



# **NASA Business Coaching**

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*Participant Guide*

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## Introduction

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Your decision to pursue a business coaching relationship is an important investment in yourself and the future of NASA. Business coaching, a proven and widely-utilized tool for performance enhancement, has become an integral part of NASA's leadership development strategy.

This guide provides an overview of business coaching, the Agency's strategic approach to coaching, the ben-

efits that can be derived from coaching, and coaching options for NASA employees. The guide also includes an overview of the NASA coaching process that will assist you in taking advantage of this unique professional development opportunity.

## What Is Business Coaching?

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Business coaching is an intensive one-to-one professional relationship that is structured toward improving the performance of the individual being coached and the mission results of the sponsoring organization.

Coaching involves a comprehensive assessment of an individual's professional performance and goals, followed by the development of an action plan for improvement. The overarching goal is to produce results that are observable, measurable, and commensurate with the performance requirements of the person being coached. A primary focus is placed upon increased awareness, self-development, and the alignment of individual and organizational goals.

Because coaching is a relatively new concept in the field of Human Capital Development, it is often confused with or mistaken for other development strategies, such as training, mentoring, consulting, tra-

ditional supervision, counseling, and athletic coaching. Business coaching is a future-oriented relationship that is focused on understanding barriers to performance and designing strategies and actions to eliminate those barriers and improve effectiveness. The dialogue of the business coach centers around questions such as:

- What have you tried?
- How has this worked?
- What else can you try?

The table on the next page provides further insight into the differences between business coaching and other types of development.

Development	Expertise	Conversation
<p><b>BUSINESS COACHING:</b> A coach concentrates on personal and professional success. How effective is the individual at achieving their goals and getting what they want out of life? Coaching is future-focused, aimed at identifying and understanding barriers and designing strategies and actions to eliminate those barriers and improve effectiveness. Knowledge resides with the individual being coached.</p>	<p>I know how to help you identify and design learning strategies and actions that will work best for you.</p>	<p>“What have you tried? How has this worked? What else can you try?”.</p>
<p><b>TRAINING:</b> A trainer provides a structured program based on personal knowledge. The focus is on the acquisition of specific knowledge or skills. The trainer has the knowledge.</p>	<p>Here is what I know about this subject.</p>	<p>“Research and experience have shown this to be the best way.”</p>
<p><b>MENTORING:</b> A mentor provides knowledge, information, and advice based on his/her experience. The focus is on passing on guidance that helped the mentor be successful in a similar situation in the past. The experience resides with the mentor.</p>	<p>My experience has been that you should do it this way.</p>	<p>“This is how I did it.”</p>
<p><b>CONSULTING:</b> A consultant gives expert advice. The focus is on acquiring a specific technical expertise. The consultant has the knowledge.</p>	<p>I know how, and this is what you are paying me to tell you.</p>	<p>“This is how to do it.”</p>
<p><b>TRADITIONAL SUPERVISION:</b> A supervisor provides direction and guidance regarding the execution of specific duties. The focus is on understanding how to do the job a specific way. Knowledge resides with the supervisor.</p>	<p>I know how, and this is what you must do.</p>	<p>“Do it this way.”</p>
<p><b>COUNSELING OR THERAPY:</b> A counselor or therapist provides support in enabling individuals to deal with experiences that are negatively impacting their lives. The focus is on reconciling the past. Understanding resides with the individual only after the counselor has supported the reconciliation process. Knowledge eventually resides with the individual.</p>	<p>I know how to guide you to psychological well-being.</p>	<p>“What happened in the past that is inhibiting you from getting what you want out of life today?”</p>
<p><b>ATHLETIC DEVELOPMENT:</b> An expert guides and directs actions based on experience and knowledge. The focus is on actions or behaviors that are being executed poorly or incorrectly. Knowledge resides with the athletic coach.</p>	<p>I see what you are doing wrong and I can show you how to improve.</p>	<p>“You need to do this in order to achieve the results you want.”</p>



# NASA's Strategic Approach to Coaching

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“The scarcest resource in the world is leadership talent, capable of continuously transforming organizations to win in tomorrow’s world . . . all people have untapped potential . . . with coaching and practice, we can all get better at it.”

—Noel Tichy, *The Leadership Engine*

NASA is committed to developing its greatest asset, its employees. While already heavily invested in technical training, NASA has become increasingly aware of the need to balance technical skills with the human resources capabilities and awareness that enable employees to reach their full potential. In response to the President’s Management Agenda (PMA), NASA leadership has identified coaching as a tool for implementing the Agency’s Strategic Human Capital Plan (SHCP).

