

## ***A taste of personal coaching***

By Brooke Broadbent

*Pat is a training manager. She is ambitious. Pat’s friends and colleagues have mentioned that coaching has given them focus, clarity and self-confidence. She has seen the difference in her friends and colleagues. Pat’s life: personal and professional is good. She wonders if it could be better. Could she benefit from hiring a personal coach? And if it’s good for her, should her training department fund personal coaching for all employees?*

Personal coaches also known as whole life coaches, executive coaches, productivity coaches and a shopping-cart full of other creative and descriptive names, help people have a great life, at work and in their personal life. I repeat, a great life. Enticing for you, your friends and colleagues?

Personal coaching is about being supported. Speak to people who have a personal coach and you’ll hear a lilt in their voice; you’ll see a beaming smile. They feel supported, focused, more in tune with their emotions. Having a personal coach is about having support in every way imaginable. You determine with your coach where you need support, how you would like to be coached. And your coach will draw on a host of skills and techniques to help you find solutions—that help move you towards your personal goals. Along the way, your coach will help you celebrate. Also, just as importantly, when you do not move in the direction you wish, your coach will ‘be there’ to feel your pain with you.

Personal coaching is about personalized learning. It goes beyond normal training and development. Having a personal coaching is like having a personalized learning program. Your learning is absolutely tailored to your personal development, in your business, your job—your whole life. Coaching is the ultimate self-directed learning experience because clients identify their own issues, perceived performance gaps, and where they get stuck in trying to move forward. You will gain huge insight into yourself through coaching, into your thoughts and your feelings. Research into what works in changing behavior has determined that the body knows—people who learn to interpret what their bodies are telling them and take action based on what their bodies say, are able to make huge strides in changing their behavior. Coaching will help you learn to decipher and act on what your body is trying to tell you. For example, when you are in an emotional state, your coach will ask you what you feel in your body and where the sensation is located. After you do this a few times, you will learn the skill of interpreting what your body is saying. You will learn to identify a certain gnawing sensation with a thought; a situation and you will have new clarity that helps you get into action.

Personal coaching is about change. In signing up for coaching, people are opting to make changes to their personal and professional life. Coaching helps employees redirect their lives in small ways that make a big difference. Coaching takes the high road to change, aiming at what people want to be—often defined as their future self. Articulating what you want to be, gives focus and a standard for evaluating your specific behavior.

Personal coaching is about synergy between peoples’ personal and professional lives. An employee’s personal life and professional life impact each other. Doing well in one helps workers do well in the other. The ‘whole life’ approach of personal coaching fosters the natural synergy between one’s personal and professional self and helps people move to new levels of achievement in their personal and professional lives.

Personal coaching augments training. HR departments use coaching to expand the classroom experience. An employee can learn management skills in the classroom. In coaching they decide how to apply what they have learned, they make commitments to their coach, report on progress and receive positive feedback. The new management skills become part of the learner’s “to be list”. Coaching cuts out travel costs and time away from the office, which makes coaching a smart use of training dollars.

The coaching profession is blossoming. Several schools have sprung up to train coaches. (See box) The International Coaching Federation has introduced training standards and a code of ethics that guides the profession. Hiring a coach trained to ICF standards helps to ensure that you and the employees you serve are in the hands of a competent coach.

### ***The magic of coaching***

It’s hard to explain the magic of coaching. Using words to explain coaching is like describing a breathtaking acrobatic performance of the “Cirque de Soleil” You need to be in the audience, participating in the performance, to feel the magic of the acrobats. Likewise with coaching, you need to be there to experience it. To feel the impact of whole life coaching on your ideas, actions and motivation. The best way to feel the magic of coaching is to take a complementary sample session.

### ***Deciding what matters***

In your sample session you will experience the effect that coaching techniques have on your life. For example, one area that a coach can go into during a sample session or a regular session is helping you decide what matters. A former world-class athlete, let’s call her Bonnie, has trained under many athletic coaches. Now she has a personal coach. Coaches working with people like Bonnie help them decide what matters. As Bonnie explains, “every time my coach asks me what’s important, I feel energized, focused. When I decide with my coach what’s important, I get a huge burst of energy to focus on what counts to make me happy and fulfilled. By asking simple, powerful questions, personal coaches help their clients set new standards for themselves. An example of a new standard that a client might set is to take more responsibility for your impact in relationships.

