

Beware the Counterfeit Coach

The Consumer's Guide To Hiring A Professional Coach

Laura Hess and Philip Cohen,
Master Coaches



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"It's not the strongest of the species that survives, not the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is most adaptable to change."
-- Charles Darwin



Welcome to Coaching!

Imagine this:

You're at a business networking event, backyard BBQ, or standing in line at the grocery store, and you get into a conversation with another person.

Invariably the conversation comes around to, "So, what do you do?"

How many times have you heard, "I'm a coach!"?

You're thinking, "Yeah, right. I've heard that one before!"

And you'd be right: There are a lot of people calling themselves coaches.

But what does it mean, this coaching thing? When somebody says they're a coach, what do they do? How do you know if they're *real*? And what can they do for you?

We created this Consumer's Guide to answer your questions and help you become an informed consumer. We've defined and explained Coaching and provided information and a tool to determine what services you need.

This *Guide* will dispel some of the myths and misconceptions about Professional Coaching. You want to be confident that the Coach you hire is not counterfeit but is a trained, Professional Coach who knows how to move you to action and success, whatever that means for you.

When you've finished reading this *Guide*, if you have any more questions, you can contact us directly at guide@ptemmc.com.

What's Covered in this Guide

When selecting a Coach, there are three primary factors to consider:

1. Why do you want to hire a Coach?
2. Who is a Coach?
3. How do you find the right Coach for you?

In this *Guide*, we'll help you answer these questions. We'll also share other things to think about so you can make the best choice for you.



What Exactly IS Coaching?

Professional Coaching is a partnership between a qualified Coach and an individual or team (client). The partnership supports the client's achievement of extraordinary results based on their goals. The coaching process focuses the client on the skills and actions (internal and external) needed to produce their relevant results successfully. The client chooses the focus; the Coach listens, contributes observations, challenges assumptions, and questions concepts and principles to help generate possibilities and identify actions and solutions. As a result, coaching accelerates the client's progress by providing greater focus and awareness of options, leading to more effective choices.

Coaching starts where the client is now and with what she is willing to do to get where she wants to be in the future. Professional Coaches recognize results are a combined effort of the client's intentions, choices, and actions, supported by the Coach's efforts and application of coaching skills, approaches, and methods.

An additional benefit of coaching is that the client often discovers unrealized, unused, forgotten, or new skills and strengths due to the coaching process.

What is a Professional Coach?

The simple answer is a Professional Coach is a skilled, trained, and credentialed professional who works to help clients reach a specific goal, or set of goals, in their personal or professional development. Coaching is a creative and thought-provoking process enabling clients to maximize their potential in areas most important to them. That's a long-winded way of saying a Professional Coach listens to clients and works with them to achieve the results they want using customized solutions created by the partnership between the Coach and client.

Think of coaching this way (and I thank one of my early clients for the analogy): Imagine Jiminy Cricket sitting on your shoulder. Remember what Jiminy did for Pinocchio? His job was to keep Pinocchio on the straight and narrow - as his conscience.



Now put a pair of army boots on Jiminy.

A Coach's job is like Jiminy's. Though we don't act as your conscience, we guide you in your choices and actions. We help you keep focused on the end goal. And, yes, when you need a little 'encouragement' to get moving, those army boots can come in real handy.



What Coaching is Not

Coaching is Not Therapy

Therapy deals with healing pain, dysfunction, and conflict within an individual or in a relationship between two or more individuals. The focus is often on resolving difficulties arising from the past which get in the way of a person's emotional functioning in the present. Therapy helps improve overall psychological functioning and helps deal with present life and work circumstances in emotionally healthy ways. Therapy outcomes often include improved emotional/feeling states.

Coaching, on the other hand, is forward-moving and future-focused. It supports personal and professional development based on client-centered goals and outcomes. While positive feelings and emotions may be (and often are) a natural outcome of coaching, the primary focus is on creating actionable strategies for achieving specific goals in the client's work or personal life. The emphasis in a coaching relationship is on action, accountability, and follow-through.

