



The Federal  
Consulting Group  
U.S. Department of the Treasury

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government's challenges

# The FCG Executive Coaching Guide

## Steps for a Successful Coaching Partnership

Consulting  
Coaching  
Measuring  
Performance  
& Satisfaction

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# Table of Contents

- Why a Guide? ..... 1**
- What is Coaching?.....2**
  - Why external Coaches?..... 1
  - Is Coaching right for me? ..... 1
- How do I select a Coach?.....2**
- What can I expect? .....4**
  - What benefits can I expect? ..... 4
  - What will it be like to work with a Coach? ..... 4
- How can I maximize my Coaching experience?.....5**
  - What Is a Coaching Partnership?..... 5
  - What is the Coach's role?..... 7
  - How do I know I can trust the Coach?..... 8
  - What must I do? ..... 8
- Is their life after Coaching?..... 10**
- References ..... 11**
  - FCG Coaching Services..... 12

# Why a Guide?

Executive coaching, as an emerging practice for leadership development in organizations, has grown over the past few years. Increasing numbers of consultants are practicing as coaches, and more and more organizations are requesting their services. Coaches are sought out for a variety of issues, ranging from remedial situations where individual or organizational issues are impacting an executive's performance, to purely developmental situations where a high-potential individual is being groomed for a significant increase in responsibility.

The purpose of this guide is to assist you in:

1. Selecting a professional coach who can most effectively work with you to optimize your performance, and that of your organization
2. Maximizing your coaching experience so that you achieve successful measurable outcomes.

This guide is a compilation and adaptation from various publications on executive coaching, which are listed in the References section.

For ease of reading, we use "he" and "she," "her" and "him," interchangeably throughout this document.

For additional information or questions about this publication, please contact Lee Salmon on (202) 504-3652, or Cheri Allen, on (202) 504-3690.

The FCG Coaching program provides a cadre of highly qualified executive coaches to support Federal executives and managers as they face immense leadership and transition challenges created by organizational change. For more information on the Federal Consulting Group, visit our web site at [www.FCG.gov](http://www.FCG.gov).

# What is Coaching?

*"Our chief want in life is somebody who will make us do what we can."  
-- Ralph Waldo Emerson*

There are four commonly used tools for improving human performance: Coaching, Consulting, Training, and Therapy; and there are important differences between them.

Just as it is important to know when to hire a consultant (a subject matter expert who knows *what should be done* based on a series of assessments), a trainer (someone who focuses on skill and knowledge transfer - the *how*), and a therapist (someone who supports resolution of emotional, intrapersonal, and interpersonal issues - the *why*), it is equally important to know the *when* and *why* for using a coach.

Coaches can support leaders as they:

- Experience personal transformation;
- Develop future leaders within their organization;
- Lead change to create high performing, results driven organizations;
- Learn how to be coaches to their employees;
- Creating organizational cultures that value learning, coaching and continuous improvement.

Coaching conversations are an excellent tool for uncovering the root cause of obstacles that slow progress toward goal accomplishment. Coaching helps clients acquire clarity about what they want, what they are committed to, and how much change they are willing to make in themselves and in their organizations to achieve what is important to them, especially during times of turbulent and continuous change. Once a client has clarity, effective choices can be made and progressive action toward the desired goal is intentional. The coach will help you remain accountable to yourself as you transform your actions to achieve your professional and personal goals.

## Why External Coaches?

*"When two men in a business always agree, one of them is unnecessary."*

This guide focuses on the use of coaches from outside the organization and we refer to these coaches as external coaches. Key features of the relationship include:

- A high level of confidentiality between you and the external coach
- Voluntary participation in the coaching relationship based on a desire to use coaching as one development tool for performance optimization
- Minimal and indirect involvement of your supervisor
- A focus on self-observation which leads to self-transformation
- Clients engaging in self-discovery, assessment and practice without fear of judgment

Why would organizations want to hire external coaches? Several reasons are to:

- Improve the existing culture of the organization
- Increase the leader's ability to leverage his or her time and resources
- Improve the interpersonal skills of the leader
- Provide a safe and secure outlet for the leader to reflect, explore possibilities and discuss new ideas
- Gain an outsider's objective perspective
- Clarify, expand, and articulate the leader's vision
- Help the leader become aware of what he cannot, will not, or does not see
- Identify techniques to reduce stress, increase effectiveness, and still have a balanced life
- Facilitate leaders ability to see, feel, sense, measure, and process more data without detrimentally taxing themselves

Coaches assist leaders to effectively utilize their Professional (technical), Management, and Leadership competencies and stay aligned with their personal and organizational visions, missions, and values.

