



# Is Hiring a Coach a Good Investment?

Guide your decision with these questions.

By Brad Sugars

They go by many names—life coach, career coach, leadership coach. You may wonder if the cost of hiring such a coach is worthwhile, especially when you're trying to cut expenses and maximize every dollar.

The truth is, there's no better time to invest in a coach. In today's challenging world, a good coach can be an invaluable resource.

The coach's goal is to help you become a student of life, relationships, leadership, and change. Unlike a consultant, who may have a narrow area of specialized knowledge, a coach offers a broad outlook. A coach can help you see the bigger picture, focus outward from the trees to the forest, and give you a holistic view, often with life-changing results.

Ask any prospective coach, "What change methods do you use?"

Good coaching programs are also geared to be very pragmatic and hands-on. The power of such a program is to put effective tools, ideas, and information directly into the hands of leaders who are busy running their organizations.

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Here are five questions to help you determine whether you and your organization are a fit for coaching and what to consider before you hire a coach:

**1. Are you coachable—or at least willing to be coached?** This means acknowledging you don't know everything and opening your mind to ideas that may be uncomfortable.

**2. Will you hold yourself accountable?** Your coach will be your "unreasonable friend" who's committed to being "on task" and making sure you are, too. If you told your coach your plan for change would be done today, you'd better have it in hand. Otherwise, you're letting yourself and your team down. You're also wasting your investment.

**3. Is your organization's culture right for coaching?** Coaching works best in an environment that's not overly political or hierarchical. The culture should be one that values lifelong learning, creativity, and personal growth.

**4. What method of change is best for your organization?** The most valuable coaching focuses on the long-term, because a number

of things need to be in place before you can create lasting change. View the strength of a potential coaching program in terms of the systems and methodology used. Ask any prospective coach, "What change methods do you favor?" Can the coach clearly outline these approaches for you?

**5. Do you have a list of questions, and are you prepared for the answers?** Before talking to prospective coaches, put together some questions, such as the following:

- How will you work with me, my organization, and my team?
- What is your background? How does it apply to my organization?
- Do you have a proven system of organizational development?
- What kind of support do you have from your coaching company? How big is your network?
- What is your track record of experience and results?

After your initial meeting with a prospective coach, guide your decision with questions such as these:

- Has the coach clearly outlined the differences between coaching and consulting?
- Does the coach ask good questions?
- Will the coach hold you accountable?

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- Has the coach worked with organizations similar to yours?
- Does the coach seem overly interested in selling coaching products rather than being passionate about coaching and interested in you and your organization?
- Is there a good personality match between the two of you?

After exploring the idea of a coach, you may realize it's the best thing you can do for yourself, your employees, and your organization. It could be one of the best investments you've ever made. ■

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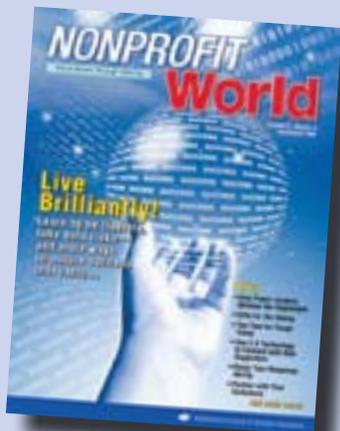
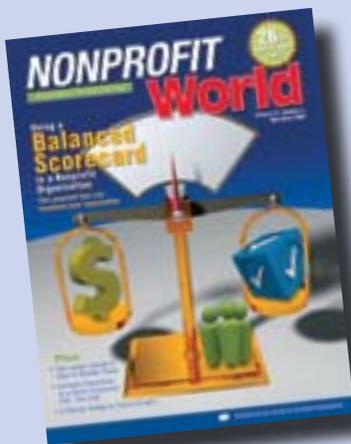
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- Adams, Tom, "Do You Need a Coach?", *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 16, No. 3.
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- Grimshaw, Stephen & Ralph Egerman, "Adapt to Change to Survive," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 24, No. 2.
- Himot, Oshana, "Leading from Feeling: Coaching Tools for Interpersonal & Organizational Excellence," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 27, No. 1.
- Mitchell, Mark & Donald Yates, "How to Use Your Organizational Culture as a Competitive Tool," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 20, No. 2.

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