While some therapists offer coaching in addition to therapy, it isn't appropriate to work with one person using both disciplines simultaneously. While some people may choose to work with both a Coach and a therapist, it's important to differentiate between the two professions.

Coaching is not Consulting

Consultants are retained for their specialized expertise. While consulting approaches vary widely, there is often an assumption that the consultant will diagnose problems then prescribe, and sometimes implement, solutions. Solutions are based on the consultant's background and expertise. Consultants often have pre-packaged answers.

The Coach comes to the relationship believing their clients can generate their own "fits me perfectly" solutions, with the Coach supplying supportive, discovery-based approaches and frameworks. Coaches offer questions to find customized, individual solutions. While consultants often focus on fixing the problem, Coaches work on also understanding the people involved.

Coaching is not Mentoring

Mentoring is guiding or sharing from experience in a specific industry or career development area. Although some Coaches provide mentoring as part of their coaching, such as in mentor coaching for new Coaches, Coaches are not typically mentors to those they coach. A Coach doesn't need to have specific industry expertise. In fact, sometimes, not having industry-specific knowledge allows for greater exploration of limiting beliefs and assumptions.

"Surround yourself with the dreamers and the doers, the believers, and thinkers, but most of all, surround yourself with those who see the greatness within you, even when you don't see it yourself."

-- Edmund Lee



Coaching is not Training

Training programs, by definition, are based on participants learning specific objectives as defined by the trainer or instructor. It also assumes a learning path or course of study which coincides with an established curriculum. Though objectives are clarified in the coaching process, they're set by the client with guidance provided by the Coach.

Coaching is fluid and has no set curriculum or plan. Coaching can be a great way to follow up, solidify, and help implement skills and lessons from the training program.

Coaching is not like Sports Coaching

Coaching is often described using sports metaphors, but Professional Coaching is very different from the traditional Sports Coach. The Sports Coach is an expert whose job is to guide and direct the behavior of athletes and teams based on his experience and knowledge. Focus is often on improving behaviors that are being executed poorly or incorrectly. Sports Coaches are VERY attached to outcomes - winning is the name of the game. AND Sports Coaches often expect to be very visible to the public.

Professional Coaches have some of the same qualities as sports coaches, but it's the experience and knowledge of the client that determines the direction. Additionally, the focus is on identifying opportunities for development based on individual strengths and capabilities. Professional Coaches have no attachment to outcomes but are, instead, VERY focused on what's best for the client ... clients define their own game and the rules they will follow. Any public attention is on the client, not the Coach.



Why Hire a Coach?

We all have blind spots. We all have our own beliefs; things we believe are true that may not be true at all. Working with a trained Coach, someone with expertise in listening for subtleties, nuances, and the message behind the words being said, has tremendous value. Here's why:

A Coach can make it easier for you to create a sense of what you want. Are the choices you're making yours, or are they based on what somebody else wants for you? Creating your vision and managing expectations can bring more passion to your life and give you a more compelling foundation for your choices.

We all have questions we're either afraid to ask ourselves or are reluctant to answer. Working with a trained Coach in a safe environment, someone who's an effective communicator, can often help you answer important questions that are too uncomfortable or difficult for you to answer on your own.

A trained Coach gives you a sounding board and reality check to explore possibilities, get beyond what you know, and explore and challenge your assumptions. By asking a simple question, a Coach can get you to look at where your beliefs are getting in your way so you get past it.

Working with a trained Coach, you have someone in your corner who doesn't have an agenda and is focused exclusively on what's right for you, the client. No hidden agendas. No expectation of benefit to themselves. Each client is unique. There is no "one-size-fits-all."

A Coach will challenge you to be your best - to take some risk where you might not on your own. Your Coach will get you to stop talking and start doing to get the results you want.

