

BY JILL HAMLYN

## EXECUTIVE PERSONAL COACHING

# A Key Driver to Sustainable Business Success

**THE MINUTE “EXECUTIVE PERSONAL COACHING” IS MENTIONED THE LIGHTS WITHIN A NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO ARE INVOLVED IN BUSINESS APPEAR TO GLOW BRIGHTLY. THE ONE DRAMATIC OBSERVATION, WHEN CONVERSING ABOUT EITHER THE THEORY OR ACTUAL COACHING ACTIVITIES, IS THAT THERE ARE A NUMBER OF SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE WHO HAVE A HUGE DESIRE AND ENERGY TO BECOME INVOLVED IN HELPING OTHERS TO ACHIEVE TO AN EQUAL OR EVEN GREATER LEVEL THAN THEY THEMSELVES REALISED WITHIN THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT.**

Likewise, a number of highly successful people in business, both men and women, acknowledge that at least part of their success, particularly in today's environment, can be attributed to them securing a professional executive business coach who has challenged them as individuals and accelerated their growth within the field of business.

So if there is a grouping of senior talent that would like to share and a further group of individuals who acknowledge the benefit of such a service, what are the challenges? Why doesn't industry quickly, immediately, post haste tap into this beneficial resource of talent and make it work for the good of all involved? There is however a very real problem. There are skills and abilities that are waiting to be shared, but how!

In interviewing some professional Executive Business Coaches there is an apparent challenge within the industry and that

is that having the desire to share doesn't necessarily enable one to effectively give! But why not? As Jenny Hoggarth, a professional executive coach who has a wealth of expertise in the arena of coaching sales professionals notes, “if untrained in the discipline of coaching there is a huge danger of the coach becoming more of a mentor. In most situations this is not entirely a problem, but coaching does differ from mentorship insofar as effective coaching ensures that the coachee owns the change, thereby making it permanent. In mentorship the protagonist is the mentor. In the coaching interaction the coachee and their development is the one and only focus”.

Kit Hodge, a Cape Town based Professional Coach adds, “Purely having the need or the desire to coach others does not qualify you to step into the coaching profession. Experience and success need to be partnered with an excellence in coaching communication. This is particularly true insofar as very few individuals are able to truly listen and internalise in order to ask the most appropriately challenging and insightful questions. They instead far more readily enter into a mentorship role where they share their individual modus operandi that may not necessarily be the most appropriately focused area of growth for the person that they are working with”.

In further discussing and defining business coaching, it becomes important to identify what it is not in order to facilitate a clearer understanding and grasping of the

concept. In much of the recent literature published around the topic of coaching within business, as well as the content of many courses and programmes offered, coaching is very often confused with or seen to be synonymous with the concept of “mentoring”. Hoggarth and Hodge both agree. Coaching is NOT mentoring, it is not frivolous and it is not business consulting. “Mentoring is focused on skills transference, whereas business coaching is a deep and powerful process that marries both personal and business aspects of a person and achieves results,” explains Hodge.

So what is the difference between a coach and a mentor? Research indicates that there are a number of parallels between the two disciplines but the identifiable difference is that, as the two professional executive coaches both pointed out, that mentorship is rather a process of guiding and sharing whilst coaching is a process of acting as a catalyst for development through questioning, challenging and driving an individual to continually stretch themselves in the areas that are most opportune for business and personal growth. Business Coaching indeed appears to be a service offering that is most appropriately directed at people in commerce who have a desire to successfully drive and initiate an environment of sustainable business for tomorrow.

So does business in general understand the power of business coaching? In many cases business sees coaching as something of a fad and that people within organisations don't generally demand it. This does however depend on what level they operate within their organisation.

But is it a fad? In examining the market there appear to be a number of individuals who profess to be “coaches” and yet who have little practical expertise in business and even less insight into any of the theoretical people skills. Italia Boninelli, a registered psychologist and another professional Executive Business Coach, believes that a number of individuals within the

environment are purely jumping on the bandwagon. Her opinion is that “having excellent people skills or even a superior track record in business are not, in themselves, a licence to enter the coaching profession”. She acclaims that a coaching methodology must be adhered to, and proven practical leadership and managerial skills are essential. She believes that a number of people who are marketing their services are in all probability relying on their natural sales and interpersonal skills but that the lack of credible, measurable business results indicates that they have little actual formal or professional abilities within this field.

In examining the range of fees that are charged for business coaching services it is indeed a tempting arena to enter. A typical 6-month intervention can cost anywhere from R20 000 to R72 000 per person. How can these costs be justified? Hamlyn appears to readily and confidently prepare to respond.

In my experience, businesses demand value for money for interventions. Any service that can directly and positively effect an organisation could be considered priceless to today's senior executives who hold direct accountability for the success, or alternatively the demise of a company.

### GUARANTEES

So is there any guarantee if coaching does not work or has there been any instance where it has not worked? Hoggarth elucidates, “If the individual is not committed to the process and if there is no chemistry with the coach, then the coaching process will not have the desired effect and the set outcomes are very difficult to achieve. Where a client has been “sent” for coaching as remedial treatment, they are more likely to be hostile and unlikely to participate.”

The coachee must be a willing partner and the coach must then walk away if this is not the case.

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