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What it takes to be a professional coach

“As coaches, our role is to bring a structure to the relationship whereby the client will be able to confront himself healthily and positively, raise self-awareness and build on it to own personal responsibility and thus, personal performance”.

Being a professional coach requires training and accreditation by a recognised institution and membership in a coaching community or association preferably an international one so as to benefit from other fellow coaches' experiences and advice.

To reach the professional coach status, one needs to go through rigorous training, practical exercises and regular assessments by an accredited coaching institution in order to be qualified and recognised. In addition, it is essential for a professional coach to have a genuine interest and care for other people in order to accompany and guide them effectively in their journey to reach their goals and objectives.

Training and an aptitude to be a professional coach do not automatically make you a good and polished coach, you need to continuously sharpen your skills through your association, reading, networking within the coaches community and keeping yourself updated on new techniques and innovation in the industry.

I did not start my career as a coach but my love for coaching, facilitating, journeying with people came as a calling through my years of experience in the corporate world. My experience in consulting, business and entrepreneurship, serving my community, guiding the youths and young leaders, following spiritual training and being an avid sportsperson has lead me to discover my love for being with people and my passion to guide them in their personal and professional life. I took the initiative to become qualified and accredited from a UK institute as a Corporate and Executive Coach.

Becoming a professional executive coach has allowed me to live my passion. I started my development to become a coach by being an image consultant to both individuals and organisations. Then I evolved in my career to incorporate not only the physical aspect but also the emotional/mind aspect of an individual. For me it is important to go in depth so as to unlock their potential and let them discover self so as to increase their performance both personally and professionally.

One of the key attributes to have is a genuine love to serve and help people. It is important for a coach be able to use his/her own life experiences in a positive way in order to inspire, encourage, motivate, and instill in his/her clients the necessary key elements to make the clients move forward in life, and achieve top personal and professional performance.

Furthermore it is crucial for a coach to fully understand himself or herself so that he/she knows which is the best approach for him/her to connect with the clients in parallel to choosing the most appropriate methodology to his/her coaching practice and process.

A coach needs to be clear and in tune with his/her personal values and be true and authentic. The coach needs to demonstrate and show confidentiality, empathy, neutrality, integrity to inspire people's trust and openness without forgetting to do active listening, and adopt a non-judgmental approach.

There are different types of coaching, namely life, youth, business, executive coaching to name a few.

Coaching is a collaborative partnership and a process to help clients unlock their potential; discover their talents and all the possibilities that lie within them to feed forward. As coaches, our role is to bring a structure to the relationship whereby the client will be able to confront himself healthily and positively, raise self-awareness and build on it to own personal responsibility and thus, personal performance.

Executive coaching has certain particularities which other approaches such as life coaching or financial coaching, or youth coaching will not necessarily adopt.

As its name implies, coaching sessions and programs are being held mainly for the needs of the corporate and/or executive in an organisation. It is coaching in a very specific way and approach, as it deals mainly with clients in a specific corporate work environment, whose objective is to enhance and build on leadership and communication skills, for the benefit and good running performance of the organisation as a whole.

How beneficial is executive coaching to clients? First of all, the clients will come out of the coaching sessions with more clarity and a sense of achievement, as they will be able to work out their action plans and how to make things happen in order to achieve their goals. The coaching sessions will not only give them a clearer view of where they need to go for both their personal and professional life but also help the clients gain in confidence and assertiveness in both their personal and professional life. The clients will be able to grasp more opportunities as they discover their potential, talents, strengths and limitations during the sessions. Executive coaching enable the clients to face their barriers, unlock blockages and move out of their comfort zone in order to be more productive and continuously live up to their full potential. The benefits of executive coaching are not limited to only the clients but also to the environment of the clients as they continue to flourish in their life.

In business and corporate applications, a study conducted by Manchester Inc. depicted the following benefits to clients. The study was based on the tangible and intangible business impacts when executives, leaders at different levels are being coached business is

impacted on a 360° level, relationships are nourished in a respectful, genuine, straightforward way, improved relationships with peers, clients, stakeholders, direct reports to name a few of the intangible business impacts. As for the tangible impacts, it has been assessed that productivity, team and organisational strengths, profitability, revenue, own retention all increased.

In addition to the tangible and intangible business impacts, we can say that the clients come out of the coaching sessions with a better focus on how to improve their lives, have a life/work balance, reduced level of conflict, improved teamwork.

The study by the Manchester Review, vol6, no1 By Joy By McGovern, Michael Lindermann, Monica Vergara and Co states three main benefits of executive coaching to clients: 'Behavioural Change, Organisational Outcomes and Return on Investment'. The study also states that executive coaching yields return on investment more than 6 times its costs.

Leaders very often feel lonely up at the top. They have their own feelings, ideas and fears; they may tend to keep all these emotions and repressed thoughts for themselves. Voicing out, working strategically may enlarge their territories, their lives, their relationship and self-empowerment in the process. In doing so it benefits all as these new founded skills and devices will be transmitted to their respective teams, resulting in more and more positive energy, powerful flow of communication and leadership skills and capacities.

Throughout my coaching experience the rewards abound due to professional and genuine relationship. My rewards are to see people grow, become more focused and happier, and are clearer in their life and professional choices and performance. The challenges are even more interesting as they give us coaches the necessary energy to develop further and highlight self-efficacy. It is wonderful to see successful people become even more successful and pass the success on to others for the benefit of all. Making a difference with a member in a company results in positively having an impact on their respective family which in turn indirectly have an effect on our country's welfare and well-being.

Coaches in general are not competitors but collaborators. Each one is unique, having his/her expertise and skills. Together as pool of coaches, we normally have one common vision: support people in their growth and performance.

My advice to potential coaches: align your own values, continuously learn and grow, do constructive research, acquire skills and necessary knowledge as clients are experts of their life and professional field and coaches are facilitators of the coaching process.