Here are some examples of the results clients have gotten working with a Professional Coach:

- Overcame fear of networking to grow a business
- Learned skills for establishing stronger boundaries with family for more harmonious family gatherings
- Effectively transitioned from military service into civilian life
- Created a balance between work, family, and personal time that made sense
- Design a strategic plan for the sale of a business resulting in grossing 2.5 times the original sale amount
- Improved management skills for a happier, and more productive department



- Created and managed staff training programs to reduce turnover and improve employee satisfaction
- Got professional counseling to resolve marital discord
- Gained control over a To-Do list to get more done and set priorities for daily and future tasks

Case Study:

Steven came from a long line of men who'd all died at very early ages. He believed his life would follow the same pattern so he lived his life in a rush, trying to accomplish a lot, thinking he could die any day. With coaching, challenging of assumptions, delving into values and other areas of his life and his beliefs, he began to realize he was living a self-fulfilling prophecy. His fast lifestyle meant he wasn't focusing on things important to him. He was doing many things in a haphazard way without thinking them through or knowing what he really wanted to accomplish.

With coaching, Steven was able to slow down. He stopped making choices and taking actions based on his fear of dying. Instead, he started making choices based on his values. His quality of life was raised dramatically, his relationships were deeper, and his business life was more productive and fulfilling. It didn't happen overnight for him, but it did happen.

When is the Best Time to Hire a Coach

There are several factors to consider about the timing for hiring a Coach.

You must be willing to dedicate the necessary uninterrupted time for your coaching sessions. Keep focused. It's also important to follow through with any action steps agreed upon with your coach.

"Each of us has a fire in our hearts for something. It's our goal in life to find it and to keep it lit."

-- Mary Lou Retton



The questions or thoughts you have can indicate that the time is right to work with a Coach. For example, “I’m not sure my life (or my business or my relationship) is going where I want it to go,” or “I have questions, and I’m not sure who to ask to help me get clarification to find the answers,” are both perfect opportunities for you to benefit from working with a Coach.

You may be getting in your own way with attitudes and beliefs holding you back or procrastinating about taking action. When you’re tired of the status quo and know there’s something more for you in your life, you’re ready for coaching.

Financially you must be in a position to afford a Coach. Paying for your Coach cannot create a hardship for you or cause you not to pay other obligations.

Your mindset is also a critical factor. Are you willing to admit you don’t have all the answers? You have to be ready to reach out and have a partner who’s on your side and with whom you’re willing to be open and vulnerable. Your openness and the ability to hear new ideas pave the way to your success with coaching. Trying new things and changing old patterns are part of the coaching process.

Summary

Coaching can be beneficial to almost anybody. The key is you must be ready to make some changes, and those are not always going to be comfortable or fun.

But that’s why you hire a Coach – to get you doing the things you don’t want to do so you can get to where you want to be.

People hire a coach to work on finances, relationships, career changes, life transitions. The bottom line is you can hire a coach:

- For almost any situation you’re stuck on or just don’t want to face alone.
- To accelerate progress toward a specific goal.
- To generally upgrade your life or business.

Possibilities are endless.

While everyone might benefit from coaching, if the timing isn’t right, don’t hire a Coach until it is.



Who is a Coach?

The coaching profession is one of the few that isn't regulated. It also has a low barrier to entry.

Anyone can call themselves a coach without any basis for the claim – there is no background or educational requirement.

Many people claim they can help you be more successful, make better decisions, make more money, and have a better life. Many call themselves coaches but are really salespeople, technicians, or trainers in disguise.

For example, a local bank advertises its financial coaches. When you talk with them, it quickly becomes apparent that they're doing some kind of financial consulting and trying to sell you investments or insurance.

Many schools or coaching programs claim they'll teach you how to become a coach in as little as three days. They often call you a Certified Coach once you've completed their program. Let us be very clear: **IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO BECOME A SKILLED AND QUALIFIED COACH IN 3 DAYS** (or in 3 months, for that matter). It takes training and practice for that to happen.

