



Selecting a Good Coach

By Matt Oechsli

This is not an infomercial. Rather it is an attempt to respond to the ever increasing stream of inquiries we are receiving regarding the selection of a coach. Coaching is the fastest growing area of human development, and as the coaching ranks increase, financial advisors are being solicited by coaches both from within and outside of our industry, both with and without experience and qualifications.

So how do you go about selecting a coach? Or, maybe I should begin by asking, how do you know whether or not you need a coach? Let me answer the second question first. Everyone, if interested in getting closer to his or her potential and open minded, can benefit from a good coaching relationship. If great athletes like Tiger Woods and Michael Jordan benefited from personalized coaching relationships, anyone committed to excellence can benefit – providing they have the right coaching relationship.

Which leads me to my initial question, how does one go about the process of selecting the *right* coaching relationship?

Attempting to keep this as simple and useful as possible, I have broken the selection process into 7 Steps ...

7 Steps in Selecting a Coach

Step 1: Know what you need. Coaching is not therapy, counseling, consulting, or mentoring. Good coaches emphasize learning and action. They are present and future oriented. They explore actions and behaviors that demonstrate high self-esteem and are linked to specific areas of improvement. In a good coaching relationship, your coach will help you remain focused, stay on task, even when you'd rather be doing something else. They will hold you accountable even when you'd rather be let off the hook, and then ask "what's next?" and make certain you provide a clear and actionable answer.

Step 2: Be clear about your objectives. Coaching is unique for each financial advisor. While your coach may challenge you to expand beyond your comfort zone and consider alternative options, it is critical for you to be in the driver's seat of the relationship, and of your future. Avoid being placed into some "cookie-

cutter” one size fits all coaching relationship. All goals must be your goals, and by being clear about where you want to go, your coach will have a clearer framework for working with you.

Step 3: Trust your intuition. When you talk with a prospective coach, do you get a good feeling from that conversation? As you embark on your journey with a coach, you need to feel confident that you have selected someone who will be with you every step of the way. Does this coach truly understand your challenges as a 21st century financial advisor? Does he or she understand the differences between wirehouse advisors and independents? You want to get a good feeling of an understanding of the industry that is combined with a personal approach that will be directed to your needs.

Step 4: It's important to do your homework. Prepare questions in advance of talking with a potential coach. Don't be afraid of expecting too much, so you'll want to base those questions on what you want out of the relationship. Also ask specific questions about such things as fees, confidentiality, and policies.

Step 5: Although this might seem a bit odd at first glance, its practical application it's very important. You need to ask the potential coach to tell you about their coaching style and methods. Beware of coaches whose methodology is described using the latest buzzwords and catch phrases. Make sure their approach makes sense to you. If you hear anything like; “I use a co-active coaching style, or non-directive style, or a directive style. My coaching focuses on macro and micro integral transformation to define future openings and gaps.” Or similar confusing verbiage, your antenna should go out and make certain you ask for clarification. Such obfuscation is quite possible a good indicator of any coaching relationship with this coach.

Step 6: Get references. Contact those people and ask them what the relationship with this coach has done for them. You will want to know whether or not this coach helped them achieve what they wanted to achieve? You want to know whether he/she provided the support, feedback, and accountability they both needed and wanted? Inquire about their accessibility. You should even inquire about his/her coaching style?

Step 7: If you are feeling comfortable about the coach you've been talking to, ask for a free sample coaching session. Most coaches will offer a free half-hour session with a potential client. It's not quite the same as a “regular” coaching session, but it will give you an idea of the coach's style and what to expect. Let me give you a word of caution; don't look to a free coaching session as a means to solve a problem. Your objective is to have an experiential understanding of your potential coaching relationship.

Speaking from 25 years of experience, and making numerous mistakes in my coaching relationships, I am convinced that if I can help you in making the right choice, everyone will benefit. You will get the coaching you need to help you achieve your goals, and your coach will enjoy a rewarding coaching experience.