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## Who Needs A Coach?

After coaching clients for many years, we have identified twelve problem areas that cause everyone, from line managers to senior executives, to have difficulty continuing to excel in both their professional and personal lives. Each area involves a skill and a willingness to learn and change. We have noticed that as each of these skills are learned and mastered the individual becomes more and more successful and has less and less need for a coach. The same issues apply equally to succeeding at running a business, maintaining a successful relationship/family life or taking care of your health. As you take a look at these skills and abilities note the areas where you are strong and where you could use some improvement - try hard not to judge yourself.

## The Common Reasons for Needing A Coach

### Goals

#### **The business and personal goals are not clearly defined.**

Without a set of goals that are reasonable, sequential and attainable it is very difficult, if not impossible, for an a person or a business to move forward and succeed. We must clearly think out and be able to state our professional, personal and organizational goals. It is often useful to write them down and hang them up where we can see them daily. Some clients come to coaching with their goals fully thought out and we can go right to work on them. Others spend the first aspect of our work together clarifying and defining their goals. Goal development only works if you are clear about what you want professionally, financially and personally. The majority of individuals drift through a life and a career that just happens to them because they do not design it. Sometimes this works out well, but often it does not. The coaching process helps people think about and articulate their hopes and dreams. Most people never really ask themselves what they really want out of life, what would be the job or profession of their dreams. Often a coach will ask questions that reach deep into the soul of the person's desires. Then those desires and how they fit the reality of one's talents and abilities are explored and steps are designed to move you forward from there toward your goal.

### Plans

#### **Planning is not a habit.**

We need to have short, intermediate and long-term strategies in place to accomplish our goals and to keep our ideas moving forward. Our definition of short term plans refer to this week or this month's tasks, intermediate plans refer to the strategies for the next three to six months and long term plans refer to larger tasks to accomplish over the next one to five years. If we don't have concrete plans, strategies and tasks laid out, we may only wander toward our goals, procrastinating, being sidetracked, losing time and possibly inspiration along the way. Planning

does not come naturally for most of us. It is a learned skill that is not usually included in our formal schooling. A coach trains you how to develop your planning skills and makes sure that plans and strategies are aimed at your stated goals.

## **Work**

### **Work is often stressful and not enjoyable.**

It is sometimes the case that a person is in the wrong job or the wrong profession. This creates work dissonance based on an inner conflict which can make a person physically sick in addition to unhappy. Part of a coach's job is to test the resonance of that person with his/her job if the individual appears to be stressed or miserable at work. Job stress or job frustration also results when a person, whether the CEO, high level supervisor or manager, feels he or she has to oversee everything in order for it to be done correctly. This type of individual often has difficulty hiring long term employees so that effective delegation can occur. Our work must be in synchrony with who we are and must be done in an environment that allows our expertise and creativity to flourish. Coaches help individuals delegate the jobs they hate and concentrate on the ones they love and will be most productive at. Or the coach helps you to explore your interests and a type of work that might better suit your interests, talents and skills.

Coaches also view a career through the lens of your overall life purpose, satisfaction and happiness. In order to maximize productivity and satisfaction an individual needs to take a comprehensive approach to their lives, with work serving as one of several centers of attention and effort. If someone's work has become too great a source of meaning and identity, or receives a disproportionate amount of their time and attention a coaching process can help establish or restore balance. By closely examining the drive to overwork without adequate recovery time, coaches can help confront self-destructive work habits and re-orient a person's understanding and work style toward increased vitality and energy.

## **Follow-through**

### **Follow-through of important tasks is random at best.**

Individuals often have few methods or strategies in place to help them follow-through on the tasks and actions needed to attain their goals. Their primary modes of operation are dealing with emergencies and procrastination. They constantly need to put out fires often blaming themselves or others because there has been inadequate planning and follow-through, and putting important decisions has become a chronic pattern. We need to establish ways to make our follow-through more consistent. This is probably the most important area in which many leaders need help. The coach provides a system of accountability. The coachee and the coach, working together, come up with a reasonable, bi-monthly task list which is reviewed at each subsequent meeting. Whether or not the tasks get done that week is not the real issue. If the task gets done you just move on to the next challenge. If the task is consistently not completed you have something important to work on together. This is the meat of good coaching. When we move out of our comfort zone we resist. The resistance to the task is explored to find out several things. Is this task too far out of the person's comfort zone, is it the wrong task for this person, does the person need outside help to accomplish the task, is the task overwhelming and in need of being broken down into smaller parts or does there need to be a consequence if the task is not accomplished?

When the resistance is understood and resolved, the block is overcome and the person moves forward again. Avoiding or ignoring the resistance can keep people stuck in the same place for years to come. Coaches serve as a spring board for launching ideas and operationalizing them, a confidential ally in executing our most important plans.

