



# COACHING FOR LEADERSHIP

## A GUIDE OF FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

From former Google CEO and Alphabet Chairman Eric Schmidt, to Oprah, and even Steve Jobs, adoption of professional coaching is a rising trend among world figures and thought leaders. Many credit coaching with helping them gain clarity and tap into insights that sustain a trajectory of meaningful growth toward reaching their greatest potential. But coaching isn't only for celebrities. According to a 2020 survey of the coaching industry, **coaching is a genuinely global trend with worldwide demand for coaching growing 33% between 2015 to 2019**. During this same period, the percentage of **leaders and managers using coaching skills grew by 46%**.

Just as in the case of celebrities, business and organizational leaders, managers, professionals and individuals engage coaches to advance their careers and enhance their personal lives. Coaching for leaders and managers offers many advantages that foster professional success, not only for the individual receiving coaching, but also gains that can pass forward to their teams and even their entire organizations.

Here, we address common questions leaders and managers often ask about coaching, its process and rewards.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### 1. What is professional coaching?

The International Coaching Federation (ICF) defines coaching as partnering in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires a person to maximize their personal and professional potential. The process of coaching often unlocks previously untapped sources of imagination, productivity, and leadership.

When you work with a coach, you set out on a path to greater personal and professional fulfillment.



**"I think coaching is a competitive advantage and can change the course of your career and your profession. It's incredibly helpful to have someone who is ... invested in meeting you where you are and then bringing you to the next level, whatever that level is."**

— Executive Lydia Henshaw, [#ExperienceCoaching](#)

### 2. How is coaching different from mentoring or therapy?

When you partner with a coach, you are in the driver's seat. Your coach provides support for accountability and self-awareness, and helps you gain new perspectives. Coaches ask questions not to get an answer they desire, but to encourage you in meaningful exploration that can help you reach a new level of depth and performance. The goal is to help you as the coaching client uncover key insights for yourself. Your efforts with your coach will focus on setting goals, creating outcomes, and managing the journey of personal and professional change on a path toward those desired outcomes. The coach is an expert in the coaching process. You are an expert in your destiny.

Comparatively, a mentor is a subject-matter expert who provides wisdom and guidance based on his or her own experiences. The coaching process focuses instead on facilitating individuals or groups draw upon their own experiences and capabilities to set and reach their own objectives.



### Making Time to Invest in Yourself

After 15 years of rising through the ranks of an international law firm, Jenny Friedle took on the challenge of becoming her company's first corporate technology Program Management Office director.

Not only was this position part of an entirely new level of leadership within the firm, but Jenny also faced the unique challenge of leading a global team that didn't have the opportunity for regular in-person communication.

"With how busy everyone is, it's not often that you ... take time to reflect and think about where you came from, and where you want to go. [Coaching] made my goals actionable and helped me learn to measure progress over the course of months and ... appreciate my own development," Jenny said.

Working with an ICF-credentialed coach, Jenny prospered in her new leadership role, even advancing to levels of leadership within the firm, managing more complex projects, and serving as a resource for others in the organization. Along the way, she found herself more fulfilled in her life both in and outside of work. She improved her boundaries between home and work, and built more confidence in her leadership capabilities.

— [#ExperienceCoaching](#)

Therapy deals with healing pain, trauma, dysfunction or conflict within an individual or relationships, typically with a focus on resolving difficulties arising from one's past that impair an individual's emotional health in the present. Therapy focuses on improving overall psychological functioning, and dealing with the present in more emotionally healthy ways. In some cases, a coach might refer a person to therapy if they observe signs a person needs this type of support. Coaching may also contribute to therapy, working hand in hand with a therapist, to sustain healthy habits in the person moving forward.

### 3. Who is coaching for?

Coaching can benefit professionals of all ages and at all stages of their careers. If you are ready to invest the time, and engage in self-exploration and critical thinking to level up, a coach is a perfect partner to help you advance.

According to a 2020 global survey of the coaching industry, 27% of coaching clients are managers, and 25% are executives/C-suite leaders, making these the two most in-demand spaces for coaching. (GCS 2020).



**"I would 100% recommend coaching.** I recently told [a colleague], 'Listen, you need this more than you think. You are going to not only grow from a business perspective, but you will also grow personally. You will end up a better person coming out.'"

— Executive Milan Atanackovic, [#ExperienceCoaching](#)

### 4. What are the signs that I might benefit from coaching?

Many professionals report feeling they have hit a wall in their career development, or that they feel "stuck" or "in a rut" before they begin coaching.

Perhaps you have encountered a challenge in your career that you are unsure how to address, or you don't know how to elevate yourself to reach the next level in your career. Or, you have been offered a great opportunity, and you are excited for the new challenge. You just need to figure out how to achieve the desired results in an efficient and effective way.

Coaching can be especially powerful when transitioning into a new role—such as becoming a manager for the first time, or taking on a new C-suite position. It also can provide invaluable support when a major change occurs, such as becoming a parent or if external factors at your organization cause shifts in your role.

Whether you are in need of direction or simply want to push yourself to keep building your skills, a coach may be the partner who can help you find your way to your next goal.