Here are two important considerations when hiring a Coach:

1. Ask where the coach was trained and check the International Coach Federation (ICF) website to see if the school is accredited. Many of the Coach Training Schools that have been through the ICF's rigorous accreditation process offer Graduate Certifications of some kind. While not the same as ICF Certification, accredited schools adhere to ICF standards, so their Certified Coaches are trained and have demonstrated their coaching skills.

Many Universities now offer Coach Training Programs. Many of these institutions are not accredited by the ICF. If a Coach is trained through a University program, do some research to determine the source of their accreditation. Usually, these programs train high-quality Professional Coaches, and not having an association with the ICF is not a deterrent to hiring that Coach.

"No one lives long enough to learn everything they need to learn starting from scratch. To be successful, we absolutely, positively have to find people who have already paid the price to learn the things that we need to learn to achieve our goals."

-- Brian Tracy



2. Look for a Coach who holds a Certification from ICF. This is a certification independent of any training program and is the benchmark of the coaching profession. ICF Certified Coaches have demonstrated their skills to coach through having completed specific coach training, documenting coaching experience hours, and demonstrating their coaching skills through written and oral examinations. In addition, all ICF Certified Coaches agree to adhere to the Code of Ethics as outlined by the ICF.

There are other independent organizations also offering coaching certifications. Again, check on what the certification means before assuming anything about the coach's skill.

It's possible to hire a Professional Coach who has no certification and is skilled and qualified. We know many Coaches who fall into this category and have no problem endorsing them. What these Coaches do have, though, is training.



How to Hire a Coach

The coaching relationship is a very personal one. In many cases, clients will tell their Coach things they'd never share with anyone else. One reason is that the Coach creates a safe environment for open communication and sharing. The Coach comes to sessions with no agenda and no judgment. Sessions are all about you, the client.

Because of this, there are things you want to pay attention to when interviewing Coaches.

First, make sure you feel comfortable with the Coach: Do you click? Not every Coach can work with every client. Personalities play a part in your selection, but that's not enough. You'll usually know this almost immediately when speaking with the Coach; it will just feel right.

Next, ask some questions. Besides training and certifications, here are some other questions to ask:

- 1. How long have you been coaching?** The longer a Coach has been in the field, the more clients they've coached and the more experience they have. That's not to say a newer Coach won't be effective for you, just less experienced.
- 2. What is your format?** Do they coach in person or by phone? How many times per month will you work together? How long are the coaching sessions? Do they require a minimum commitment for a specific number of months? What is their fee?
- 3. How would you define your style of coaching?** How will they adapt their style to yours? Coaching is very personal, and every Coach has a unique style. Some Coaches may be too 'soft' for you, others too 'rigid.' If you find their style doesn't fit you, you can find another Coach more suited to you and your personality. A Professional Coach will be able and willing to provide you with the names of other coaches who may be more suited to you if you need a referral.
- 4. What is your background?** If you want a Coach to work with you on your business, you want one who models that. If you want to live with more balance, you want a Coach who lives that way. Do they have experience working with clients like you? What kinds of successes have their clients had? You wouldn't go to a divorce lawyer to file a bankruptcy. So why would you hire a Coach who specializes in working with stay-at-home moms and life balance to work with you on your business?

*"All that is necessary to break the spell of inertia is this:
Act as if it were impossible to fail."
-- Dorothea Brande*



5. What do you do for continuing education? How do they upgrade their skills and stay fresh with their coaching?

6. Do you have a Coach of your own? There is no Coach we respect who does not have a Coach of their own. It only makes sense - Coaches are telling clients everyone can benefit from coaching. When asked if they have a Coach, if their response is, “No,” they’re saying, “You need one. I don’t”. There’s an integrity issue here and one that would make me question the value of coaching with this coach.

7. How do you see starting our work together? Will they start with an assessment of some kind, or do they have a specific process they follow? Is there something they require from you (pre-work) before you begin coaching?

Know What You Want and Why You’re Hiring a Coach

You may not even know what you want, but you know something is missing for you. You’re looking for help figuring out what you want to do with your life or career. Perfect. A Coach can help you with that.