## **WorkLife Balance**

### **Burnout is caused by inadequate recovery time.**

For optimal performance every person from the athlete to the CEO needs adequate recovery time. When we continue to work a muscle without sufficient rest the muscle fatigues and performs poorly. When we drive ourselves to work sixty hours a week, take work home at night and work over the weekend while we check our email we mentally and emotionally burnout. Human beings are built to withstand brief periods of intense work with periods of rest and recovery before working again. Coaches audit the lifestyle of the participant to ensure sufficient time is being allocated for recovery, rejuvenation and play as well as work. Having an active and enjoyable life includes time for socializing, exercising, eating well, spending time with friends and family, and resting to produce a greater sense of harmony, energy, and vitality. Productivity in the work place depends on your full energy and vitality that can only be maintained by really unplugging to recharge your battery, stopping long enough to genuinely shift from stress to recovery.

### **Emotional Containment**

#### **The person becomes easily overwhelmed.**

Individuals often have difficulty containing the stress of multiple and simultaneous inputs and tasks. They have few or no coping strategies in place when the situation becomes overwhelming. At these times the person may become frozen, withdrawn, impulsive or angry at those around them. When we have a mechanism in place to handle multiple inputs, we can help ourselves avoid becoming overwhelmed. The coach offers a support system to help when that feeling arises. Physical disorder can contribute to the experience of feeling overwhelmed. A coach can suggest an active solution like hiring a professional organizer to help you create and maintain order in your space. In some cases the inability to contain multiple inputs has an emotional root and will lead the coach to partner with a counselor to address the underlying concern. Without learning how to create, step by step, well thought out plans for our business and our life, we can easily become unfocused and overwhelmed. Likewise if our plans continually are foiled by poor follow-through our to-do lists become unwieldy and our self-confidence can be shaken. This aspect of coaching directly tackles the emotional aspects of efficiency, productivity and effective collaboration.

### **Savvy Communication Skills**

#### **Positive successful communication does not come easily.**

Many people need to learn and master essential relationship and communication skills. Creating good working relationships is one of the most important assets for any business. A coach helps a person work toward mastery of:

1. Setting boundaries and saying "No"
2. Asking for help whenever it is needed
3. Giving constructive positive and constructive negative feedback
4. Accepting constructive positive and constructive negative feedback
5. Expressing and accepting irritation and anger
6. Listening without the need to give advice
7. Handling conflict effectively
8. Building effective teams

This list may seem like a tall order and it's one of the reasons we may need coaches in one form or another throughout our lives. We all seek out coaching or advice about how to communicate effectively from parents, mentors, friends, therapists, teachers and so forth. Poor communication skills account for most failed business and personal relationships and good relationships are the foundation of any successful business or life. Interpersonal Communication 101 is not a regular course we take in school although it should be. The first skill listed above, saying "No" and

setting boundaries is often one of the most difficult and undeveloped skills for business people. We have so many good choices it is sometimes hard to choose. But we must or we will get flooded and drown from too much input and too much to do. Learning to say "no" and set appropriate boundaries often takes hard work. Giving and receiving constructive feedback is the second most important skill that is frequently lacking. You cannot understand what is not working unless you make an effort to find out. Asking for honest feedback from friends, colleagues, employees, managers and so forth gives you vital information you need to move forward and change for the better. Fear of harsh criticism usually prevents people from asking for and giving feedback. Another part of the coach's job is to teach the individual how to ask for feedback from those they trust and how to give feedback to others. Useful feedback is always given with kindness in a constructive way.

### **Education**

#### **If we don't keep learning we lose our edge.**

Once we think we know everything we need to recognize that we are in trouble. Continuous learning keeps our thinking fresh, prevents burnout and actually helps our brain cells develop further. To educate literally means "to draw out". A skilled coach doesn't give you advice unless you specifically ask for it. Any good teacher, supervisor or coach helps you to learn by guiding you and encouraging you to explore your options and ask the right kinds of questions. It may take longer to learn what to do that way, but it fosters the development of new ways of thinking and learning. Continued learning helps us become more creative and innovative, but it also serves to keep us humble. There are always things we could learn that would improve our work life and our personal life. A coach is both a teacher and a supporter who encourages us to keep learning from ourself and others. Education need not take place in a formal classroom. Learning takes place in many ways be it from an advisor, a mentor, or through an experience in which we participate. The learning must fit the needs and learning style of the individual. Many learners do best in an internship setting rather than a classroom, others just need to set aside the time and they will happily research, learn and study by themselves. Some people learn best with a one on one teacher who moves at their pace. A good coach keeps new learning an active and integrated part of the coaching relationship.

