

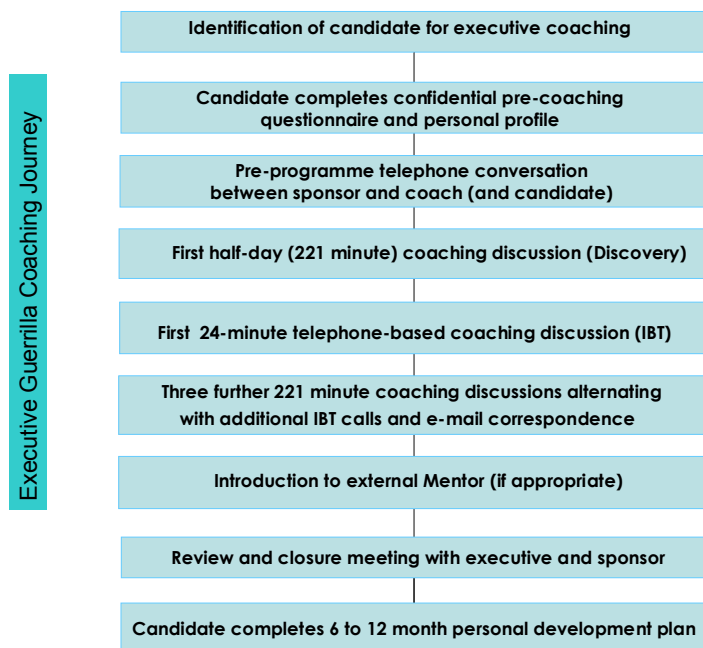
Having made the decision to accelerate the fulfilment of your aspirations you will meet your designated coach. After an initial exploration of your current situation, challenges and priorities a series of short-term goals will be agreed along with an initial plan of how they are to be attained. This first meeting may well include your manager who will no doubt have a clear idea of what business-related goals he wishes you to achieve and where your strengths and areas for development lie.

The coach uses searching questions to draw out your aspirations, goals and any existing or potential real and perceived barriers to success.

The coach will also use a combination of techniques to allow you to form your own plan of action whilst testing both your levels of self-belief and motivation plus if what you are setting out to achieve is congruent with who you are as person. This is essential to ensure the agreed actions are followed through.

Towards the conclusion of the initial meeting you and the coach will agree the frequency and duration of future meetings/contact (face-to-face, telephone and written). A typical coaching relationship will last between 3 months and a year.

The following diagram illustrates a typical coaching programme:





What will be the nature of the discussion with my coach?

Whatever you want and is needed to deliver results. All of our coaches are skilled and have a wealth of experience in specific subjects:

- Increasing sales and profits
- Opening more doors to potential clients i.e. turning cold calls warm
- Creating a network of powerful and influential people
- Customer service
- Leading a sales team
- Building a work team
- Developing business strategy
- Overcoming personal interference and 'creating a success mindset'
- Influencing and persuading colleagues, suppliers and customers
- Understanding self and others
- Significantly accelerating the pace of change
- Leading a change project/organisation transformation
- Improving career prospects e.g. preparing for interviews, writing CVs etc
- Preparing for an important speech or presentation
- Creating a balanced and healthy work/home life.

5 qualities to look for when hiring an external business coach

Credibility

Ensure they have a track record both in achieving results themselves and coaching others to succeed. Ensure they walk-the-talk and have their own coaches. Beware over-relying on the coach having industry/sector experience; coaching is easily transferable as many of the challenges people face are how they relate to themselves and the people around them.

Rigour and flexibility

Good coaches will have a proven approach which they know will deliver results. They must be also willing to adapt their approach to suit the needs of your business and the individual without compromising the integrity of the coaching process.



5 qualities to look for... continued:

Personal chemistry

If possible arrange an informal meeting with the people who will be participating in the coaching and the coach(es) to ensure they 'connect.'

Exceptional at listening and deploying proven coaching techniques

Listening is a core skill of any successful coach, test this out when you first meet them and also examine how they would approach specific coaching related challenges. Beware coaches who simply want to lecture you how to do things just because it worked for them.

Being 'off the wall' and having a sense of fun!

The best coaches are engaging and willing to do whatever it takes to cause their coachees to take action. Look for people who regularly go the extra mile and who are not afraid of doing something different. The best coaches openly express their enjoyment at doing what they love to do with a smile on their face!

What if you invest in a Business Coach?

Congratulations, a great step forward! If you have been involved with an executive coach before then you will know what to expect. If not then prepare for an inspirational, challenging and fun ride. We make only one promise.

'If you are ready to take yourself to the next level of performance and success we will help you get there faster than if you make the journey on your own.'

What if you don't invest in a Business Coach?

Nothing will happen other than you will continue to ***'do what you've always done and get what you always got'*** and operating as a Lone Ranger with the support of your manager and colleagues might be just right for you, or it might not....



Next Steps

For further details and a confidential, no-obligation discussion please contact us.

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P.S. It may be of interest to you to know what differentiates Bozeat Consulting from our competitors:

Here are four reasons:

- We initially focus only on the business results you want
- We deliver results faster than the majority of people believe is possible in minutes rather than days
- All our people 'walk-the-walk' whereas many of our competitors talk other people's walk
- We tailor all our engagements

However when you get to know us you will realise it is our systematic and rigorous approach that sets us apart from the competition. On the following page I have summarised 4 'LITE' steps to success.



The 4 LITE steps to business success through people

When we have the privilege to work with an individual, team or entire organisation we follow these 4 steps. We have proved that this is the only way to deliver sustained business success through the development of people.

Step	Which means...
L isten	Understanding at a deep and fundamental level the heritage, frustrations and aspirations of people. Many of our competitors dive straight into an approach which is something like – <i>'here's a programme, it will be good for you'</i> . We know from experience that 80% of development programmes simply don't deliver. To really engage people we take an appropriate length of time to give everyone a <i>'damn good listening to!'</i>
I nspire	People learn best when they are genuinely excited and have a hunger for the subject. Sometimes simply listening is enough to inspire people but it may be that the Business Coach will need to demonstrate, in a powerful way, the value the development journey will deliver and the opportunity they will miss if they choose not to accept the invitation to be taken to a higher level of performance.
T raining in techniques	Once people are inspired, excited and ready to learn then their thirst for new skills and knowledge is quenched via a dynamic, timely and relevant training and coaching experience. We only train our clients to use techniques that we use ourselves, ones proven to consistently deliver outstanding performance and results.
E MBED	I have lost count of the number of people who reply, when asked; <i>'so what value have you derived from 'x' training programme?'</i> with <i>'it's too soon to tell'</i> or <i>'i'm too busy doing real work'</i> or worse still <i>'there is no point training me it's my boss (or colleagues) that need this'</i> . Where we differ is not leaving learning to chance. Processes and systems are introduced in parallel with the development experience to ensure people's great intentions are realised and skills that were once new swiftly become powerful habits.