

**WHITE PAPER:
FINDINGS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL EXECUTIVE COACHING SUMMIT
A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT TO DISTINGUISH THE PROFESSION AND DECLARE THE
POSSIBILITIES**
Convened at the International Coaching Federation Conference, October 1999, Orlando, Florida

Abstract: This article represents the key findings, definitions and discoveries about the Executive Coaching profession. A group of 36 Senior Executive Coaches, leaders in the field, met with the purpose of identifying the distinguishers of Executive Coaching. This White Paper is written for the benefit of the following primary audiences: individuals calling themselves Executive Coaches, other coaches, those coaches who aspire for the executive level, organizations who wish to hire Executive Coaches, organizations desiring to initiate a coaching culture as a strategic device for retaining talent, coach training organizations and coach professional organizations.

Part I: A Need Filled

Over the last decade of the 20th century, coaching become a more mature profession and industry. As with other developing professions, participants began to distinguish themselves into specialties and declare the parameters in which they offer services and employment. Since there are so many types of coaches (e.g.: sports coaches, personal coaches, business coaches, spiritual coaches, life coaches among the myriad of different titles coaches have claimed) those Coaches who are engaged to work with leaders and executives of major organizations needed to be distinguished from other types of coaches in terms of what makes them capable of providing services at the high levels of responsibility in organizations.

Laura Whitworth (CoachLaura@aol.com), founder of Coach Training Institute, declared in early 1999 a need for a clear distinction around the specialty area of coaching that is called Executive Coaching. Since more and more companies and organizations are seeking executive coaches, Whitworth had a dream of fully distinguishing the terms and parameters so that industry could contract with the right coach for their top corporate talent. Engaging a small committee of well-known executive coaches and thought leaders in the field, she joined with Dr. Lee Smith (Lee@coachworks.com) and Dr. Jeannine Sandstrom (Jeannine@coachworks.com) of CoachWorks International, and Leslie Clark and Lauren Powers to bring together an alliance of seasoned executive coaching leaders to discuss such distinctions.

This small group caught the spirit of Whitworth's dream and became determined to have an International Executive Coaching Summit during October '99 at the International Coach Federation Conference. More than 100 leading Executive Coaches responded to an invitation to apply for participation in the two-day Summit. The 36 who participated (see list of participants at end of the paper) were those applicants having the most extensive experience in the field with the highest level of executive responsibility. The committee was determined to have those coaches who have been specifically defining the field to participate in formally distinguishing it.

The desired outcome was to have a compelling message to industry about the proficiencies, capabilities and ethics of those who would be hired to work with executive leaders. Another desired outcome was to be clear about the distinct differences between Executive Coaches and all other coaches.

The two-day Summit was highly successful with high-energy competitors and leaders in the field dropping their egos at the door and collaborating to create something unusual and much needed for their profession. With the help of two highly experienced facilitators, Dr. Jeannine Sandstrom of CoachWorks and Dr. Phil Drouillard of Sibson, this collaborative meeting of peers and colleagues resulted in definitions, findings and discoveries that would bring understanding of the Executive Coaching field to industry as a whole. This is explained in the following sections of the paper.

Part II: Discoveries

The Dilemma: The Basic Level of Competence in all Coaches

As the Summit participants began listing all the things that Executive Coaches do and what executive coaching is, it suddenly appeared that what they had was a list of things that all coaches do. This discovery led to awareness that there is a basic level of coaching competence that should be obvious in everyone who delivers coaching services whether they operate as personal coaches or Executive Coaches. All coaches should have proficiencies in listening, creating an environment for change, facilitating self-awareness, etc., and should be able to work with personal, professional, and perhaps organizational issues about which their clients want focus.

The dilemma for the Summit participants became that of identifying the characteristics that set the Executive Coaches apart from all others. Distinguishers such as business acumen, understanding the world of the client, and having a proficiency in systems and organizational behavior would then become a way for organizations to ask for the characteristics that would serve their executives best. In addition, it was important for Summit participants to define Executive Coaching for the marketplace.

The Definition of Executive Coaching

The 36 participants agreed to the following definition of Executive Coaching:

Executive coaching is a facilitative one-to-one, mutually designed relationship between a professional coach and a key contributor who has a powerful position in the organization. This relationship occurs in areas of business, government, not-for-profit, and educational organizations where there are multiple stakeholders and organizational sponsorship for the coach or coaching group. The coaching is contracted for the benefit of a client who is accountable for highly complex decisions with wide scope of impact on the organization and industry as a whole. The focus of the coaching is usually upon organizational performance or development, but may also have a personal component as well. The results produced from this relationship are observable and measurable, commensurate with the requirements the organization has for the performance of this person being coached.

