

Dattner Consulting, LLC

Risks in Executive Coaching and How to Minimize Them

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Executive Coaching: Risks and how to minimize them

- Client selection
- Coach selection
- Client/coach matching
- Alignment
- Confidentiality
- Role confusion
- Accountability
- Follow up

Executive Coaching: Client selection risks

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Providing coaching to the wrong person at the wrong time for the wrong reason can be a waste of the organization's focus and resources and can even be a harmful distraction.

- It's possible that coaching is not the right intervention and/or that the designated client is not the right recipient
- Beware investing in coaching for an individual if there are other issues that need to be addressed first:
 - Technical, skill or knowledge gaps
 - Lack of clarity about role definition or expectations
 - Team, departmental or organizational dysfunction
 - Personal challenges
- Coaching should be used for high performing and/or high potential clients, and not be used as a remedial exercise

Executive Coaching: Coach selection risks

- Client selection
- **Coach selection**
- Client/coach matching
- Alignment
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- Follow up

Coaching is still an unregulated and fragmented industry. The wrong coaches can do more harm than good by influencing clients in counter-productive ways and making dysfunctional organizational politics worse.

Coaches should be thoroughly screened for:

- Appropriate educational and training credentials
- Relevant business or client experience and knowledge
- Reference checks at similar organizations or for relevant client situations
- Internet searches for coach publications, website, affiliations and professional networks

Executive Coaching: Client/coach matching risks

- Client selection
- Coach selection
- Client/coach matching
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- Coach role confusion
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- Follow up

There needs to be good chemistry between client and coach. If a client is matched with the wrong coach, the engagement is much less likely to be successful and may end prematurely.

Recommendations:

- Create a database of coaches that includes matching criteria for the first cut
- Give clients a choice of coach, and arrange several in-person informational meetings with potential coaches to inform client's final selection

Executive Coaching: Alignment risks

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- Coach selection
- Client/coach matching
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 - Confidentiality
 - Coach role confusion
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 - Follow up

There are four participants in most coaching engagements: coach, client, manager, and HR. If there is misalignment of goals and expectations at the front end of the coaching that are not addressed, the engagement is not likely to succeed.

What needs to be aligned:

- Goals for the engagement from the perspectives of the manager, HR and client
- Agreement about timing and duration of the coaching
- Expectations and commitments about confidentiality

Executive Coaching: Confidentiality risks

There needs to be a balance between confidentiality and sharing of information. Too little confidentiality and the client and feedback providers won't trust in the process. Too much confidentiality and it's hard to hold the client accountable for progress.

What should be confidential:

- Feedback from assessments
- 360 degree feedback surveys
- Interview findings

What should be shared:

- A summary of key themes
- The development plan based

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Executive Coaching: Coach role confusion risks

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- **Coach role confusion**
- Accountability
- Follow up

There is often a temptation for coaches to overstep the boundaries of their role for a variety of reasons. Coaches should not play these roles:

Evaluator:

Compromises trust in the process and discourages client from being fully open

Messenger:

Conveying messages back and forth is the role of a mediator, not a coach

Advocate:

Coaches should not get involved in organizational politics or make arguments on behalf of clients

For an article on this topic: <http://www.dattnerconsulting.com/threeroles>

Executive Coaching: Accountability risks

In too many coaching engagements, the client is not held appropriately accountable for learning from, and acting on, the feedback and insights gained in the coaching. For coaching to be most successful, all four participants should be accountable:

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- Follow up

Client:

For the extent to which the development plan has been successfully implemented

Coach:

For the value he or she added to the client and the organization in achieving the agreed-upon coaching goals

Manager:

For supporting the client in putting insights into action

HR:

For evaluating coaches and applying coaching process best practices across the organization

Executive Coaching: Follow up risks

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- Confidentiality
- Coach role confusion
- Accountability
- Follow up

In too many coaching engagements, there is little to no follow up and the short term benefits of coaching are not fully realized over the longer term.

Recommendations:

- Build in follow up meetings to support progress
- If 360 feedback was part of the coaching, resurvey and benchmark progress after 6 months or a year
- Evaluate coach performance by surveying client, supervisor and HR
- Apply lessons from each coaching engagement to subsequent ones

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