## Is Coaching Right for Me?

*"Man's mind, once stretched by a new idea, never regains its original dimensions." -- Oliver Wendell Holmes*

Coaching may be right for you if you are ready to declare the following:

- I am ready to make a commitment of time, money, and energy in my own development.
- I am interested in coaching because I want to improve, not because someone else (my boss, my spouse, my colleague) wants me to change.
- I am capable of participating in rigorously honest self-appraisal.
- I am humble enough to realize I'm not perfect and that another person can assist me to become more effective.
- I am willing and able to devote the necessary time and effort to work with a coach over a period of several months.
- I am capable of trusting another person enough to talk candidly about my weaknesses and mistakes.
- I am confident that I have the ability to change my behavior.

**Note:** We have not included mentoring as a commonly used tool. Mentoring is considered to be a very specialized apprentice/master relationship and rarely involves someone from outside the organization.

## How do I select a Coach?

*"Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity."*

*-- Elmer Letterman*

Selecting the right coach is a subjective decision by the executive. The level of motivation in the executive is a major factor in a successful coaching experience. It is important that the executive:

- Indicate a desire for coaching,
- Articulate desired professional and personal outcomes, and
- Have the support of the executive's supervisor

In addition, each coach interviewed must also determine whether or not there is a good fit with the executive. The relationship must be a collaborative partnership.

The FCG only refers highly qualified coaches. The following are items to consider when interviewing and selecting a coach in order to determine if there is a good "fit." Before sending coach referrals for your consideration, an FCG Executive Consultant will try to assess some of these items by having an interview with you, the executive.

- The coach's typical clients and developmental issues - Has the coach worked with situations similar to mine?
- General technique or approach to coaching - Am I willing to work within these techniques or approaches? Do I prefer to work face-to-face, by phone, or Email? How flexible am I on the "meeting" format?
- Experience coaching Federal managers - Has the coach worked with Federal managers so that he/she is familiar with the dynamics unique to Federal organizations or my organization in particular?
- Business/organizational knowledge - Does the coach understand the business/organizational issues related to my situation?
- Values – sensitivity to confidentiality, ethics, and freedom from gender and culture bias - Am I comfortable that the coach can work for my best interest?
- Interpersonal skills – listening, straightforwardness, rapport, trust, warmth, compassion, humor - Is the coach someone I can trust? Does the coach listen to understand?

- Assessment skills and awareness of instruments applicable to your situation - What other information will the coach use to assist me?
- Flexibility and ability to work effectively with a broad range of executives - My issues involve relationships with other executives; can the coach work with me effectively, and help me understand how to work effectively with them?
- Ability to plan, conceptualize, implement and manage a coaching relationship over time - How will the coach keep me accountable for results and assure that I keep making progress?
- Demonstrated knowledge of learning theories and the dynamics of change - Does the coach understand the personality and temperament issues related to my situation or organization?
- Credibility and authenticity - Can I trust this coach to be honest with me?
- Political Savvy - Is the coach savvy enough to understand the politics of my situation?

Not all the above will be revealed through words during an interview with the coach. Some are part of the "chemistry" that we may or may not feel when we meet the coach, and it may take at least one coaching session to decide.



# What can I expect?

*"Chance favors the prepared mind." -- Louis Pasteur*

Most executives want to know:

1. What benefits can I expect, and
2. What will it be like to work with a coach?

## What benefits can I expect?

As an emerging practice, there is a limited amount of quantitative data available on the benefits of coaching. A recent Manchester Consulting Research report revealed the following benefits and improvements for executives who received coaching:

- Working relationships with direct reports (reported by 77% of executives)
- Working relationships with immediate supervisors (71%)
- Teamwork (67%)
- Working relationships with peers (63%)
- Job satisfaction (61%)
- Conflict reduction (52%)
- Organizational commitment (44%)
- Working relationships with clients (37%)

The benefits you derive will depend upon your coaching goals. Setting coaching goals and measuring progress on a recurring basis will allow you to acknowledge that changes and benefits are occurring.

## What will it be like to work with a Coach?

Each coaching relationship is unique and depends upon what the issues are, and your willingness to work with these issues in new and sometimes challenging ways. A coaching relationship is a collaborative partnership, and the next section will focus on maximizing the benefits of that partnership.