Quick Points of the Definition:

- A relationship exists between Coach and high-level individual(s) of the organization.
- The relationship occurs in and is sponsored by differing kinds of organizations with multiple stakeholders.
- Coaching is for the benefit of a person with high levels of responsibility and broad scope of impact.
- Focus of the coaching may be both organizational and personal development.
- Outcomes are observable and measurable, and match organizational performance requirements.

The Primary Distinguishers for the Profession of Executive Coaching and Executive Coaches

The primary distinguishers of Executive Coaching and its Executive Coaches revolve around a definition of the person being coached, the wide range of responsibilities for which they are held accountable, the breadth and depth of skills that are demanded in their high-level roles, and who the Executive Coach needs to be with their levels of proficiencies and capacities in order to serve as the developer and change agent at those levels.

Quick Points describing the distinguishers found by the Summit participants:

- The person(s) being coached has a broad accountability for:
 - Fiduciary responsibility to multiple stakeholders
 - Stewardship of human, financial, intellectual, capital and social resources for the benefit of all stakeholders

- Economic, social and ecological well-being of entire communities
- Executives want to be coached around a complex combination of skills and human capacities that are required of their role in the organization, such as:
 - Business acumen and financial management
 - Leadership and organizational skills
 - Social and communication skills
 - Analytic and innovative thinking capacities
 - Ability to inspire trust and commitment to action
 - Rewards and acknowledgement
 - “Presence” that allows them to work in a very large arena or overlapping arenas
- In order to be an effective resource for the executive’s development, Executive Coaches must possess a unique combination of maturity, professional skills and human qualities, such as:
 - A firm grounding in business knowledge and competencies
 - Grounding in the understanding of the world of the executive leader
 - A broad understanding of leadership and leadership development
 - A knowledge of systems dynamics (organization and community)
 - A knowledge of the framework of adult development
 - A high standard of personal and professional ethics
 - A highly developed communication proficiency allowing them to operate in the executive’s environment
 - Advanced coaching skills and capabilities
 - A stature and reputation that gains respect
 - A commitment to lifelong learning similar to the Leader him/herself

Part III: The Competencies, Proficiencies and Interpersonal Characteristics of the Executive Coach

Corporate organizations are seeking qualified Executive Coaches but many do not know what characteristics and proficiencies to request. They also have not had any distinguishing guidelines previous to this article to review prior to determining what kind of coach their executives most need.

The following is a listing of the basic proficiencies followed by the distinguishing qualifications required of an Executive Coach:

Basic Coaching Competencies (as specified by ICF Credentialing):

The Executive Coach possesses the following eleven competencies that should always be present and visible in any coaching interaction:

- Meet ethical guidelines of the profession
- Ability to establish a coaching agreement
- Ability to establish an intimate and trusting relationship with the client
- Ability to be fully present, conscious and spontaneous
- Ability to express active listening
- Ability to ask powerful questions
- Ability to be a direct communicator
- Ability to create and raise the client’s awareness
- Ability to design and create action plans and action behaviors
- Ability to develop plans and establish goals with the client
- Ability to manage the client’s progress and hold him/her responsible for action

Advanced Executive Coaching Proficiencies:

Executive Coaches work beyond the basics of coaching in a very complex group of proficiencies. Their levels of expertise reach to very broadband skills and defining intervention abilities. In fact, they must be able to operate on an equal level with the executive with whom they coach.

The following are the advanced proficiencies identified by the Summit participants:

- Ability to ask the right business questions because the Coach possesses a wide range of business knowledge, experience and expertise. The Executive Coach may, at times, use the “coach approach” to consult the executive in the area(s) that the Coach holds business expertise.
- Holds a high level of confidence in working within the leadership arena. Executive Coaches are thoroughly familiar with the executive leader’s world (context, roles and hierarchy) and has a thorough working knowledge of leadership and leadership development.
- Ability to have conversations beyond the obvious. May include global issues, philosophical items, sociological issues or business issues of the day and future.
- Comfort with coaching around complex issues and international agendas.
- Ability to recognize the system dynamics and intervene to maximize performance and structure. This requires that the Coach be able to discern the patterns of behavior and larger scale systems in order to intervene on those that prohibit peak performance. This is particularly true when working with the executive and his/her team(s).
- Ability to challenge people at high levels, speak the truth and the secrets when no one else will.
- Holds great respect for and knowledge about multi-cultural issues that enhance the executives’ international business focus.
- Ability to articulate adult developmental theory and deliver information about how the executive compares with what he/she needs to be and do.
- Ability to be highly innovative, creative and collaborative. Consequently, serves as a strategic partner to the executive leader and his/her team.
- Ability to be a confidante in which executives are able to share all sides of themselves; their hopes as well as their fears, their egotistical wants as well as their social needs, their dreams for themselves as well as their organizations.
- Holds highly developed coaching, communication, and interpersonal skills and competencies that allow the Executive Coach to operate confidently in both the social and business environment of the executive leader.
- Ability to inspire others at the highest levels. The Executive Coach is truly the one who inspires the inspirational leaders.
- Ability to hold all things in confidence and operate out of highly evolved ethical procedures and conduct.