The Agency’s organizational goals in facilitating business coaching include the following:

- Address individual and organizational change to improve mission performance
- Enable personal transformation and career role transition
- Support the development of future leaders for the organization
- Address a specific problem area or challenge
- Facilitate the creation of an organizational culture that values learning, creativity, and continuous improvement

# The Benefits of Business Coaching

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There are many reasons why an individual may choose to work with a business coach. This motivation can be described in general terms as a desire to improve performance, rebalance priorities, and increase awareness.

## *Improve Performance*

- There is something at stake (a challenge, stretch goal, or opportunity) that is urgent and compelling.
- There is a desire to accelerate results.
- There is a need and a desire to better organize and become more self-managing.
- There is a need to improve performance that requires more than the acquisition of new knowledge or the development of new skills.

## *Rebalance Priorities*

- Work and life are out of balance, and this is creating unwanted consequences.
- There is a need for a course correction in work or life due to a setback.
- There is a desire for work and life to be less stressful or complicated.

## *Increase Awareness*

- There is a perceived gap in knowledge, skills, confidence, or resources.
- An individual has a style of relating that is ineffective or is not supporting the achievement of relevant goals.
- There is a lack of clarity, and there are choices to be made.
- The individual is successful, but this success has also generated negative consequences.
- There is a desire to identify core strengths and effectively leverage them.
- The individual wants to participate in a rigorous and honest self-appraisal.

Results from coaching can include improved performance and working relationships, better teamwork, and reduced conflict. When coaching produces better alignment between personal and organizational values and goals, the results often include increased job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

# Characteristics of Effective Coaches

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A coach is a non-judgmental, strategic business partner. The coaching relationship is built on trust. Coaching conversations must remain confidential between the individual and the coach in order for the partnership to work. While the content of the conversation between the individual and the coach are confidential, the individual's supervisor is also a key partner in the coaching process. The supervisor's input on areas of improvement and observations on how the coaching is impacting the individual's effectiveness are vital to the success of a coaching engagement.

Coaches at NASA demonstrate knowledge through past experience and application of basic competencies. NASA has adopted the competencies identified by the International Coaching Federation (ICF). Other competencies include the ability to:

- Establish a coaching agreement

- Establish a trusting relationship with the client
- Be fully present, attentive, and spontaneous
- Express active listening
- Ask powerful questions
- Be a direct communicator
- Create and raise the client's awareness
- Design and create action plans and action behaviors
- Develop plans and establish goals with the client
- Manage the client's progress and hold him/her responsible for action

Effective coaches believe in the potential of their client and demonstrate personal integrity in "walking the talk."

A listing of ICF competencies is available at: [www.coachfederation.org/aboutcoaching/](http://www.coachfederation.org/aboutcoaching/)

# NASA Coaching Options

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Business coaching participants may choose to work with either an internal or external coach.

Internal coaching is a facilitative, one-to-one, mutually designed coaching relationship between a qualified NASA Employee Coach and a key NASA employee who is accountable for highly complex decisions with a wide scope of impact on the Agency, government, or industry.

In addition to the general coaching capabilities discussed previously, NASA has established specific requirements for Employee Coaches, which include the following:

- Certified coaching credentials from an ICF-accredited training program
- An appropriate level of corporate experience to understand the employee's developmental, political, and environmental needs
- Skilled at problem diagnosis; qualified to administer the diagnostic instruments used during coaching
- Results-oriented; able to specify how coaching success will be measured, evaluated, and impact NASA's mission results

- Demonstrated knowledge and application of coaching and interpersonal competencies

External coaching is conducted in a similar fashion to internal coaching, except that the coaching relationship is between a NASA employee and a trained and certified coach hired from outside the Agency.

In addition to the requirements for Employee Coaches listed above, NASA has established the following standards for selecting external coaches:

- Extensive coaching experience in the specific skill area being addressed through the coaching, preferably with certification from the International Coaching Federation (ICF), and experience coaching leaders at the same professional level as the individual being coached.
- Knowledge of NASA's Strategic Goals, Leadership Model, and Performance Communication System; NASA's operational areas (e.g., science, engineering, administrative); and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Executive Core Qualifications (ECQ)
- Familiarity with the Federal Government business environment and the unique challenges of public sector leadership

# The NASA Coaching Process

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The NASA business coaching process has four steps:

Step 1: Meet with the Center Coaching POC

Step 2: Coach Assessment and Selection

Step 3: Coaching

Step 4: Periodic Assessments

## Step 1: Meet with the Center Coaching POC

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If you are ready to pursue business coaching, the first step is to set up a meeting with the coaching point-of-contact (POC) at your Center. Prior to this meeting you will be asked to complete a coaching application (Form A). This request form is designed to help the POC better understand your needs and professional goals as you begin the coaching process.

During the meeting with the POC, you will be asked to complete a preferences guide (Form B). This questionnaire is designed to help the POC identify the learning option that is best suited to meet your developmental needs.