# How can I maximize my Coaching experience?

*"Personally, I'm always ready to learn, although I do not always like being taught." -- Winston Churchill*

Executive coaching is a collaborative partnership between an executive, his/her organization, and an executive coach. It is not something that is "done" to you, nor does someone show you every step of the way. Coaching is a learning and discovery process to assist you in moving forward in new ways that will work for you. From a business perspective, the purpose of this partnership is twofold:

- Facilitate both the executive's and the organization's learning, and
- Achieve identified business results.

## What Is a Coaching Partnership?

*"Success is a journey, not a destination." -- Ben Sweetland*

We see at least eight key elements of an effective coaching partnership.

1. A successful coaching partnership is composed primarily of one-on-one interactions between a professional coach and an executive and is supported, as needed, by others.
2. It is based on agreed-upon ground rules, time frames, and specific goals and measures of success.
3. The coaching partnership uses tailored goals and approaches, including:
  - Skill building
  - Performance improvement
  - Development for future assignments
  - Exploration, definition, and implementation of the executive's leadership and the organization's business objectives.
4. It follows a process that includes:
  - Pre-coaching needs assessment, analysis and planning -  
Consulting with your stakeholders to determine if executive coaching is right for you, establishing the appropriate goals, and selecting the best coach - All of

which ensure the best possible experience and outcomes for the executive and the organization

- Contracting -  
Ensure productive outcomes, clarify roles, prevent misunderstandings, establish learning goals, and define business and interpersonal practices by establishing a learning contract (the outcome related aspects including purpose and objectives, milestones, measures of success, identification and roles of stakeholders, clearly articulated guidelines and rules of engagement, confidentiality agreements including records management) and a personal contract (the operational/personal aspects of the relationship with the coach) for your coaching
- Data gathering -  
actively seeking assessments and feedback
- Goal setting -  
honestly setting realistic priorities to support your own perceived needs and the perceptions of others about you
- "Coaching" -  
the ongoing dialogues with the coach and being open to learning and acting upon new ideas in support of yourself and the organization
- Measuring and reporting results
- Transitioning to long-term development -  
effectively planning for your future learning and development including resources to support you.

5. It applies several of the following practices, among others:

- Problem solving and planning
- Rehearsal and on-the-job practice
- Feedback
- Dialogue
- Clarification of roles, assumptions, and priorities
- Teaching and applying a variety of management and leadership tools
- Referral to other developmental resources.

6. It focuses on leveraging the executive's strengths and building the key competencies needed to achieve strategic objectives.

7. The partnership involves key stakeholders in the coaching process (called "other partners"), including:

- The executive's supervisor

- Human Resources staff
  - Peers
  - Direct reports
  - Other key people in the executive's life.
8. A successful coaching partnership is guided by clear personal values and experiences that establish the credibility of the coaching process and maintain the welfare of the executive and his/her coworkers.

For the coaching outcome to be of the greatest benefit for the organization as a whole, all stakeholders must see themselves as partners in the coaching process.

### **What is the Coach's role?**

*"When you hire people who are smarter than you are, you prove you are smarter than they are." -- R.H. Grant*

Executive coaching requires the use of highly skilled and experienced professional coaches. These coaches maintain high standards of competence and exercise careful judgment in determining how best to serve their clients' needs, choosing the most appropriate methods from their range of expertise.

We believe that a coach's competence is not determined by any arbitrary academic or certification requirements. They have strong knowledge, experience, and expertise in a variety of essential areas: business management; interpersonal communication; the behavioral sciences and behavior change; organizational behavior; organizational systems and development; leadership development; adult learning; individual, team, and organizational assessment; career development; team building and development; and applied psychology. A qualified coach for a specific assignment must also have the relevant knowledge, experience, and demonstrated competencies to facilitate change at the individual, team, and organizational systems levels of a particular organization.

Executive coaches recognize the limitations of their expertise and provide only those services for which they are qualified by education, training, or experience. They constantly strive to increase their competence through client interactions, continuing their education and staying up to date with best practices in coaching. The executive coaches referred by the FCG are committed to participation in an FCG sponsored community of practice that provides opportunities for mutual learning and sharing of best practices.

## **How do I know I can trust the Coach?**

*"Learning is a willingness to let one's ability and attitude change in response to new ideas, information, and experiences." -- Peter Vaill*

Upon beginning executive coaching, the executive is placing significant trust in the coach and the organization. She is allowing herself to be vulnerable and open. To ensure that she remains receptive to feedback, new ideas, and learning, the organization, coach, and other stakeholders must establish and maintain a psychologically safe and respectful environment.