Interpersonal Characteristics that Industry Seeks:

In addition to proficiencies that are necessary for Executive Coaches to possess, organizations look for specific characteristics beyond the obvious, such as:

- Companies look for a Coach who can be an insightful sounding board while holding sacred the confidences.
- They look for an experienced conversation partner who is a good match, and where there is a strong connection between Coach and client. However, they want a Coach who is different enough to bring about intervention, innovation and creativity to awareness.
- They want someone who can work beneath the strong ego of the leader and who will challenge him/her to raise standards in all areas.
- They require someone who is dedicated to having the executive accomplish the agreed upon outcomes (e.g., increased productivity, increased effectiveness, shifts in leadership approach, increased organizational benefits).
- They need someone who has “been there” and who understands through their own analytical and intuitive hunches what the organization and client issues are.
- The executive wants a Coach who will give strong objective feedback in a non-judgmental manner.
- Executives are looking for someone who will model processes and vision for them until they can model such things themselves. The Executive Coach actually holds the vision of the outcome while holding the executive accountable for advancing toward the goals.

Part IV: Strategic Rationale for Hiring Executive Coaches, Tools They Use and Typical Results

Why Organizations Hire Executive Coaches

There are many reasons that companies consider hiring Executive Coaches versus another type of coach. The participants of the Summit captured the primary ones in the following listing:

- Their executive and executive teams need strategic leadership development and skills.
- They are conducting 360-degree feedback assessments and want Executive Coaches to deliver feedback and conduct follow-on coaching. They often want the Executive Coach to provide a model for the executive to deliver 360 feedback to his/her director reports.
- Their executive is on a derailment path and needs a major shift to stay in the game.
- Their executive needs to raise standards and performance in order to have the company stay competitive in the marketplace.
- They want help with developing succession planning of appropriate replacement personnel as well as assisting those leaders who are moving on to design their next stage of life.
- Their executive has requested a Coach who serves as a sounding board for strategy, particularly when the marketplace has changed.
- They want their executives to have professional development coaching and career development. In addition, at times the executive him/herself wants personal coaching.
- They want coaching for implementing their strategic initiatives and goals.
- They want coaching for executive teams so that the teams can lead the company in a cohesive yet innovative and collaborative manner.
- The leader has just been hired and they want coaching for assimilation into the new culture and asserting new leadership into the organization.
- They want measurable outcomes and observable results.

Tools of the Executive Coach:

To accomplish the items listed above, the Executive Coach brings a wealth of tools to use in coaching and intervention within the organization and the world of the executive leader. The Summit participants concluded that, in addition to those items listed below, the greatest and best tool being brought to the relationship is the Executive Coach himself or herself. Executive Coaches are aware of the possibilities and profound impact they have on individuals, organizations and communities. Concomitantly, they are aware of their frailties and have a positive intention of growing and learning along with the person(s) being coached. In essence, the Executive Coach is a tool that organizations use to impact for the greater good of their workplace.

Listed below are the primary tools employed by most Executive Coaches:

- Assessments for Conducting Gap Analyses such as:
 - Initial interviews that determine current situation, future goals, what is missing, background of strategic plan, mission statement, financials, etc.
 - Scorecards for accountabilities
 - Pre/Post assessments to measure results such as 360 degree for individuals and teams, team effectiveness
 - Measuring progress in terms of political acumen, being well read, personal courage, facilitation of teams, tasking for practice, stakeholder management, intellectual/intuitive awareness of the bigger picture, global-multicultural capabilities, personal and professional successes (e.g., networking, sales/marketing, and business/operational skills)
- Processes for conducting business in more effective manner such as with determining vision, modeling values, discerning authority, decision making, effective meetings, handling conflict and disagreement, creating innovative methods.
- Other customizable tools such as:
 - 360 degree feedback with outcome of Professional Development Plan
 - Self assessment tools such as developmental history, wheel of balance

- Facilitated conversations and shadow coaching
- Role playing , homework assignments such as reading and practice
- Powerful questions, requests and use of stories and metaphors
- Technological tools such as coaching simulator, audio tools, email and voice mail coaching

Typical Results From Having a Coaching Intervention:

[Note to Editors: The original question seemed to address both what coaches do and what the results are. This area needs some additional input from you. I think the question speaks to what the outcomes and results companies can expect on a regular basis since we've already covered what coaches do (tools, etc.). I will also put this area out to the rest of the Summit participants for suggestions.]

