

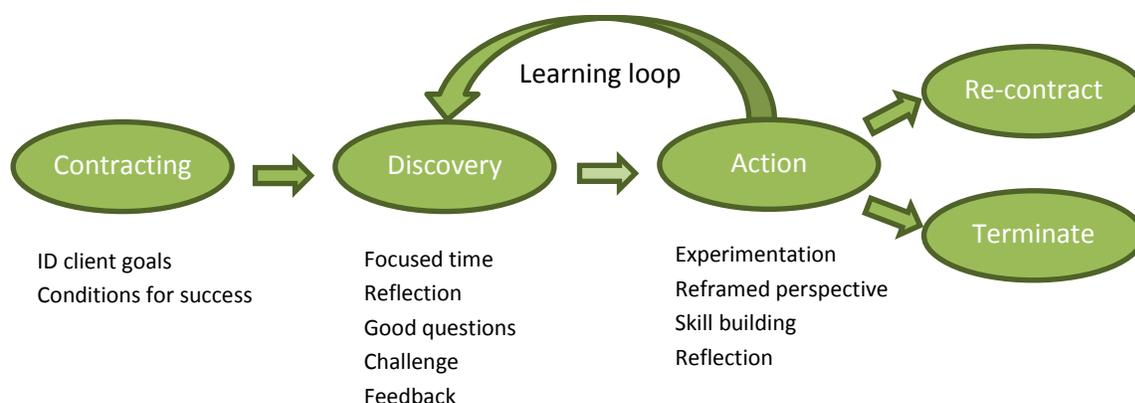


An Overview of Coaching

The growing popularity of professional coaching testifies to its power for helping people make real changes in their personal and professional lives. A good coach provides what textbooks, training classes and even experience do not. Many challenges that leaders face have little to do with technical issues or pure knowledge. Instead, they have to do with exercising good judgment and maintaining perspective amidst inner and interpersonal conflict. For leaders, success requires not only self-mastery, but relational mastery as well. Leaders must see how their attitudes, decisions, and actions affect their own and others' success, then intentionally adjust their approach for the good others and their collective mission. A coach helps leaders do just that – see things clearly and gather the fortitude to do what needs to be done.

The Coaching Process

While coaching can take on various forms, the basic process follows the same pattern.



Contracting

Like other relationships, the coaching relationship is built on a good rapport and the adoption of common goals. These two conditions are worked out during contracting. The coach adopts the client's goals and becomes his/her advocate to the client's own goals and self-interests. Sometimes a coach also represents an employer's interests and therefore must bring the employer's values and goals into the process along with the client's. The client and coach determine whether they are a good fit around any number of issues, e.g., style, gender, age, experience, and values during contracting. Unless there is a good fit, there is no sense in continuing. When a good fit is not found, the coach normally recommends a peer that fits better with the client's needs.

Discovery

Together the client and coach explore the issues, challenges and work that needs to be done for the client to realize his/her goals. The purpose of this time is for the client to see their reality, muster the fortitude to make tough decisions and tackle difficulties, and then identify new habits that will bring them success. The coach facilitates these outcomes by focusing the client's time and thinking on their goals, encouraging them, asking insightful questions, challenging the client's perspective, and by giving feedback. Assessments such as 360° surveys, personality inventories, and work style instruments are used to provide the client with valuable feedback and see their world from another perspective.

Action

All of the action is up to the client. The coach offers ideas, poses challenges, and even makes suggestions, but it is the client who does the work and owns the responsibility for the outcomes. After exploring a topic together, the coach will typically leave the client with a challenge to do something, such as have a crucial conversation with a peer, or reflect on something, such as their reason for opposing a new proposal, or to experiment with a new skill. The action taken by the client continues the learning loop that started in *Discovery* and comes full circle in future conversations. The learning loop continues until new goals are identified, or new coaching conditions are needed, or the client has met his/her goals and the relationship is terminated.

The Coaching Routine

Coaching sessions typically last from 30 – 45 minutes and are held on a weekly basis. As the relationship progresses, it is common to gradually lengthen the space between sessions from one week to four weeks. Some research shows that change from coaching relationships takes root between six and nine months. Accordingly, coaches often ask for a six month commitment to the relationship, with a formal evaluation conducted at the half-way point.

Many sessions can be conducted by telephone or through video conference, but it is generally desirable to conduct some sessions in person as well. Initial meetings and assessment feedback sessions, for example, should be conducted in person because of the relational dynamics involved.

Who Needs Coaching?

One of the hallmarks of a successful person, by most any measure of success, is that he/she is an active learner. Such people seek to learn from books, their experiences, and from the people around them. Coaching is a powerful learning experience because it provides focus, encourages goal oriented experimentation and provides the feedback people need to grow. With this in mind, we believe that coaching is for anyone who has goals and who is trying to improve themselves.