The relationship between the executive and his coach is sensitive and often private. To maintain this relationship, all stakeholders must be clear in their presentation of issues, organizational information, coaching goals, coaching activities, and ground rules for confidentiality. All partners must adhere to clearly articulated guidelines and rules of engagement. Breaches of trust or actions that run counter to agreements and guidelines are extremely serious, especially if the executive suffers negative consequences such as a loss of reputation, income, or relationships. All parties must therefore function at the highest levels of integrity and candor when involved in executive coaching activities.

There is no recipe for the perfect coaching experience. Along the way, unpredictable challenges, conflicts, and opportunities arise. Whether these situations help or hinder the executive's development depends upon the judgment the stakeholders exercise in an ever-changing work environment.

## **What must I do?**

*"The significant problems we face cannot be resolved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them." -- Albert Einstein*

The quality of the coaching relationship is a key element of success. The coach creates a safe environment in which the executive can feel comfortable taking the risks necessary to learn and develop. Drawing from a broad knowledge base and a solid repertoire of learning tools, the coach offers guidance and activities that help the executive meet his learning goals. Conversations explore the executive's current work situation to find practical, business-focused "learning lab" opportunities.

The practical activity of coaching is based on principles of adult learning: awareness, action, and reflection. Using data gathered from the assessment phase of the process, the coach engages the executive in discussion and activities designed to:

- Enhance self-awareness of the implications of typical behaviors

- Learn skills, build competencies, change behaviors, and achieve results
- Reflect on ways to improve and refine skills and behaviors.

Learning tools and activities may include, but are not limited to, purposeful conversation, rehearsal and role-plays, videotaping, supportive confrontation and inquiry, relevant reading, work analysis and planning, and strategic planning.

After the assessment is complete and goals are established, additional forms of coaching or development besides executive coaching may be required as part of the executive's learning. These types of coaching and development activities include, among others, career coaching, management development training, personal coaching, presentation skills training, coaching on dressing for success, organizational development consultation, process reengineering, and video coaching. When the coach has expertise in these areas and they fall within the scope of the learning contract, the coach may provide the assistance directly. If the coach is not qualified, or the additional coaching is beyond the scope of the learning contract, other arrangements may be made. The coach may make appropriate referrals or work with other members of the organization to obtain the additional help.

As an executive being coached, the following are commitments that you will need to make in order to maximize your coaching experience:

- Assume ownership of your learning. Use your coach as a consultant to help you maximize your unique learning style.
- Be forthright about what is and isn't working in coaching sessions.
- Engage wholeheartedly in the agreed-upon coaching assignments.
- Take required actions for learning, and reflect on those actions.
- Maintain an open attitude toward experimenting with new perspectives and behaviors.
- Willingly be vulnerable and take risks.
- Focus on your own growth within the context of your current and future organizational role.
- Transfer learning gained through coaching to your day-to-day work.
- Exchange feedback with your coach about the helpfulness of the coaching.
- Seek feedback from others in the organization about the results of your coaching.

## **Is there life after Coaching?**

*"Over the long run, superior performance depends on superior learning."*

*-- Peter Senge*

A successful executive coaching process serves as a catalyst for the executive's long-term development. The length of the coaching process and future plans for development vary from individual to individual, and must take into consideration the current and future needs of the individual and the organization. An FCG coach can provide you with further information based upon other executives' experiences. Please call (202) 504-3626 and request to speak with one of our coaches.

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## **FCG Coaching Services**

The Federal Consulting Group (FCG) is a franchise in the Department of Treasury and has provided consulting services on best practices in management to Federal executives and managers throughout the Federal government. As the successor organization to the Federal Quality Institute, FCG and its cadre of Executive Consultants has a proven track record of working with Federal agencies for over 20 years. FCG is committed to improving the quality of government service and assisting government leaders in creating high performing organizations.

The FCG Coaching program provides a cadre of highly qualified executive coaches to support Federal executives and managers as they face immense leadership challenges created by continuous change. Our vision is two-fold: First, it is to develop future leaders with authenticity to lead people and change effectively. We desire to transform government agencies so that Federal employees are empowered to make their best contributions and the public receives outstanding customer service. Second, our vision includes the creation of a community of practice where our coaches come together, learn from each other and stimulate one another to reach new levels of competency and success. This community of practice will fuel the coaches' transformation work and the accomplishment of real business results.