Example: Team Effectiveness Survey typically indicates a 25% overall increase in effectiveness of teams.]

Part V: Trends in Executive Coaching

[Note: This is another area that needs some additional input. I will also put this area out to the rest of the Summit participants. If we think about it, I believe that there are other important trends that were not listed in the time available at the Summit.]

Examples of trends I (Lee) know about are:

- *Executive coaching is a requirement in many executives' benefit packages.*
- *Executive coaching is considered "just in time" learning rather than the "just in case" learning in training venues.*
- *Executive MBA programs have begun to consider the issue of the Executive Coach in the mix of possibilities.*
- *More and more, Human Resource executives are required to have coaching competencies.*
- *External Executive Coaches often have a vested interest in having the coaching initiative be successful. This is represented by agreeing to receive part of their remuneration in the form of stock options.*

Some of the ones on the charts are:

- Executive Coaches contribute to an organization's advantage in the talent war and increase the likelihood of high attraction, retention and motivation.
- Executive Coaching legitimizes working on the interaction between life stages and demands of role in the life of the leader.
- Since there's a trend in human resources to do more web-based learning, Executive Coaching fills the gap for face-to-face and team real time learning.
- In addition to strategic outcomes, Executive Coaches address balance, wholeness and community within the executive arena.
- By being responsible and acting with the integrity of our ethics, Executive Coaches make an impact on society because they coach with individuals and teams who have a wide scope of impact on the world.

Part VI: Ethics of the Executive Coach

[Note to Editor's: This is the third area that needs additional information. The charts seem to indicate that there are very few distinguishers for Executive Coaches that are not listed in the standard coach ethics statements (see ICF Ethics list).]

Here's what was listed on the charts as being above and beyond the ICF ethics list (expanded for clarification):

- Executive Coaches hold inviolate “insider” information (financial, market strategy, product information). Non-disclosure agreements are often required. If not, the Executive Coach should provide it.
- Confidentiality is a negotiated up-front contractual agreement with client, sponsor and Coach.
- The Executive Coach will determine where other Coaches are being used in the system of the organization in order to communicate and align the strategic efforts.
- The Executive Coach will discern the “at risk” executive or system and involve the sponsor in how the situation is best handled (e.g., addictions, harassment, etc.). Such “special situations” will be discussed in the contractual agreement regarding confidentiality.

What would you add to this list?

Summary of White Paper

This very unusual community of collaborative senior Executive Coaches discovered and created some extraordinary information about their industry. They not only discerned what was basic to their operation as well as basic to all other coaches, but also discovered the unique distinguishers that separate their complex work world and the scope of their impact on organizational culture as well as society.

They delineated what they know to be the competencies, proficiencies and interpersonal characteristics that “world class” Executive Coaches possess and those that industry is currently seeking. The participants also discovered the strategic reasons that Executive Coaching is effective in an organization along with typical measurable results.

Other considerations covered by the group were the understanding of the current trends in the profession as well as the very critical factors of ethics for the Executive Coach.

The primary findings of the Summit were three fold:

1. A group of competitive Coaches can come together to form community for the higher purpose of defining their profession.
2. There is much complexity in the world of Executive Coaching because of the scope of impact and responsibility that their executive client and key contributors bring to the relationship.
3. The Executive Coach must be working in this arena as familiar territory, being seasoned both from experience as well as from the social aspect.

An added benefit of this experience is that the 36 participants are committed to maintaining the community that was formed in the two days and add others to continue to grow and develop the understanding and utilization of Executive Coaches.

International Executive Coaching Summit Esteemed Participants

The following is a listing of the Executive Coaches who participated in the International Executive Coaching Summit and from whom this information was produced:

Sue Bethanis, Sean Brawley, Cecile Burzynski, Leslie Clark, Jane Creswell
Phil Drouillard, Alexis Brown Falek, Tim Gallwey, Harris Ginsberg, Elizabeth Guilday
Linda Hall, Mike Jay, Bob Johnson, Stephen Josephs, Ray Lamb
Steve Lishansky, Niki McCuiston, DJ Mitsch, Agnes Mura, Cynder Niemela
Barbara Parton, Lauren Powers, Jeremy Robinson, Phillippe Rosinski, Wanda Ross
Jeannine Sandstrom, Cliff Schelling, Andrea Sigetich, Lee Smith, Gary Taylor
Keith Thompson, John Vercelli, Karol Wasylskyn, Laura Whitworth, Ellen Wingard, and Linda Yort