You need help with your finances, relationships, or exercise schedule. A Coach can help.

Your business is floundering and you want to get it back on track, including working with your employees in a better way. Got it, a Coach can help you there.

Whatever is up for you, there’s a Coach who can help, BUT not all coaches are created equal. Every Coach has a specialty: Training and experience differentiate them. Not all professional Coaches are equally suited to coach you. Use our guidelines to find the best coach for you and ensure they’re able to get you the results you want.

Don’t get stuck on labels – a professional Coach can work with you on personal and life issues, as well as business issues, whether they call themselves a life or business Coach. Coaching is coaching is coaching. A trained professional can work with clients on their personal lives or their business. Coaches may choose to focus on one area or another, but they have the skills to coach both. The reality is even when Coaches work with clients on their business, they’re still coaching the person, and people have personal stuff come up even in a business setting.

Use our [Needs Analysis Checklist](#) (page 16) as you interview Coaches. It will help you evaluate each one based on criteria that’s important to hiring a Coach who can deliver the service you want.



Final Thoughts

There's no shortage of people calling themselves coaches. There may even be some counterfeit coaches who can move you to action and results. Maybe not as fast and effectively as a Professional Coach, but results nonetheless.

The problem is that you won't know until you've invested some time and money with them.

It's better to begin with hiring a Coach who's been trained and has the skill to get you moving toward the results you want.

We think most people can benefit from having a Coach. We've had our own Coaches since we began our coaching businesses in 1994.

We are passionate about the coaching profession. We want you to have the best experience possible. Counterfeit coaches who mislead the public by offering services they're not qualified to provide are doing a disservice to you. They give the coaching profession a black eye.

Coaching is powerful. We know what's possible. We want you to have the best and most productive experience with the Coach you hire.

Be an informed consumer. Hire the best. That means Beware the Counterfeit Coach!

Hire a Pro!

"There are costs and risks to a program of action, but they are far less than the long-range risks and costs of comfortable inaction."

-- John F. Kennedy



Needs Analysis Checklist

Use this Checklist when you're looking for a Coach. Assess each professional against your needs and preferences to select the best individual for you.

Some of the items on this Checklist may be more important to you; others are not as important. Cross off those that aren't important and add any additional criteria important for your decision-making.

	Coach 1	Coach 2	Coach 3
How do you feel when speaking to the coach			
Their training			
Certifications and Credentials held			
How long have they been coaching			
Do they have a Coach of their own			
What is their background/niche/specialty			
How often will you meet			
How long are sessions			
What is their fee			
Is there a minimum commitment			
Do they have a fixed-length contract, or is it open-ended			
How do they define their coaching style			
What do they think is the most critical skill they bring			
Can you get additional time with them			
Is there homework between sessions			
Are they willing to challenge you			
How will they hold you accountable			



[illegible]

Q & A

1. *Can't all coaches help me achieve my goals?*

All coaches are professionals who can help you achieve your goals. Wrong! All coaches are NOT equal. Training and experience differentiate the Professional Coach from the counterfeits. Even with Professional Coaches, not all are equally suited to coach you. Use our [Needs Analysis](#) (page 16) to find the best coach for you.

2. *Can I benefit from a Coach even if I don't have a specific goal in mind?*

You hire a Coach because you want something more in your life or your business: money, profits, quality of life, time, better communication, the list is endless. You hire a Coach to smooth the road to change. If you don't have a specific goal but know you want more from life, a Coach can help you identify the gap.

3. *Why can't I just get coached by a friend and save a lot of money?*

Friends are blessings in our lives, but is your friend a trained professional you can trust to coach you without bias on the most important aspects of your life or business? Will they hold you accountable to your goals, desires, and aspirations? Do you really want to burden your friendship with that responsibility? Better to keep your friends separate from your Coach. Friends and family, even when well-intentioned, usually have some kind of agenda of their own for you. Most people discover the money they spend on coaching is a bargain for the return they get back.