### **Money**

Companies as well as individuals often have trouble handling money and need to develop skills in: creating and sticking to a realistic budget, not spending impulsively, saving regularly, and investing money intelligently in research and development for future strategic opportunities. Money can be a very emotionally charged topic and often takes work to talk through with any depth and honesty. This aspect of coaching helps prepare line managers whose responsibilities are expanding: assuming P and L responsibilities, setting and discussing salaries with direct reports, or making budgeting decisions. It can also be helpful for those who are actively negotiating deals, both internally and externally, that have bottom line impact for the company.

### **Organization**

#### **The person is not organized.**

Some individuals lack the skills needed to organize tasks and clear out the clutter in a logical and orderly manner. When tasks and paper work pile up the individual can quickly lose focus. We need to develop ways to organize our people, materials, tasks and activities. A coach assists you in organizing your leadership plans, tasks and actions to move toward your goals. But physical disorganization contributes to mental disorder and it is difficult to work effectively if your desk, your office and your home are in constant disarray. So the first task is often to bring physical order to your life. To be organized doesn't mean you have to become a neatnik; it does mean you must be comfortable in your surroundings and can put your hand on whatever you need quickly and easily. Organized looks different for every individual. A coach helps you find the

resources you need to get physically organized.

### **Environment**

#### **The physical environment is not conducive to productive work.**

When there is clutter, poor ambiance, inadequate lighting, an uncomfortable workstation, a lack of privacy and/or a pressured emotional environment in the workplace, the individual feels constantly stressed. Our work atmosphere ought to be exciting, relaxing and orderly. Establishing a positive physical and emotional environment is essential to satisfying work. A coach might recommend an ergonomic professional to visit your workplace environment to help you make it more conducive to productive work. In addition to the papers and files in your office, ambiance and atmosphere are often neglected. People do their best work when they are surrounded by things they love like photos of loved ones, paintings, objects of beauty that have special meaning to them and so forth. The environment must have physical comfort as well, e.g. a comfortable chair, good lighting, real air, natural light, the right height computer and desk, etc. It should also include a good headset if your work keeps you on the telephone. Many workplaces thrive on continual pressure and stress almost as if it were an addictive drug. This is unhealthy for everyone even if they claim they like it. If we are coaching managers we always make it a priority to change the belief that high stress, deadlines which are usually artificial, are unnecessary. If you plan well and leave a little leeway for the unexpected you are rarely caught in a crunch. If your work environment craves stress perhaps you purposely and unconsciously plan things unrealistically so you are always under extreme emotional pressure. If you work in an environment that is based on stress and it is hurting you, a coach may suggest ways to change your job so that you can be more productive with less stress. Every one wants a sane work life coupled with excellent productivity.

### **Support Systems**

#### **There is no effective professional or personal support system.**

Individuals often feel isolated and alone without a peer support group or trusted individuals to check in with regularly. These managers make poor decisions when they don't have regular input from others to help create a balanced perspective. To be truly successful, we must cultivate an effective support system. Often the more senior an individual is within a company the greater the potential for isolation and exhaustion. An effective coach helps you build a support system so that you can eventually be your own coach. We all need advisors from within our work environment and trusted advisors outside of our system to give us their perspective. Anyone who is functioning in isolation or feels unappreciated has difficulty functioning effectively and incurs disproportionate health costs from stress. We all need contact with people who we care about at work as well as in our personal life. Healthy, strong relationships are usually the basis of successful work and a successful life. Research has taught us that just having one close relationship at work makes a person's worklife more productive and enjoyable. A hundred years ago we all lived and worked in close proximity to our families and the people we grew up with. In today's world of cars, air travel, phones, emails, faxes, and an accelerated economy we don't necessarily live near our family and close friends. We may often work in cities we don't live in and there may be a greater tendency toward isolation. As of the year 2004, forty percent of the work population works at home. The coach's task may include helping the individual/manager learn how to network, become connected to others, and then stay connected. Success in business in today's world is based on satisfactory relationships that are long lasting not glitzy ad campaigns.

### **Hire Your Coach**

If you are either disorganized, not clear about your goals, easily overwhelmed, say "yes" when you want to say "no", have difficulty delegating, or have a weak support system, coaching could be a high leverage investment for you. If someone who reports to you could use help in any of

these arenas, you may want to consider hiring them a coach.

### **Fire Your Coach**

Once you set your goals, plan how to get there, enjoy your work, follow-through on your planned tasks and activities, delegate and communicate well, use your financial resources intelligently, get organized, create a good work environment, and have a network of trusted individuals in your support system, you will have achieved what you set out to do. Your life and work will be successful and you can fire your coach with his or her blessing.

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## **Quiz: DO YOU NEED A BUSINESS COACH?**

How many of these traits describe you?

