



Top Ten Questions to Ask Before Selecting a Coach or Consultant

1. Have you clearly defined the goals of your project, or the issues, questions, and concerns you want addressed by the professional?

Articulate your goals and objectives for the project. If you require/desire certain methods, specific procedures, or special arrangements for the project, outline those in detail. Present your plan to a colleague unfamiliar with the project for constructive feedback.

2. Which type of professional do you need for this endeavor? Do the project outcomes necessitate a combination of solutions (i.e., training and coaching)?

A coach will partner with an individual or team to set goals, provide tools, support and structure, and challenge the client(s) to accomplish results. Coaches hold clients accountable for reaching their goals.

A consultant brings specific content knowledge and expertise to produce specified outcomes. Consultants plan for, develop and deliver the results. The client holds the consultant responsible for results.

3. What qualifications and work experience should the professional possess? What does the project require and are you willing to be flexible in any areas?

Is having specific academic training or particular credentials a prerequisite for considering candidates?

What types of experience is critical to understanding the complexity of the project?

4. Does the coach or consultant offer a complimentary session to learn firsthand about his/her personal style and how s/he likes to work?

Coaches generally offer a free session to the client to learn about the client: what brings the client to coaching, what the client(s) would like to achieve, and whether there is a match between the coach and client.

Consultants usually set an appointment to meet with the potential client to discuss the goals of the project and background information about the company, department or work group.

5. Do you have an interview format for use during the complimentary session?

Decide how you will describe the project; how much detail is required for the professional to have a sense of the results you desire? Ask how s/he would approach the work and relationship.

Ask questions to discover the consultant's breadth and depth of experience in your area of interest. (Ask, "Tell me about a time when you worked on a project of this nature - how many people were involved, how did you manage communication, etc ." or, "Describe a situation in which you developed a response to a hostile work environment through a training and coaching initiative.")



6. Will it be possible/practical for you to see illustrations/learn about their previous work? What has been the scope and length of previous projects?

Ask A consultant may have a portfolio of projects representing the variety, complexity, and styles of her work.

A coach may have a website or brochure that illustrates his work with various types of clients (from different fields, using different formats, and methods).

7. How will you ensure that the professional shares your vision and plan for achieving the goals?

Ask the consultant to create a project plan, based on your discussions, which includes: goals, objectives, timeline, methods, results/products, etc.

Communicate with the coach to create a deep understanding of who you are, your goals, your style of interaction - how you want to be supported and challenged to achieve results.

8. What is the anticipated length of the project/commitment? Will this professional have the necessary time to work with you, and what type of access will you have to him/her when new information, questions or concerns arise?

Consultants often have several concurrent commitments. How will s/he ensure project completion?

Coaches usually require a three month commitment, and a coaching relationship may last from six months to two years.

9. What's the plan for formalizing the business relationship?

Will you/does your company use a contract, letter of agreement, or verbal agreement? What are the cost categories and parameters?

How will changes be made to the relationship or outcomes, if necessary?

10. How will progress toward goal achievement be communicated?

Will you set aside time each call or each month to reflect and share your thoughts and feelings about your ³wins² and shifts resulting from the coaching relationship?

Will you want discussions regarding progress weekly, email updates, or formal reports from the consultant.