

# Initiating a Coaching Relationship

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Do you want better skills, better decisions, better execution of plans, better use of time and other limited resources, better relationships, and more balance in your life?

You might be saying, "Hey, everybody wants those things! But you don't have to use a coach to make those things happen!"

I say, "Right you are. But more people are using a coach today than ever before!"

Organizations spent \$1.8 billion on coaching in 2002. Why? Because many people have discovered that finding the right coach helps them go farther and faster than tackling any of those objectives on their own.

Are you interested in moving beyond the status quo in your life? What could move you from just thinking about it to doing something about it?

**Inspiration.** Are your dreams vibrant? Have you recently observed a role model who stimulates your imagination? Is your mentor encouraging you to stretch yourself beyond your comfort zone? Have you recently been struck with a far-out idea that you can't shake? You, my friend, may be inspired!

**Desperation.** Are you disgusted with something you've tolerated for a long time? Are you embarrassed by some situation you allow to exist? Has some crisis occurred because you've been ignoring something important in your life? Has your negligence or bad habits gotten you in trouble one time too many? Are you realizing that nobody's coming to rescue you?

**Boredom.** Maybe you are neither inspired nor desperate. Maybe you realize that you've been underperforming for a long time. Has your search for significance stalled? Are you facing a future that no longer has appeal? Are you tired of not making a difference in anybody else's life?

So maybe you want to change. Can you do it alone? Sure! Do you need a coach? Nope!

Hey, for thousands of years, folks have been improving their circumstances in life and their contributions without a coach!

Have some people found a coach helpful? You bet! But you must be motivated to change, and it won't work if it's some forced requirement by your boss!

You can't expect that the coach will make the changes for you! There are no magic wands or fairy godmothers. But the right coach, with skills in the area where you want to grow, can increase your pace and quality of progress immensely.

A Harvard Business Review article from November, 2004 identifies characteristics of a good coach. You should expect your coach to focus on your goals, foster your independence, ask penetrating questions, and provide honest observations. Further, your coach should have sound judgment, acute perception, integrity, and diplomacy.

A coach will cause you to reflect, pausing to contemplate your behaviors—both their causes and their effects. And your coach will stimulate you to consider new options, guiding you to evaluate whether and how choosing different behaviors might yield more desirable outcomes.

Do you operate under the misguided assumption that because you are a leader, you don't need support, encouragement, and feedback? Do you measure your leadership against what others are doing rather than against your God-given potential?

Give honor to your dreams. Wipe out your disgust. Shake off the boredom. Don't settle for the self-deception of your comfort zone!

If you've never experienced the help of a certified coach, ask for a trial run. You'll learn a lot in a brief demonstration. If the chemistry seems right, ask for references and testimonials—and check 'em out! Then communicate your objectives clearly and prepare to measure your progress!