

choice

the magazine of professional coaching

Taking Care of Business

Coaching in corporations

What does it
take to be a
**GREAT
CORPORATE
COACH?**

**SPIRITUALITY IN
THE C-SUITE**

**COACHING
to CULTURE**

**LEADERSHIP
COACHING**
It's not just one thing



TAKING CARE OF **BUSINESS**

What does it take to be a great corporate coach?

HOW DO ORGANIZATIONS decide that coaching is for them? Who is the decision maker inside the organization and how do they choose and implement a coaching program? How do coaches market and get into corporate coaching programs? What are the different types of coaching required in corporations? What qualifications and tools do you need to be a corporate coach? Join us as we explore coaching in corporations.

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By Terry H. Hildebrandt, PhD, MCC, MCEC

Coaching within corporations continues to grow in popularity and credibility. Aspiring corporate coaches need to carefully consider several factors to successfully create a business focused on corporate clients. This includes choosing a niche, gathering required qualifications, building your toolkit, marketing, and contracting. As a corporate coach for over 20 years, both internal and external, I provide below some best practices to demystify this specialty within the coaching world.

Many corporations are now creating cohorts of internal coaches that provide coaching to peers and other leaders on a part-time basis in addition to their primary job role.

WHAT IS CORPORATE COACHING?

I define corporate coaching as a partnership with employees, leaders or teams in organizations to support them in achieving their organizational and professional goals. Corporations hire coaches for many purposes, some of which are outlined in Table 1. One of the first steps of a corporate coach includes choosing one or more niches. Very few coaches cover all aspects of corporate coaching. Focusing on a few of the possible roles will enable you to develop skills, reputation, and marketing focus. Some important considerations when choosing a niche should include:

- Your personal passion;
- Your past corporate experience;
- Whether you want to work with individuals, teams, or groups;
- The qualifications and certifications required.

QUALIFICATIONS NEEDED TO GET HIRED

Each of the specific corporate coaching niches requires specific background, skills and knowledge to be successful. I highly recommend that all coaches get a firm foundation in the basics of coaching by attending an accredited coach training program. The International Coach Federation (ICF) maintains a list of coach training providers that have met stringent requirements in

the core competencies of coaching. However, coaching skills training is only the first step in being qualified to be a corporate coach. Each of the specific niches outlined in Table 1 will require additional training.

CORPORATE COACHING TOOLS

I strongly recommend that every corporate coach get certified in the specific tools required for their chosen niche. For example, leadership and executive coaches at minimum need to be certified in a reliable and valid personality assessment tool. Popular examples include MBTI, Hogan, Birkman, Enneagram, NEO-PI and DISC. These tools enable the coach to quickly understand the communication and leadership styles, needs, values, strengths, stress patterns and interests of their coachees.

A second must-have tool for leadership and executive coaches is a 360° feedback assessment. Popular examples include the Korn Ferry Voices 360, The Leadership Circle Profile 360 and Benchmarks 360. Feedback assessments are a staple for leadership development coaching. Executive coaches should also be trained in qualitative interviewing to gather stakeholder feedback.

I highly recommend that coaches create written contracts that outline specific roles and responsibilities for each of the core stakeholders.

Group and team coaches also need to have specific training in team dynamics and group facilitation. Specific certification now exists for team coaches to enable them to handle unique challenges with teams including contracting, assessment, conflict management, feedback, team effectiveness, etc. Specific assessments are also available for teams, including culture surveys, team effectiveness profiles, team values profiles, and conflict climate to name a few. These assessments enable the team coach to explore the characteristics of the team as a unit of measure. Commercial assessments include the Conflict Climate Inventory, Five Dysfunctions of a Team Profile, Kenexa Culture Insight, and Korn Ferry Team Architect, to name a few examples.