### ***A variety of roles***

According to a survey by the International Coaching Federation, clients utilize their coaches in a wide range of roles, including guides (mentor and business coach) and in more directive roles such as teacher and taskmaster.

### **Six Coaching roles**

- Mentor 50.5%
- Business consultant 46.7%
- Teacher 41.0%
- Taskmaster 30.5%
- Spiritual guide 29.5%
- Other 13.3%

### ***The benefits***

Coaching is an investment. The more time and energy you devote to it, the more you will benefit. And people benefit in countless ways. Respondents to the ICF survey reported a wide range of benefits as we can see below, leading with increased self awareness, better goals setting, a more-balanced life and lower stress levels. The benefits you get will be the ones you go after.

#### **The top dozen benefits of working with a coach**

1. Self-awareness 67.6%
2. Setting better goals 62.4%
3. More-balanced life 60.5%
4. Lower stress levels 57.1%
5. Self-discovery 52.9%
6. Self-confidence 52.4%
7. Improvement in quality of life 43.3%
8. Enhanced communication skills 39.5%
9. Project completion 35.7%
10. Health or fitness improvement 33.8%
11. Better relationship with coworkers 33.3%
12. Better family relationship(s) 33.3%

### ***How to find a coach***

Most professional coaches are self-employed. And some corporations hire internal coaches as employees or on contract. Most of the resources listed below have coaching referral services for people who have graduated from their programs. Once you find a coach, your employer might be ready to pay for your coaching. Some employers use personal coaching as a perk to reward high-performing employees. Previously limited primarily to executives, employers are now increasingly using their training budgets to hire coaches for employees.

### ***What to look for in a coach***

Select a coach that you feel ‘right’ with. If you don’t trust your feelings and need to rationalize your decision here are sample selection criteria.

- Coaching skills. Is the coach able to lead a session that takes you to new places?
- Respect. Do you feel respected by the prospective coach?
- Spontaneity. Are you comfortable being spontaneous with the prospective coach?
- Training. Has the coach received training through a reputable school?

### ***Working effectively with a coach***

Chances are you will establish a relationship with your coach like you have never experienced before. So, be ready for a new experience. You will gain the most if you:

- Accept honest feedback from your coach
- Explain clearly to your coach what you want
- Focus on all your calls with your coach

- Are open to new ways of behaving
- Are working diligently on your 'homework' between sessions

### ***Pat's decision***

The fictitious training manager we introduced at the beginning of the article has a choice. She can see coaching as a flavor of the month trend. Something to avoid. It won't be around next month. Or. She can see it as a menu of Baskin and Robbins 31 flavors. Something for everyone. A rich source of new sensations, new learning, new experiences. What would you do if you were in her shoes? Are you ready to saunter up to the counter and ask for a miniature pink spoonful?

### ***Resources for coaching***

The resources listed here will help you learn more about coaching. A sample session will give you first hand information about what coaching can do for you and for your organization

Organization	Services	URL
CoachU	Tools, training for coaches	<a href="http://www.coachinc.com">www.coachinc.com</a>
Coachville	Find a coach, free coaching resources	<a href="http://www.coachville.com/">www.coachville.com/</a>
FAQ about coaching	From the International Coaching federation	<a href="http://www.coachfederation.org/aboutcoaching/about.htm">http://www.coachfederation.org/aboutcoaching/about.htm</a>
Glossary	Glossary of coaching terms	<a href="http://www.interlinktc.com/definitions.html">http://www.interlinktc.com/definitions.html</a>
The Academy for Coach Training	A coach referral service.	<a href="http://www.coachtraining.com">www.coachtraining.com</a>
The Coaches Training Institute	Coaching certification courses from CTI, find a coach	<a href="http://www.thecoaches.com/">http://www.thecoaches.com/</a>
The International Coach Federation	Coach referral service, links to coach training organizations	<a href="http://www.coachfederation.org">www.coachfederation.org</a>

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