

## **Are You Ready, Willing, and Able to Be Coached?**

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I was certified as a coach eight years ago. My, how time flies! I recently searched for some information in my training notes from back then. As often happens, I found something else interesting along the way. I saw a reference to Laura Fortgang's 1999 book entitled *Take Yourself to the Top*.

In the book, she identifies a self-evaluation for healthy individuals to determine if professional coaching might be an appropriate intervention for achieving personal or career growth. Her assessment questions have been adopted by several organizations that train and certify coaches.

Are you investing in your growth? Are you investing in the future of your organization by developing the individuals under your authority? Are you ready, willing, and able to enhance your leadership skills and apply them in ways that are more effective for you and better serve your direct reports?

For individuals willing to invest in themselves and their organizations, coaching can make a huge difference. Of course, not everyone knows what "coaching" involves. The word "coach" at this time of year may cause you to think about football, or maybe the start of basketball season. You might have an image of a determined, focused individual pacing the sidelines, barking directions to the players on the field. That's not at all descriptive of what I do.

Think instead of a stagecoach you might see in a Western movie. To get from one town to another in the "old days," you could walk, ride a horse, or catch a stagecoach. Either of the first two would get you there, but you'd be dirty, hot, and tired when you arrived. Taking a coach, however, got you there faster and you weren't as fatigued or filthy when you arrived.

That's the kind of coaching I provide. We go where you want to go. I help you get there faster and more elegantly. Not only do you enhance your leadership skills, your organization and all those individuals under your influence benefit. Everybody wins--that's the only way I like to play!

Are you thinking about contacting a coach to help with your growth? Consider the following.

**Are you ready?** Do you have time available for developing yourself? Can you recognize gaps between where you are currently and where you want to be? Will you allocate at least an average of thirty minutes a day to work on personal development? Does now seem the appropriate time for you to invite thought-provoking questions from an outside professional who genuinely wants you to succeed?

**Are you willing?** Are you committed to working in new ways to achieve your goals? Are you open to exploring the self-defeating behaviors that currently limit your success? Can you tolerate experimenting with new approaches? Will you commit to telling the truth as you see it, especially when there are new insights, to your coach? Are you open to receiving feedback from the people around you who will observe and experience the effects of your changed behaviors?

**Are you able?** Are you physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually healthy? Do you have the patience to take consistent action toward your goals, realizing that results may not be immediate? Do you have support (from your boss, your family, and your friends) to make significant changes without them putting up a lot of resistance? Does your schedule allow you to make and reliably keep appointments for dialogue with your coach? Do you have adequate funds to pay for coaching without regretting the fee? Do you see coaching as a beneficial investment in improving your life?

If you are considering engaging a coach, you should talk with several individuals who have experienced such a relationship. Coaching involves a balance of “challenge” and “support.” Being comfortable is the enemy of growth. A vision of something better must be pulling at you to make you improve (change!).

Before you agree to spend money with a professional coach, you’ll want to check out that person’s skills, motives, and reliability. Just as you would if you were interviewing to hire a new team member, ask for references from two or three coaches who you might use. Any credible coach will gladly provide a multitude of previous clients for you to contact and interview.

A guide for selecting the right coach for you is on my website; the address is below. Scroll down alphabetically to "How to Choose a Professional Development Coach."

Don’t be surprised if your potential coach spends some time investigating you, too. He or she doesn’t want to waste time or energy with someone who isn’t serious about personal growth, and who doesn’t have a personal vision of “what could be” pulling against your current reality. You may be asked to provide some references, too. And a credible coach will likely contact a few of them!

The work you will accomplish with the guidance of a coach is probably more demanding than you will experience if you attempt the improvement effort alone. But that externally supplied stretch--with supportive encouragement--is what enables you to get from where you are to where you want to go more quickly, elegantly, and in a way that will serve you and those you serve in a lasting way!

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After publication: I discovered a Harvard Business Review article that reinforces this article. It is located here:

<https://hbr.org/2018/11/if-you-want-to-get-better-at-something-ask-yourself-these-two-questions>

Dennis Hooper, January 4, 2019