**"I think that doing my coaching work, long-term, has helped to create space for other people, which allows them to respond to me differently. My relationships in the workplace have shifted."**

—COO Tia Dwyer, [#ExperienceCoaching](#)

## 5. How do I find a qualified coach?

When looking for a coach, it's important to find a true professional—to exercise due diligence to ensure the coach is appropriately trained and adheres to the highest ethical standards.



Ask each candidate about his or her coaching credentials and professional organization memberships. Though not required to be a coach, an ICF Credential indicates a coach has met the highest standards of the profession through a rigorous, accredited training program, an established number of coaching hours, and assessment. An ICF Membership indicates a coach is committed to ongoing professional growth and the highest ethical standards.

It's best to interview multiple candidates before selecting a coach, as this allows you to get to know them, compare styles, and find one that best suits your needs. Before the meeting, prepare questions to help you better understand the coach's experience, areas of focus, and approach. Referrals to prior coaching clients can provide insights to ensure the coach can help you reach the goals you have in mind.



### ICF's Credentialed Coach Finder

A searchable directory with listings for thousands of qualified ICF-credentialed coaches worldwide.

## 6. What should I expect from a coaching session?

You are responsible for your progress, but a very important first step is to establish your coaching agreement. In your sessions, the coach will challenge your thinking with practices and tools designed to evoke awareness, consider new perspectives, and cultivate learning and growth, with a focus on making clear progress toward a clearly defined goal. These tools might include worksheets, personal SWOT assessments, or other exercises.





## 7. What kind of commitment is a coaching engagement in terms of sessions and duration?

The duration and frequency of a coaching engagement can vary significantly by each client's needs, objectives, and organization. Each coaching experience is likely to be different because each is highly individualized.

Typically, a coaching engagement ranges from weekly to monthly sessions, usually about an hour long. On average, engagements can range from a few sessions to about six months in length. Coaching works toward a defined goal, around which each session is structured. When you have achieved this goal, you and your coach might agree the engagement is concluded, or you may work together to set a new goal.

Coaching is driven by you: As the client, you are in control of this experience. Work with your coach to find the right fit that meets your needs and accomplishes your goals.

## 8. As a business leader, what are the things that a coach can help me with if he/she has less business experience than I do?

Coaching is helping a person tap into their own internal wisdom, which is accomplished by evoking awareness that can help the client consider different perspectives or alternate approaches. A coach's relative lesser experience in your industry or type of role does not preclude them from partnering with you to help you achieve your career goals. They are your thinking partners who are experts in the process of coaching – collaborating with you, challenging your own thinking and helping evoke creativity and innovation.

## Top Outcomes from Coaching

People who worked with a coach reported common positive benefits including:

1. Improved communication skills (42%)
2. Increased self-esteem/self-confidence (40%)
3. Increased productivity (39%)
4. Optimized individual/team performance (38%)
5. Improved work/life balance (34%)

(2017 GCAS)



# 84%

of coaching clients said they were **likely or extremely likely to recommend coaching** to a friend or family member

(2017 GCAS)

## 9. What results can I expect from being coached? How can I measure these results?

People who engage a coach often experience benefits that include increased confidence, enhanced communication skills, and optimized individual and team performance.

An individual's results from coaching will be tightly aligned with the goals they set with their coach at the start of the engagement. While a return on investment (ROI) in these engagements can be difficult to measure, an alternate way to measure the impact of your coaching engagement could be to measure your Return on Expectation (ROE), which gauges how your coaching results tie back to the objective you and your coach set at the outset of your work together.

For example, some organizations that use coaching widely within their enterprise apply self-rated snapshot surveys to gauge how a person feels about key indicators of success—such as confidence or time management—before, during and after a coaching engagement. In other instances, asking colleagues or team members to contribute to a 360° survey of your performance can help to set goals and measure growth through coaching.

Especially when working with organization leaders or team managers, coaching's beneficial impacts flow beyond the individual receiving coaching.

Many coaching clients find the benefits of their coaching—such as improved self-awareness, communication skills and open-mindedness—positively impact their lives far beyond the original goals, including in their team dynamics and personal relationships. This might include increased performance from team members who feel more empowered and can more easily share ideas, or perhaps reduced stress at home due to an improved ability to listen to a partner or child.



**“We found solutions that met me on my own terms rather than those set by others. I was amazed at the process, and how much more comfortable I was with the solutions and takeaways that I had created for myself.”**

—Max Berkowitz, [#ExperienceCoaching](#)

### CONCLUSION: An Investment in Yourself

Coaching is a way to invest in yourself and your future.

Working with a coach is a transformational experience. Coaching empowers you as a leader, a professional, and a human being. Coaching can enhance your impact within your organization, bolster your team, and advance your career. And, these benefits can positively impact your life beyond your career, helping you to find improved work-life balance and communicate better with loved ones.

Coaching can help you recharge, refocus and reach new heights of success.

**“[My coach] was able to really zero in on my ideas and then give meaningful feedback on my conclusions, and that would lead to some real light bulb moments. I think we had more than a few of those light bulb moments together, where **things just clicked and suddenly made sense.**”**

— Executive Director  
Kimahli Powell,  
[#ExperienceCoaching](#)

