



Coaching Compass

FINDING THE RIGHT MENTOR IS KEY TO UNLOCKING YOUR HIGHEST POTENTIAL AND SUCCESS.

BY MARK SEPHTON

If you have a business or big career ambitions, you'll likely desire a coach or mentor at some point throughout the journey. These individuals help you navigate setbacks, challenges, opportunities and even successes. They also become instrumental when that next level of success requires additional support.

However, not all coaches are the same. You want someone who's qualified, but you also need a coach who will be the right mentor for your individual needs. Hiring a coach is an investment and a commitment, which means that due diligence is paramount. Jon Cheplak, coach, consultant and CEO of The Real Recruiter, offers insights to navigate this process. He explains that research, asking questions and self-assessment are key.

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THE MAIN BENEFITS OF WORKING WITH A COACH

For one, a coach "can see your blind spots," Cheplak says. They offer an outside perspective, helping you identify what you might not always see on your own. "They show you the highest form of love, which is accountability," he says. "[Accountability] is observing or noticing without judgment, while allowing you to self-discover so that you can choose your next steps and have an internal decision process versus an external decision process." Rather than feeling like a decision was forced upon you, this value of personal agency is a beneficial core component when facilitated correctly by the coach.

COURTESY OF JON CHEPLAK

HOW DO YOU DEFINE A 'GOOD' COACH?

Cheplak says that this starts with integrity. "[A good coach is] someone who walks the talk.... [There are] too many coaches out there [who] say one thing and they live in an entirely different way," he explains. Getting to the heart of this requires asking strong questions, Cheplak says.

"[A good coach is] not constantly trying to validate themselves by overwhelming their client with information," he says. They will empower their client to be in the driver's seat and act as a guide who ideally operates from a place of contribution and empathy. "[A good coach] really holds the line on principle and doesn't let personality blur the lines," he says. They hold their clients accountable versus "just being a rah-rah cheerleader."

In addition to wisdom and guidance, mentors bring objectivity. "The toughest thing on the planet to do is to be a third-party observer of self. I don't mean to look down, to judge, but to observe the field of play," Cheplak says. He explains that a good coach offers a different perspective and firsthand insights from having been where you are trying to go. "The ultimate shortcut and ultimate fast path to growth is avoiding the mistakes you don't have to make," he says, emphasizing that a good mentor already possesses the knowledge, lessons and proof of concept. These are invaluable on one's path toward success.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT COACH

Cheplak says that this is unique to each person. "We all respond differently," he says. "There are some people [who] respond to an absolute in-your-face... type coach." In addition to recognizing one's preferred style, a person must also determine what they actually need from a coach.

Do you need a specific strategy and tactic? Then maybe you need someone who's operational-focused. Or do you need someone who can support you with a bigger vision? Ask yourself, "Which of those do I need the most?" One might think they need business support, but, really, they need personal development. For example, they might need to address the root causes of any reluctance or accountability struggles.

Still, Cheplak says the most important thing is to find someone who genuinely believes in you, perhaps even more than you believe in yourself. "In business coaching, there's the business side of it; there's the personal side of it," Cheplak says. "But many, many people come to a business coach for that human element more than anything."

It's also important to be on the lookout for red flags, such as inconsistent messaging. "What that tells me is that the coach is just looking for money," he says. "They're just trying to find where the money market is." Essentially, a mentor should show consistency in their content and offer expertise versus jumping into the next trending niche. Similarly, Cheplak says transparency is critical, not just in the coaching relationship but during the exploration and discovery process.

"Everything going on privately shows up publicly," he says. Look at their habits, family situation, path to health and wellness, ongoing personal development and whether or not they have a coach. Cheplak also says to look for credibility. This includes observing how public a coach is about their clientele, whether past clients talk about their work together or even talking to current or past clients. All of this helps demonstrate a coach's value. It's critical to avoid coaches who cannot and do not admit their flaws. Another red flag is a coach who claims, or appears, to have all the answers, Cheplak says, "because they don't."

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LEARNING FROM THE PAST

If you've had a bad experience with a coach in the past, Cheplak's advice is to remember the value of having a mentor and to know that good coaches are still out there. "Trust the process," he says. "All high performers have a coach or consultant. CEOs do; high-performance athletes do," he says, explaining that success comes from having support. Almost always, we can find that spot where we saw the red flags, yet we didn't listen to ourselves. "You'll continue to repeat history over and over based on your 'picker,' if you will.... Don't blame the player; evaluate the game," he says. Reflect back and this will help you move beyond the negative experience and help you get the right support from the right coaches moving forward, Cheplak says. ♦

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