TABLE 1: Niches Within Corporate Coaching

TYPES OF CORPORATE COACHING	TYPICAL FOCUS	TYPICAL CLIENTS	TYPICAL QUALIFICATIONS OF COACH
Career Coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity on career vision and goals • Resume writing • Job Search • Interviewing Skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outplacement due to layoffs • People in transition • Clients seeking promotions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific career coaching training or • HR/Management experience in recruiting
Leadership Coaching <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Potentials • First-Time Managers • Middle Managers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership assessment • Leadership development • Management skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newer leaders or managers • Newly promoted managers • Staff identified is high potential in secession planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certifications in 360s • Experience in leading • MBA or MA in Organizational Development or Leadership related domain.
Executive Coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy Development • Political Savvy • Advanced Leadership Skills • Executive Presence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directors • Vice Presidents • CEO, COO, CFO, CMO, etc. • Board Chairs • Executive Directors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MA, MBA, or PhD • Prior executive experience. • Knowledge of psychological principles • Advanced coach training • Certification in personality and 360 assessments
Team Coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team development and effectiveness • Group dynamics • Team culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intact teams • Executive teams • Business teams • Development teams • Functional teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitation skills • Team dynamics • Team process development expertise • Certification in team assessments
Group Coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared focus area of participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any collection of individuals with a shared topic for coaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team dynamics • Group coaching skills
Remedial Coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing specific derailers • Closing a gap in leadership skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders or employees that are at risk of career derailment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment skills • Advanced contracting skills
Specialty Coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly focused: e.g. Presentation Skills, Innovation, Board Development, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clients looking for a very specific development experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domain specific experience and training

HOW TO GET STARTED

Breaking into the corporate coaching world can be daunting. My own journey as a corporate coach began with getting experience as a leader and manager within corporate America. I then began coaching internally and eventually landed a position as master-level internal consultant with significant leadership, executive and team coaching responsibilities.

Many corporations are now creating cohorts of internal coaches that provide coaching to peers and other leaders on a part-time basis in addition to their primary job role. If you are already a corporate employee, I highly recommend this route to getting practical experience coaching in the corporate environment.

If you are an external coach and are looking to break

into corporate coaching, one effective on-ramp is to sign up with one of the many third-party coaching firms who make it their business to market to corporations. Drawing upon the experience and scale of one of these third-party firms enables independent coaches to reduce the initial marketing investment of playing in the corporate coaching space. Third-party coaching firms typically have a large cohort of independent contractors, which enable the third-party firms to flexibly expand their capacity to staff coaching contracts.

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER CONTRACTING & ETHICS

A significant element of corporate coaching that coaches need to pay attention to revolves around the complex

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relationships among the stakeholders and the ethical considerations of working with multiple stakeholders.

It is common to have up to four or more key stakeholders in a corporate coaching engagement. These include the coachee, the sponsor/manager, the human resources contact, and someone on the procurement side. Each of these may require specific deliverables and ongoing communication, which creates unique challenges around confidentiality and accountability.

Leadership and executive coaches at minimum need to be certified in a reliable and valid personality assessment tool.

I highly recommend that coaches create written contracts that outline specific roles and responsibilities for each of these core stakeholders, including: frequency of communication, payment terms, cancellation penalties/terms for the overall contract and individual sessions, and confidentiality and its limits.

Hiring a coaching supervisor is a best practice for corporate coaches to get peer support in navigating the complex contracting and confidentiality issues inherent in corporate contracting. The International Coach Federation (ICF) reports that the majority of ethical problems they get involved with revolve around issues of contracting. Certified coaching supervisors are specifically trained in handling these complex situations.

Corporate coaching continues to be an important, growing space within the coaching community. Coaches wishing to build a business within corporations need to carefully choose a niche, get required training and experience, and develop their marketing strategy. Working within corporations or signing up as a contractor with a third-party coaching firm are two effective ways to break into this space.

Corporate coaches also need to pay specific attention to the issues inherent in multi-stakeholder contracting. Hiring a coaching supervisor is a best practice for coaches to get support in successfully maneuvering within the corporate coaching environment. •

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