

Questions to Ask When Interviewing a Coach

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All too often, I hear stories about people who've hired a coach, only *later* wishing they'd known a little more about him than "he seemed to know his stuff." Or that, even though they'd gotten along well enough, the client wished they'd spent more time asking questions about background and experience before signing on. Even people who spend a lot of time asking questions during the hiring process are sometimes stumped as to what questions to ask!

The International Coach Federation recommends interviewing at least three coaches before making a decision. This exposes the client to a variety of styles, giving them a sense of their rapport with each potential coach, as well as a chance to assess each coach's strengths. But without a game plan, many people end up with a set of notes and impressions from each conversation and no way to compare them, since the interactions were just "too different." Comparing "apples to oranges" like this just makes the decision-making process more frustrating. And ultimately, it makes us *less* likely to choose the right coach.

Because it's such an important decision and will involve a substantial investment of your resources, it pays to get it right. And one way to do that is to level the playing field by bringing the comparison into clearer focus. While it's important to make note of your "general impression" of each sample session, it can also be helpful to have a single set of questions you ask each coach. By incorporating an "interview" of sorts into each exchange, you'll have both analytical *and* intuitive information on which to base your decision. This alignment of mind and heart will go a long way as you make your choice.

Most coaches aim for 30 – 45 minutes for an initial consult, so keep that in mind as you pare down your list of questions. Spending some time on coaches' websites will not only help you get to know each coach before meeting with them, but it will also help you add to your list of questions. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- Who is your ideal client?
- How would you describe your background and training?
- From what institution have you received certification?
- How did you get into coaching?
- For how many years have you been a coach (as your primary profession)?
- What is your coaching philosophy?
- What's your mission as a coach?
- Describe the results one of your clients has achieved through coaching.
- How do *you* select a coach?
- What's unique about you as a coach?
- Describe your coaching process.
- Will our sessions be in person or over the phone?
- How frequently will we meet, and for how long?
- What do you charge?
- How long will we work together?
- How will we measure success?
- What did you do prior to becoming a coach?
- What else should I have asked you that I haven't?



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Naturally, we all want our investments to pay big dividends. When it comes to selecting a coach, an ideal fit isn't *just* about rapport; it also depends on a coach's ability to deliver results. And if we ask the same set of core questions during every consult, the combination of the interview and the sample coaching ensures that we'll pick a coach that meets our needs.

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