



Five Questions to Ask Your Coach

Successful coaching is a partnership. It is important that you feel an affinity and rapport with your prospective coach and have satisfied yourself that this is the right coach for you. If the coach does not offer it as a matter of course, we suggest you request a phone conversation or face to face meeting before commencing with paid for coaching. This will enable you to assess whether you can work together effectively. Here are some questions we recommend you ask your prospective coach:

1. **What is your background and experience?** Your coach's work and life experience informs their coaching and how well they will relate to you and your specific context. For example, if you are looking for coaching in leadership you may wish to be coached by someone with experience in that area. If you are looking for coaching in a particular skill you will probably want to work with someone who has demonstrated that skill themselves.
2. **What is your coaching experience?** It is useful to know what sort of coaching your prospective coach has done i.e. the kind of clients he/she has worked with and the sort of areas and outcomes worked on. Testimonials are often helpful in understanding what it is like to be coached by your prospective coach and what sort of results to expect.
3. **What kind of coaching do you provide?** For example, there are life coaches, executive coaches and business coaches. Each of these may also specialise in a particular area e.g. a life coach may specialise in relationship coaching, an executive coach in management performance coaching. Some coaches work with you to develop specific skills, some focus on your performance or the achievement of specific goals while others focus more on your personal learning and development.
4. **How do you work?** To be effective the coaching needs to suit your own learning style and personality, so you will want to understand how your coach will enable you to achieve results. For example, does he/she use a specific coaching method, model or technique and if so how does this work? How your coach works includes the duration of the coaching, the mechanism i.e. face to face or on the phone, the number, length and regularity of sessions, pricing and what if any support is available between sessions, for example some coaches offer email contact.
5. **Are you member of, or accredited by, a recognised professional body?** The International Coach Federation (ICF), the Association for Coaching (AC) and the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) are all organisations setting and monitoring professional standards for coaching in the UK. Coaches belonging to these organisations abide by their Codes of Ethics and can also qualify for a coaching credential or accreditation involving a demonstration of coaching experience and training and an examination of coaching skills. There are also many different postgraduate qualifications in coaching, including certificates, diplomas and masters degrees in coaching or related subjects.