These two activities take only a few minutes, but will ensure that your time devoted to coaching is worth the investment.

During this meeting, you will also discuss your career goals with the POC and think about how business coaching will help you achieve these goals.

Depending on your position with the Agency, your supervisor may be part of your coaching process by helping to define performance goals and by providing feedback on your progress.

## Step 2: Coach Assessment and Selection

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Based on the information provided in Step 1, a pool of potential internal and external coaches will be identified. You will then have the opportunity to review the credentials of these coaches and conduct interviews with them prior to making a final selection.

### *Selecting a Coach*

Each coach has his or her own unique style, personality, strengths, preferences, and weaknesses. Similarly, each individual has his or her own unique developmental needs, personality, preferences, and learning style. For this reason, selecting the best coach is an important first step in ensuring the success of the coaching engagement.

The best way to select a coach is to review the bios of two or three coaches, and then conduct a screening interview with those that meet your personal criteria. Both during the screening interview and throughout the coaching process, you should continue to refine and adjust your assessment of how the coach is helping you achieve your stated objectives.

### *Screening Interview Questions*

- Describe your career history
- What coaching education and training have you completed?

- Have you worked with Federal agencies before? With NASA?
- Have you coached individuals at my level?
- Can you work with me to help me understand how to work more effectively with others?
- How will you maintain my confidentiality?
- Describe your coaching approach
- What assessment instruments do you use as part of the coaching process?
- How will you measure improvement/success?
- How will you keep me accountable for results?
- How do you normally communicate with coaching clients?
- What type of clients do you work with most effectively?
- What are the essential skills for being an effective coach?

After the interview process is completed you will contact your coaching POC to finalize your selection of a coach.

## Step 3: Coaching

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Coaching typically begins with a personal interview (face-to-face or by teleconference) during which you and the coach will discuss your professional opportunities and challenges, define the scope of the relationship, and establish specific desired outcomes.

Subsequent coaching sessions may be conducted in person or over the telephone, with each session lasting for an agreed-upon length of time. The duration and logistics of the coaching relationship vary depending on each individual's needs and preferences.

Coaching agreements typically run from three to six months. Short-term agreements typically include provisions for immediate feedback and identifying necessary actions. Longer-term relationships involve more in-depth data collection and analysis with intensive feedback.

To ensure a successful coaching partnership, the individual should:

- Be comfortable with the coach's background, style, and approach
- Be clear about the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders including the supervisor and others determined to be critical to success
- Identify specific targets and how you will collaboratively achieve milestones in a given period of time

- Agree on how to work together, including the logistics of the coaching sessions.
- Agree to the evaluation method of the coaching process.

Between scheduled coaching sessions, you may be asked to complete specific actions that support the achievement of your goals. The coach may provide additional resources in the form of relevant articles, checklists, assessments, or models.

The coach will typically conduct an assessment to gather information about an individual's values, behaviors, competencies, goals, interests, and potential opportunities for development. Assessments are used to guide and focus the coaching relationship, provide new explanations for behaviors, discover new possibilities, and generate a baseline of diagnostic information. All assessment data will be kept confidential between the client and the coach.

Once the assessment is completed, the coach will review the data and provide feedback. You and your coach will then work together to create a development plan and a set of objectives based on the data results and your personal goals. You and your coach will also identify the roles of stakeholders (including your supervisor and coaching POC), significant milestones related to your progress, and measures of success.

## Step 4: Periodic Assessments

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### *Midpoint Assessment*

The Midpoint Assessment will be conducted half-way into the coaching contract. This assessment is designed to track the progress of the coaching contract, relationship, and coaching process. During this phase, some of the following questions may be asked:

- What is working well?
- What needs improvement?
- How can we do things differently?
- Are we on track in accomplishing our goals?

After this assessment, the coach sends the completed assessment to the coaching POC. A sample Midpoint Assessment form is included at the back of this guide (Form D).

At this time, you and your coach will determine whether to stop or continue the coaching relationship. Your coach will give you the final assessment form to complete along with a preaddressed envelope and instructions. This information is kept confidential and only aggregated data is given to the coach and NASA. A sample final assessment form is included at the back of this guide (Form E). At this time an assessment from the supervisor may also be obtained (Form G).

### *Followup Assessment*

The final phase of the coaching assessment process is the Followup Assessment. This is normally conducted six months to a year after the end of the coaching contract. A sample Followup Assessment form is included at the back of this guide (Form F).

# Form A: Coaching Application

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Position/title: \_\_\_\_\_

Length of service: \_\_\_\_\_

Senior Executive Service (SES) member?  YES  NO

Preferred characteristics of coach (gender, background, style, special expertise, etc.) or specific preferred coach in the local geographic area:

Professional goals:

Goals and reason for desiring coaching:

List any relevant assessments you have recently had that could be provided to the coach:

Have you ever had a coach before? If so, what was your experience?

