



To Be, Or Not to Be ... Coached

By Matt Oechsli

BOSTON – After finishing a talk about our recent research project on *Attracting New Affluent Clients*, I was flooded with audience questions about coaching. Once the attendees sensed that someone can be *coached* into becoming a Rainmaker, they immediately wanted to know more about the process, the value and the cost of professional coaching. In other words, they wanted the bottom line.

Financial advisors rarely wake up one day and say, “You know what? I need a coach.” Instead, they gradually determine that the gap between their goals and their reality – between actual income and hoped for income – won’t close unless they seek professional assistance. A good coach will serve as your guide for bridging that gap through providing insights, advice and tools, and demanding the kind of accountability that no seminar, workshop or book can offer. For a true performance coach (our focus at the Oechsli Institute), the bottom line is helping you take steps to dramatically increase your earnings over both the short term and the long run.

Sounds great, right? So why don’t more people seek professional coaching? Aside from the obvious – the tiny fraction of advisors who are happily earning boatloads of money (some as the result of previous coaching) – there are two main reasons: fear and inertia.

Fear comes in many forms, among them the fear that coaching will produce few results, the fear that it will be a waste of money, the fear that (like Freudian analysis) it will go on forever, etc.

Inertia usually involves denial that anything needs improvement. That leads to avoidance – which often takes the form of “I’m too busy and/or indispensable to take time from my hectic schedule.” Ironically, this last excuse (and it *is* an excuse) is the same one that prevents many advisors from taking time to engage in face-to-face meetings with key clients and prospects and to use the high-impact activities needed to become a Rainmaker.

To help you make an informed decision about whether coaching is right for you, let’s cut through some of the myths about coaching.

Myth: Coaching is too expensive.

Fact: Yes, it costs money, especially if you work with one of the industry’s best coaches. But the tangible benefits almost always outweigh the investment – provided you’re serious about implementing the steps recommended by your coach. Our clients average over 15 new million dollar relationships a year –they become Rainmakers. You

do the math. I've witnessed financial advisors bring in more assets in five months than they did in the entire previous calendar year.

When it comes to budgeting, treat coaching as a professional development expense in your business plan. Under the "business goals" section, indicate that you're prepared to spend 7.5% of net revenue each year on professional development. This figure is a common benchmark used by many advisors. Let's say your annual net is \$150,000. At 7.5%, this translates into \$11,250 per year for a monthly budget of \$937.50. That may (or may not) seem like much money. Either way, consider it a necessary business expense if you're going to move forward.

Myth: Coaching Can Double My Production

Fact: Be careful of grandiose promises. Rookies can, and should, be doubling their production. Coaching or no coaching. Veteran financial advisors need to approach any such promises with guarded vision. Recently I talked with a team that was promised they would double their production in two years. Although they were three months into their coaching arrangement, they wanted my opinion. I asked three questions: 1) What was your production and asset base before you entered into your coaching contract? Answer -- \$1.5mm on 200 million in assets. 2) How many new 1 million plus relationships did you bring in last year? Answer -- not sure, be very few. 3) Do you have a plan for bringing in 75 million dollars of new assets a year? Answer -- not yet, but do you think it's doable?

Always do the math. It will take a certain amount of new assets in today's fee-based world to experience a corresponding increase in production. This increase in assets will also require a specific number of new relationships that are at a certain level. Focusing on increased production is fine. However, our experience tells us that the real issue is translating that into the number of new affluent relationships you are committed to bring in over the next 12 months. Performance coaching focuses on teaching you and holding you accountable for executing the necessary high-impact Rainmaking activities on a daily basis.

Myth: I'll get just as much from a book or a seminar.

Fact: It's possible, but unlikely. A coach is not a manager or an instructor standing at the front of a classroom, both of whom are primarily concerned with improving group performance. Coaches establish a tight, one-on-one relationship that is completely focused on you and your unique situation. The person you choose will either be the right coach, or the wrong coach. There is no in between. This is why your coach had better know you, your business and his business.

What's more, *no book or seminar facilitator will hold you accountable* for sticking to the program. After providing you with first steps, a good coach will bolster your commitment with goals and deadlines, and will hold you accountable for achieving results. Many people initially resist personal accountability because they aren't used to it. But if you continually resist, the benefits you receive from the coaching relationship will be greatly diminished.

Myth: Coaches pressure clients to continue working with them ad infinitum.

Fact: If you ever encounter such a coach, fire him. A coach is *not* a therapist, consultant or mentor. Coaching emphasizes both learning *and the actions* that will move you from the present toward your specific goals. Good coaches are future oriented. “What do you want to achieve? What will achieving those objectives do for you? What is your first step?” Those are questions you will hear from a good coach. Your coach’s work is done as soon as you have achieved your desired results.

Myth: Coaches merely tell you what you want to hear.

Fact: Absolutely not. Good coaches will *not* let you remain in your comfort zone. He or she will encourage you to set big goals that will stretch you – and this is where the true power of coaching emerges. Your coach won’t impose those big goals on you; you will make that choice. But the coach won’t leave you struggling to achieve those goals on your own. He or she will be totally focused on helping you get there – with whatever processes, tools, expertise, questions, feedback and support you need. And when you commit to specific actions, you will discover why the accountability process is so vital to your success.

Myth: A Coach is a coach is a coach.

Fact: Not all coaches are made equal. Driven by demand, many people are hanging out their shingle as a coach. It is important that you conduct your own due-diligence. Is this person an expert in your field? How long has he/she been coaching? Does this individual make an earnest effort to understand your situation before discussing how he or she will help you? What are your expected results? Can this prospective coach answer performance specific questions? Can you contact references? Do you get a good feeling from this person?

These are just a handful of screening criteria for selecting a coach. In addition to determining whether you can truly benefit from professional coaching, it’s critical to select the right coach. Just as a good coach will profile you during the first conversation to determine whether you’re a suitable candidate, you should also profile him or her to see if there’s a good match.

Research featured in the *Public Personnel Management Journal* reported that individuals who participated in a management training program increased their productivity 22.4 percent. A select group engaged in post-training coaching and their productivity increased by 88 percent. This is one of many studies that validate the bottom line value of performance coaching.

Find the right coach is only part of the process, the other part requires you to look in the mirror and determine whether you are ready to benefit from a professional coaching relationship that is focused on performance.