### **1. Goals**

#### **Goals are not defined**

We must clearly think out and state our corporate, professional, and personal goals. Without a set of goals that are reasonable, sequential and attainable it is very difficult, if not impossible, for an individual to move forward and succeed.

### **2. Plans**

#### **Planning is not a habit.**

We need to have short, intermediate and long-term strategies in place to accomplish our goals and to keep our business moving forward.

### **3. Work**

#### **Work is often stressful and not enjoyable.**

Part of a coach's job is to test the resonance of that person with his/her job if the individual appears to be stressed or miserable at work. Job stress or job frustration often results when a person feels he or she has to do or check everything personally in order for it to be done correctly. This type of individual often has difficulty hiring competent people so that effective delegation can occur. Our work must be in synchrony with who we are and must be done in an environment that allows our expertise and creativity to flourish.

### **4. Follow-through**

#### **Follow-through of important tasks is random at best.**

Some individuals have few methods or strategies in place to help them follow through on the plans, tasks and actions needed to attain their company's goals. Their primary modes of operation are dealing with emergencies and procrastination. They constantly need to put out fires because there has been inadequate planning and follow through, and postponing important decisions has become a chronic pattern. We need to establish ways to make our follow-through more consistent.

### **5. WorkLife Balance**

#### **Burnout is caused by inadequate recovery time.**

For optimal performance every person needs adequate recovery time. When we continue to work without sufficient rest we perform poorly. Human beings are built to withstand brief periods of intense work with periods of rest and recovery before working again. Our life must include sufficient time for recovery and rejuvenation.. Having an active and enjoyable life includes time for socializing, exercising, eating well, spending time with friends and family, and resting to

produce a greater sense of harmony, energy, and vitality. Productivity in the work place depends on your full energy and vitality that can only be maintained by really unplugging to recharge your battery, stopping long enough to genuinely shift from stress to recovery.

## **6. Emotional Containment**

### **The person becomes easily overwhelmed.**

Individuals often have difficulty containing the stress of multiple inputs. They have few strategies in place when the situation becomes unfocused. At these times they may become frozen, withdrawn, impulsive or angry at those around them. When we have a mechanism in place to handle multiple inputs, we can help ourselves avoid becoming overloaded. We need to approach our work place interactions with sufficient emotional intelligence to be effective managers and coaches and to build successful working relationships with colleagues and external partners.

## **7. Communication Skills**

### **Positive communication does not come easily.**

Many people need to learn and master essential relationship and communication skills. Creating good relationships is one of the most important assets any person or business can have. We want to work toward mastery of:

1. Setting boundaries and saying "no"
2. Asking for help whenever it is needed
3. Giving constructive positive and negative feedback
4. Accepting constructive positive and negative feedback
5. Expressing and accepting irritation and anger
6. Listening without the need to give advice
7. Handling conflict effectively
8. Building effective teams

## **8. Education**

### **If we don't keep learning, we lose our edge.**

Once we think we know everything, we are in trouble. We can always learn things that will improve our work and personal life. The challenge is to find the right form of learning that works for us. To educate literally means "to draw out", and therefore education, whether in the classroom, with a mentor, on the job or with a coach leads us to explore more creative options and ask the right kinds of questions. Continued learning keeps us humble, keeps our thinking fresh, prevents burnout and actually helps our brain cells develop further. We need to discover how to keep learning what we truly need to know throughout our lives.

## **9. Money**


### **Money often has a negative connotation.**

Companies as well as individuals often have trouble handling their money and need to develop skills in such areas as: creating and sticking to a realistic budget, not spending impulsively, and investing money intelligently for the future. This aspect of coaching helps prepare line managers who are newly holding P and L responsibilities, or newly setting and discussing salaries with direct reports, or making collective budgeting decisions. It can also be helpful for those who are actively negotiating deals that have bottom line impact on the company.

## **10. Organization**

### **The person is not organized.**

Some individuals lack the skills needed to organize tasks and clear out their clutter in a logical and orderly manner. Delegation of tasks, along with papers, pile up, and the individual doesn't



follow through and becomes easily overloaded. We need to develop ways to organize ourselves, our people and our stuff.

### **11. Environment**

#### **The physical environment is not conducive to productive work.**

When there is clutter, poor ambiance, and a pressured environment in the workplace, everyone feels stressed. Our work atmosphere ought to be exciting, relaxing and orderly. Establishing a positive physical environment is essential to satisfying and productive work.

### **12. Support Systems**

#### **There is no effective professional or personal support system.**

CEOs, managers and individuals often feel isolated and alone, without a peer group or trusted individual to check in with regularly. They often make poor decisions when they don't have the input of others within and outside of the company to create a balanced perspective. To be truly successful, we must cultivate an effective support system.