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## Executive Coaching

### What Is Executive Coaching?

Even the most **accomplished professionals** may encounter **obstacles in mid-career**.

**Getting Life Back in Balance.** It takes talent, focus and drive to achieve professional success. But getting there can take a tremendous personal toll. Often, the price is paid in chronic stress, reduced time to spend with friends and loved ones, and a diminished capacity to enjoy the very things that make life worth living. While the *need* to make profound life changes may be obvious, the *means* to effect the necessary change may not.

**Dealing With Perceived Limitations.** Most people who achieve success do so *despite their limitations*. In fact, the more often we succeed, the more profoundly aware of our own limitations we may become.

**Making Difficult Transitions.** No degree of professional achievement can insulate us *from unexpected change*. When we least anticipate it, business conditions change, a loved one becomes ill, or a long-sought-after promotion finds us surprisingly unprepared.

**Searching for Greater Heights.** After achieving many of their life goals many professionals ask, "Is this all there is?" Clearly, there is a need for personal renewal and a new direction, but how can these be found?

Although highly capable people can usually "cope" with these types of challenges, what they need is to truly master them, in order to move on to greater levels of personal achievement. For that, what is often needed is **the right coach**.

According to Jeffrey Auerbach, President of the College of Executive Coaching, an executive coach plays four roles:

"First, a coach is a **professional development expert** in a specific discipline, such as leadership development, performance management or emotional intelligence, who provides guidance and insight. Second, a coach is a **partner** who challenges your thinking as a leader. Third, a coach is a **confidant and trusted advisor**, and fourth, a coach is an **objective outside resource**."

### What Coaching Is Not

**Coaching is not therapy** (although there can be therapeutic moments in a positive coaching relationship). Therapy focuses on a patient with serious problems, their cause and their cure. Coaching clients are essentially healthy people

who believe that changes in themselves and/or their organizational cultures could significantly improve their effectiveness.

**Coaching is not mentoring or consulting or advising** because the coach's role more a partner than a subject matter expert. However, there will be times when advice, mentoring and/or consulting may be requested and appropriate.

## Is Coaching Effective?

In a 2004 survey by Right Management Consultants (Philadelphia), "86 percent of companies said they used coaching to **sharpen the skills** of individuals who have been identified as **future organizational leaders**." -- Paul Michelman, "What an Executive Coach Can Do For You," *Harvard Business Review*

Based on a study of 150 executive coaching participants, Thompson (1986) found that "the participants' bosses **reported significant behavior changes due to coaching** and that those **changes lasted for at least one to two years** following the coaching engagement." -- Peterson and Kraiger, "A Practical Guide to Evaluating Coaching," *The Human Resources Program Evaluation Handbook* by Jeffrey Auerbach, PhD

Studying 370 coaching participants, Peterson (1993) found that coaching produced "roughly the equivalent of **moving from the 50th percentile to the 93rd percentile of performance**." -- Peterson and Kraiger, "A Practical Guide to Evaluating Coaching," *The Human Resources Program Evaluation Handbook* by Jeffrey Auerbach, PhD

## Mary Heidkamp Describes Her Role as an Executive Coach

"My job as an executive coach is to engage you in an **ongoing process of inquiry, discovery and commitment**. I will **listen** as you describe your goals and your perceived obstacles toward achieving them. I will **ask questions** that help you to analyze your situation in a fresh light and arrive at new understanding. I will help you **harness your own creativity** in devising workable strategies to achieve your goals. And I will **hold you accountable to yourself** for following through. I will be constantly in your corner, and I will **celebrate your success** as you grow from strength to strength."

## How Is the Executive Coaching Relationship Structured?

**Initial Coaching Period.** Once a fit is established, new clients may start with a 3-month commitment. Usually that is sufficient time to establish a good rapport with your coach, to get acquainted with the coaching process, and to begin to reap the benefits.

**Coaching Sessions.** Most executive coaching is done by phone, so **distance need not be a factor**. The typical coaching process, whether by phone or in person, is 3 to 4 hours per month. Most clients find that 1-1/2 hours twice a month works well, but the sessions can be tailored to the individual's needs.

**Financial Arrangements. Coaching fees are paid in advance.** The preferred arrangement is usually for the executive's employer to provide coaching as a pre-tax benefit. For top-level executives, this may involve requesting of the board that executive coaching be included as part of a compensation package. However, in cases where this is not possible, executives may elect to treat this as an out-of-pocket expense.

## Virtual Coaching, Delivered Globally

I offer virtual coaching on an hourly basis to leaders, executives, and managers globally via telephone, web, and webcam. This service started so that I could provide executives convenient access to high level executive coaching on an as-needed basis. In person coaching is of great value, but there are times when it's necessary to zoom in on an

issue or situation with a coach, knowing that she is only a call or click away. To request your first hour of virtual coaching, call or [email](mailto:Mary@Heidkamp.com) with any questions you may have.

## How Do You Get Started?

It is of the utmost importance that you feel comfortable with your executive coach. While establishing an excellent rapport might require several weeks, you can often learn quite a bit from a **free 30-minute consultation**. Such a "get-acquainted session" allows you to get a feeling for the coach's style and decide whether you would be a good fit. There is absolutely *no obligation* in signing up for a free consultation.

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