

## Business Coaching...why wouldn't you?



Sceptical about coaching? It can be confusing – people talk about business coaching, life coaching, career coaching, executive coaching, etc.! If a colleague tells you they are meeting with their coach...what are they talking about? Are they getting advice from that coach that will give them the upper hand? **Do you have to share your deepest**

**fears and secret career ambitions with a complete stranger?**

Let me clarify: Business coaching is not the same as life coaching or wellness coaching and it is not a therapy session. In short, it is development. Your development.

I am often asked what the right stage of a career is to explore business coaching. I believe coaching is meaningful to people for different reasons at different stages of their careers. In some instances individuals may get stuck and seek out a business coach for themselves and in other instances organisations may recommend business coaches as part of a career plan or for certain development paths.

**There is a clear set of rules that trained business coaches have to follow.**

As a business coach I had to learn to stop talking and listen. Attentively. STOP. What? Stop talking and (just) listen? As a Learning & Development (L&D) professional who talks for a living, I was challenged out of my comfort zone! Originally being trained as an auditor, I was taught to look at most things through sceptical lenses, so I was not convinced by the initial instruction to “trust the process”. Fortunately, I found myself in the very patient and capable hands of Eileen Thayser – a master coach registered with the ICF (International Coaching Federation). **The ICF defines coaching as *partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential.***

Another great learning for me was the preparation effort BEFORE meeting with a client – setting aside my own advice, judgements or questions in order to genuinely listen for relevant verbal and non-verbal indicators of what my client is communicating. What and how can I help unlock this?

In his book, *Coaching on the Axis*, Marc Kahn differentiates business coaching from life coaching by clarifying that “*the purpose of business coaching becomes one of bring the individual’s story into better relationship with those of the organisation*”, because on the “*one end sits the individual with his or her stories of personal career goals, competence, history and personality. At the other, we have the market and organisational needs with its narratives of strategy, culture and business objectives.*”

**Further down the road I learned that this (business coaching) was not at all that different from any other intervention to develop oneself:**

- The ethics of the development process are clear. Confidentiality of conversations is crucial.
- It is a safe learning environment with clear goals and outcomes to be achieved.
- Respect for learning is present. The client demonstrates this by wanting to be coached. The coach demonstrates this by asking only the necessary questions to assist the client in achieving their goals.
- Engagement between the parties.
- Cognitive interest generated by linking performance and / or behaviour to the business context.

**Business coaching is a voluntarily commitment to become a better you.**