

The Top 10 Reasons Why a Corporate Executive Hires a Coach

by Thomas J. Leonard, Founder of Coach U and CoachVille.

Executives hire a coach for many reasons, but there are ten overriding ones that are particularly important in light of today's fast-changing workplace.

1. To improve the existing culture of the company.

Company cultures need to change from autocratic, rigid, fear-oriented to decentralized, entrepreneurial, cooperative enterprises. Often, the executive who's leading the company is a product of the "old" culture and can benefit from a re-orienting that an Executive Coach facilitates. The Executive Coach works with the executive to design an optimum operating culture for the firm, and to devise a plan to integrate all players into this enhanced culture.

2. To increase the executive's ability to leverage his/her time.

The role of and leadership methods used by the executive must continually upgrade in order to stay ahead of an increasingly fickle customer base and less-loyal work force. The Executive Coach works to double (at a minimum) the executive's leverage and effectiveness.

3. To improve the way the executive comes across.

Character, communication skills, and listening ability are more vital today to the executive as the customer base and employees expect more polish, sophistication and subtlety. This, plus the increased use of virtual communication methods requires that the personal side/real-person side of the executive comes through in order to maintain leadership-by-attraction vs. leadership-by-control.

4. To have fostering discussions of the executive's ideas that are still in the inkling stage.

Often, the next generation or evolution of a company is conceived during an open discussion of ideas. Most executives don't take enough time for this type of creativity, nor do they have the right "listening partner". The Executive Coach provides the environment in which the executive's inklings, ideas, and concerns are respected and expanded.

5. To get an outsider's opinion from someone (the coach) who has no vested interest in the outcome of the situation.

Everyone the executive works with, including the spouse, has a need to either maintain the status quo or to make changes that benefit themselves/their turf. This self-interest is normal, but may lead to a lack of objectivity and encourages a "not invented here" culture. The Executive Coach is usually the only person in an executive's rolodex whose only priority is the executive's interests.

6. To expand upon, clarify, and clearly put into words the executive's vision for the company.

A huge simple vision naturally keeps customers and employees focused, reducing the need for management and constant motivation. For example, Microsoft's vision: "a computer on every desk and in every home, all running on Microsoft software." Apple's vision? (Good question) The Executive Coach is an expert at languaging concepts, goals and visions, and assists the executive to properly put into words the vision for the company.

7. To have a secure, safe, and confidential outlet to vent, when necessary.

Pent up frustrations, anger, and disappointments impair good judgment. Every executive needs a special person to complain to, vent, and with whom to talk things out.

8. To point out what the executive can't, won't, or doesn't see.

Smart business people understand that they have blind spots and most authorize an insider, outsider, or a team with the permission and mandate to speak frankly and illuminate the executive's blind spots. However, politics being as they are, most individuals aren't empowered to speak their minds. The Executive Coach has an ethical obligation to point out what he/she sees.

9. To find a better way to reduce stress, increase effectiveness, and still have a great life.

The days of the passive/suffering executive spouse are coming to an end, as is the work-is-all-that-matters obsession. Leadership today requires a clear-thinking individual who is in touch with the many parts of life, not just running a company. Executives are expected to have a real life. The Executive coach works with the executive to design a balanced and sustainable personal and professional life.

10. To widen the executive's "pipe" in order to handle a faster flow of information.

The ability to assimilate and analyze huge amounts of data--reports, facts, trends, subtle changes in the marketplace, demographic shifts, needs of the company, status of R&D projects and emerging markets--is enhanced when the executive has a faster mental modem, Pentium chip, RAM, and hard drive space. The Executive Coach helps the executive to notice, feel, sense, see, measure and process more data without taxing his/her personal CPU.