How soon would you like to get started with a coach?

Other considerations (type of coaching, availability, etc.):

Supervisor's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_













# Form C: Coaching Agreement

We are voluntarily entering into a formal coaching relationship partnership, which we expect to benefit NASA and us. The following highlights the features of our partnership:

1. Coaching partnership objectives:

2. Coaching milestones related to objectives:

3. Measures of success related to objectives:

4. Specific role of the coach and key stakeholders:

Coach:

Client:

Other key stakeholders (manager, peers, direct reports, and customers):

5. Specific logistics of the coaching partnership: *(Please include expected start date, end date, contact locations, durations, frequency, total time estimates by activity, travel logistics and cost estimates, methods for staying in contact, etc.)*

6. The client will gain the commitment of his/her supervisor by:

7. We will honor the following confidentiality agreement:

This agreement remains in effect for 12 months. The agreement may be terminated at any time by either the coach or the individual being coached.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
Individual Being Coached

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
Coach

**Instructions:** Please complete and return a copy of this form to Cambria Consulting (fax: 617-523-7817; E-mail: [dsteinbrenner@cambriaconsulting.com](mailto:dsteinbrenner@cambriaconsulting.com)), as well as to the coachee's local Center coordinator for the coaching program.







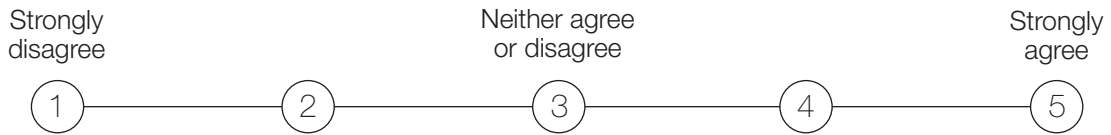




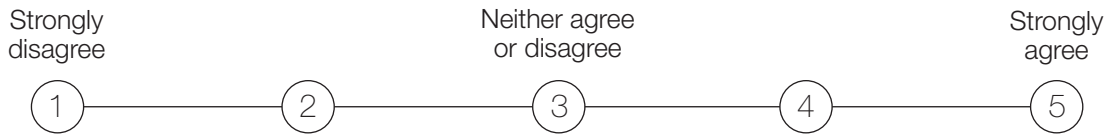


16. In what way(s) was your coach effective in helping you achieve your goals?

17. My coach and I were compatible.

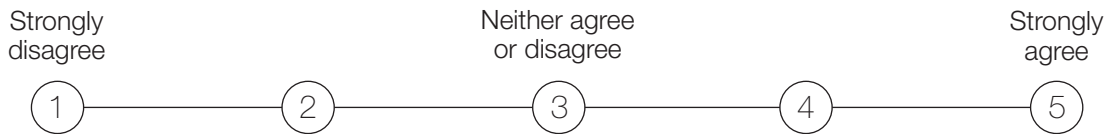


18. My coach gave me constructive feedback.



**Supervisory Relationship**

19. I received encouragement and support from my immediate manager/supervisor to participate in the coaching process.



20. In what way(s) did your manager/supervisor offer support or encouragement?

## HR Relationship

21. I received encouragement and support from human resources to participate in the coaching process.

Strongly  
disagree

Neither agree  
or disagree

Strongly  
agree

1

2

3

4

5

22. In what way(s) did human resources offer you support or encouragement?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



8. I am more willing to participate in learning or developmental activities as a result of coaching.

Strongly  
disagree

Neither agree  
or disagree

Strongly  
agree



9. To what degree have you become more interested in long-term development since your coaching experience?

Not at all  
interested

Moderately

Extremely  
interested



10. How can the human resources staff help you to continue with your own development?

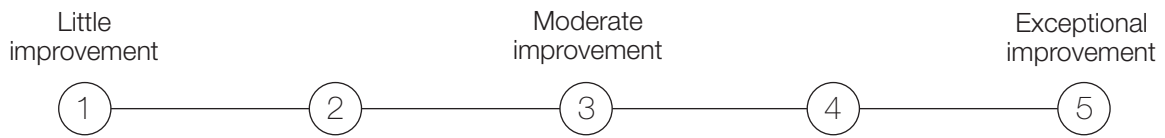
Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_





**Judgment and decision-making ability**



**Ability to build trust and supportive relationships**



**Ability to manage self-development**



**Ability to understand and leverage the informal organization**



**Ability to design processes to achieve results**



**Ability to anticipate and fulfill customer needs**



**Ability to efficiently allocate and manage resources**



**Ability to understand and respond to internal and external strategy, policy, and regulations**



