

What Does Your Coach Deliver to You?

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When you purchase a product, you naturally have expectations about its use. You can immediately see and touch its features, and you enjoy its benefits as soon as you start using the device.

Whenever you agree to purchase a service, however, you are counting on someone to fulfill a promise. You receive nothing tangible, at least initially. You're relying on the competency, honorable motives, and reliability of the service provider to deliver what was promised.

Coaching is a service. Professional coaches help you move from where you are to where you want to be. Your coach made some agreements with you when you described your initial expectations.

Should you expect to receive any additional deliverables along the way? Absolutely yes! This article provides a comprehensive list that I've obtained from CoachVille.com, a worldwide network of 30,000 coaches in 175 countries.

If you've never used a coach, I invite you to imagine receiving these services. As you read each one, consider whether you would find value in a competent coach providing this assistance to you. And if you are a client of mine, I welcome you using this list as a basis for feedback to me!

Please note that these are not the outcomes you as a client should expect from the coaching relationship. As your coach supports you through these deliverables, you make decisions and execute your preferred actions, and the outcomes are the consequences of your behaviors.

Perspective and Increased Awareness. Your coach provides fresh or different ways of looking at a given situation, providing context or offering a potentially different meaning. Sometimes, this will feel quite challenging (see the final item in this list.)

Validation. Your coach provides acknowledgment, support, and encouragement, affirming you or your choices.

Message. Your coach shares appropriate or relevant knowledge, opinions, or wisdom.

Energy. Your coach provides inspiration, encouragement, or cheerleading support, stimulating you to generate options for addressing your current situation.

Stimulation. Your coach offers ideas for resolving a problem or issue.

Plan. Your coach collaborates with you in generating a set of sequential action steps to address an issue.

Structure. Your coach provides a method for preparing you for coaching sessions and for following up with you after the session. Your coach provides you guidance on how to contact him or her, if necessary, in between coaching sessions.

Resources. Your coach introduces, suggests, or refers you to relevant experts, books, videos, assessments, and other tools.

Options. Your coach expands the number of alternatives available to you in considering your response to a given situation.

Caring. Your coach provides you with assurance and affirmation through safe space, listening, and patience in seeking to understand and offer compassion for your situation and perspective.

Training. Your coach provides education and increased awareness of personal and business skills.

Advice. Your coach helps identify advantages and disadvantages as you consider each option you've generated for potentially executing one or more of your ideas.

Strategy. Your coach collaborates with you to generate a personal or business strategy.

Feedback. Your coach offers feedback, insights, ideas, and opinions on your observed behaviors.

Challenge. Your coach invites you to consider a different meaning of your current reality and/or to step up to making a change or stretching beyond previous limits. Your coach holds you accountable for examining your current reality, considering potentially uncomfortable alternatives, and executing the decisions you make.

Is a coach the only kind of individual who can provide these deliverables? Of course not. You can obtain these support mechanisms from a friend, your wife or husband, a trusted neighbor, a colleague, your boss, a direct report, a customer, or a supplier.

Though any of these individuals may provide these supports occasionally, they usually are driven by their own agendas. A coach, however, focuses on helping you accomplish your agenda. Your coach's success is measured by how satisfied you are in moving away from your current reality and toward your desired future state.

Please realize that this list is a catalog of options, not a checklist of required interactions. No client ever receives all of these at the same time. However, in a single coaching session, it's not unusual for many of these descriptions to be present at different times during the conversation.

If you have authority over direct reports in the workplace, consider the extent to which you provide these services to the individuals under your authority. Many bosses are finding that they inspire others to achieve more by behaving as a coach instead of a command-and-control assigner of work. That model of leadership is outmoded today where the typical knowledge worker may be more intelligent than his or her boss!

If the concept of you serving as a coach for your direct reports is so foreign to you that it feels uncomfortable, then you likely would benefit from some leadership coaching. Coaching others may be a more effective strategy than perhaps what you are currently offering.

Consider searching online for "Finding Top Executive [or Leadership Development] Coaches." Among the options will be a direction to LinkedIn. On the LinkedIn site, look for a "Get proposals" button and click it. You'll be taken to a short questionnaire to determine what you want and how you'd like to work with a coach. When you finish the questionnaire, your request will be forwarded to coaches in your geographic area. You'll receive up to five responses from coaches, and you can begin asking questions of them to determine the extent to which they can assist you.

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