4. *Is there a difference between a Life Coach and a Business Coach?*

Many people believe Life Coaches are for personal goals and Business Coaches are for business goals. Here's the bottom line: Coaching is coaching is coaching. A trained professional can work with clients in either their personal lives or their business. Some Coaches may choose to focus on one area or another, but they have the skills to coach both. And when it comes down to it, even when Coaches work with clients on their business, they are still coaching the person, and people have personal stuff come up even in a business setting.

5. *How long does coaching take?*

It all depends on what you're working on, your level of commitment to the work, and the skill of your Coach. If you have a very focused topic or goal, it may take just a few sessions with your Coach. On the other hand, many people come to coaching with lots of goals or a couple of very large ones. Those usually take longer. We've seen change happen in a matter of minutes. We've seen clients achieve remarkable results with as little as 1 hour of coaching a month. The mark of a good coaching relationship is that there is continuous progress.



6. *What is the Format for Coaching?*

There's a wide variety of ways coaching can be delivered - some Coaches prefer face-to-face meetings while most Coaches elect virtual sessions for working with clients. While each Coach defines the structure their coaching takes, most Coaches and clients prefer 2-3 sessions per month for 30-45 minutes each. It's a small investment of time for the results that are possible.

7. *Will a Coach tell me what to do?*

A Professional Coach is not a consultant or sports coach. They don't tell you what to do. They work with you to find options so you can make the best choices for yourself. Coaches believe people are more motivated to complete tasks they choose for themselves than tasks assigned by someone else. Only a counterfeit coach will tell you what to do.

8. *Can I count on promises and guarantees made by a Coach?*

No Coach can guarantee results. Clients must be motivated and willing to work with the Coach and results will be dependent on the client's efforts. It's the Coach's job to keep the client moving in the direction of their goals. It's the client's job to take the action to achieve their goals.

9. *Can I choose a Coach from their website?*

A Professional Coach won't take on a client without first having some personal interaction with them. The Coach may send you to their website to learn more about them and their work, however coaching is a very personal relationship and needs a personal touch before either the Coach or client decides they want to work together.

10. *What can I expect to pay for a Coach?*

The investment for coaching can be anywhere from nothing to \$50,000 per year or more. The fee for coaching is dependent on many things, including how long your Coach has been in business, the type of coaching they offer, whether you're going to get individual or group coaching, and how much access you have to your Coach. Newer Coaches tend to charge on the lower end of the scale, and those with more experience on the higher end.



Meet the Authors



[Laura Hess](#), Coach and former CPA, focuses on working with women in business to eliminate overwhelm and stress while growing themselves and their businesses. Her clients appreciate her “Coach with the velvet whip” coaching style.



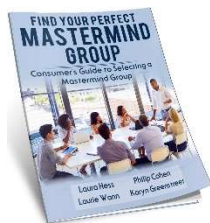
[Philip Cohen](#), Coach and former CPA, works with business owners and executives to grow their businesses while expanding their skills. People who work with him say he has a unique way of challenging them to see beyond the obvious.

Philip and Laura share a professional path, having been CPAs before becoming coaches, which gives them a unique perspective for personal and business coaching. Among the early adopters of the coaching profession, they have been coaching since 1994. Each works one-on-one with their own clients, and they combine their skills to present dynamic virtual and live learning events.



Their program, [Partners with Partners](#), is a powerful way for couples who work together to keep their relationship solid and their business thriving. With all the challenges of running a business, relationships can suffer. And business can suffer when there are problems at home. [Partners with Partners](#) is the roadmap to navigate life and business as a couple.

Laura offers a program specifically for women, [Push Where It's Easy](#). It's presented in group coaching format and brings coaching within reach of every woman ready to get what she wants.



In addition to the [Consumer's Guide to Hiring a Coach](#), they have co-authored a [Consumer's Guide to Finding Your Perfect Mastermind Group](#). Download your free copy today.

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