

Inc. COLUMNIST

Looking For An Executive Coach? Make Sure They Have These 7 Standards

In addition to a good recommendation from your colleagues, here are seven credentials every coach should have.



By [Joelle K. Jay@JoelleKJay](mailto:JoelleKJay)

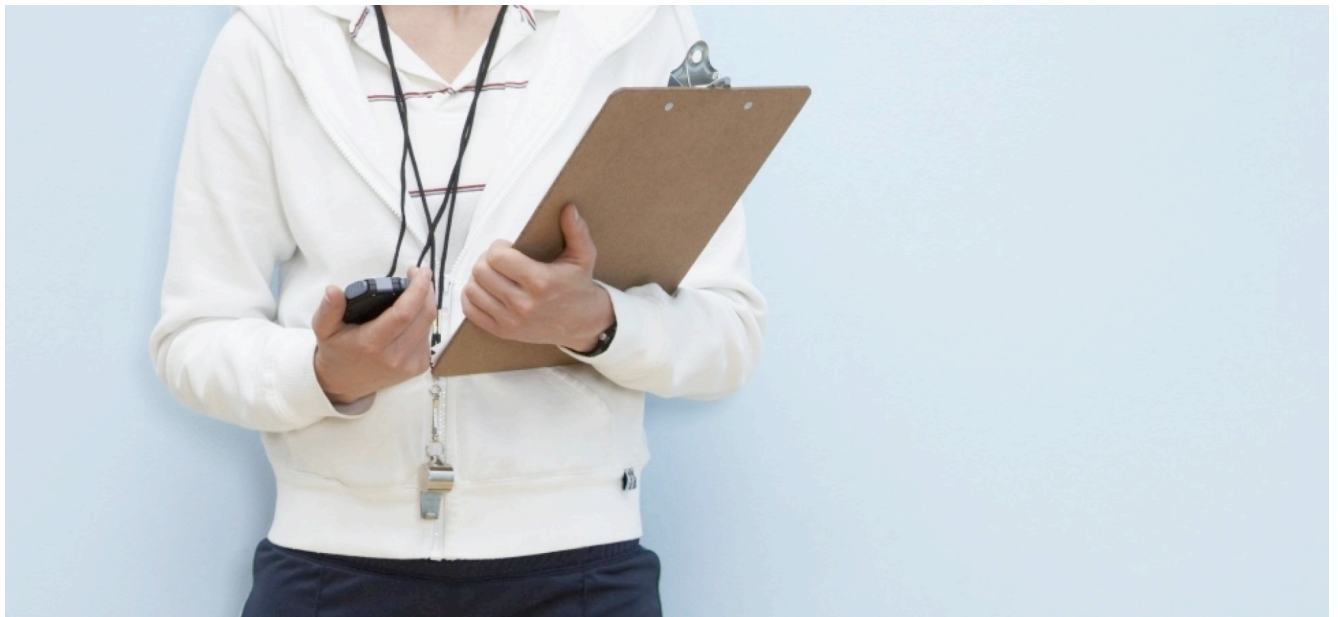


IMAGE: Getty Images

I recently had a colleague tell me he was looking for an executive coach. I asked him about his process for finding one, and, as many people looking for a coach do, he said he was asking

around for names. It's the most common approach to finding a coach--find someone trusted by someone you also trust.

But when it comes to coaching, referrals actually aren't enough. You can spend valuable time vetting coaches that are the wrong fit for you or your organization and end up hiring someone less-than-optimal. Too late, you discover that the coach that was perfect for the person who recommended him or her is a poor fit for you.

As an executive coach, I want to offer you better ways to find a coach that will lead to a more effective coaching relationship. In addition to a good recommendation from your colleagues, here are seven credentials every coach should have:

Education: Before you select a coach, make sure to have an understanding of the coach's background. Do they have an MBA, or a PhD in executive coaching? Do they have a degree relating to leadership or business skill sets that you value?

Experience: Do some online research on their website, which should be clear and answer the following questions: Who have they worked with in the past? Which companies have hired them? What level of leaders do they work with?

Expertise: What is the coach known for? Are they known for a particular outcome, like preparing leaders for more senior positions? Do they have a particular content area, such as time management or work-life balance? Make sure to be clear on your goals before you do this research to ensure your goal and the coach's expertise are aligned.

Approach: Has this coach developed an established approach? What tools do they use? How do they measure success? In what way is that measurement similar or different than yours? These are all important questions to ask to make sure that you will get the most out of the coaching sessions themselves.

Personal fit: Ideally, coaches connect with their clients beyond a friendly or personal way in a way that makes the client feel like they can learn from the coach. A coach should be someone who challenges you and helps you achieve your goals. Is this coach someone you look up to and can get you where you need to go?

Type of coaching: Every coach has a certain group or type of professional they are committed to working with. Do they coach executives who want to work at their leadership skills? Are they a leadership coach who teaches skills for building behaviors for managers in

corporate settings? Or are they a personal coach or life coach who aims to help you outside of work?

Track record: Every coach should have evidence of a successful track record. Has the coach you are considering written a book? Do they have testimonials, or letters of recommendation? Can they connect you to a former client? The answer to each of those questions should ideally be a yes.

Remember, when you're choosing an executive coach you are looking for more than coaching--you're looking for results. Set the bar high. Yes, take into account the referrals you receive from friends and colleagues, and of course look for chemistry and personal preference. But take the time to assess the impact the coach will have by applying these seven essentials criteria, and you'll give yourself the best start possible to get the most out of your coaching experience.

The opinions expressed here by Inc.com columnists are their own, not those of Inc.com.

PUBLISHED ON: DEC 16, 2015

Joelle K. Jay, Ph. D., is an executive coach specializing in leadership development. She strategizes with business leaders to enhance their performance and maximize business results. Her clients include presidents, vice presidents, and C- level executives in Fortune 500 companies such as Microsoft, Google, and Adobe. She is the author of *The Inner Edge: The 10 Practices of*

Personal Leadership. For a free summary, go to www.TheInnerEdge.com or email Info@TheInnerEdge.com.