

Solve Anything with Dr. Mark

Career Advice
for the
Working Class

Put me in, coach

Q: I'm in my early thirties and between jobs. I think I need to change careers. I'm confused and am confusing my friends, family and people I've worked with. They're all telling me that I need a coach but there are so many different kinds.

Do you have some suggestions on how to identify the best kind of coach for me and then do you know of any resources I can go to that will help me locate that coach?

A: Coaching is a growing technique that helps people and companies learn more and move forward. There are health coaches, tech coaches, presentation coaches, executive coaches and career coaches. The wide array of people calling themselves "coaches" today makes it a bit confusing to differentiate between them and decide which coach fits well with your needs. Jeanne Schadt is founder of Internal Relations, a Marina del Rey-based coaching firm which matches coaches to corporations.

She recommends these six steps to work through the nebulous world of coaching, find a good coach and make sure you are coach-ready.

1. Know why you're hiring a coach. Coaching is results-focused and you should have an idea of what results you want to achieve. "I want to work in an environment where I can be myself and use my natural talents with ease" is a clearly defined goal and very coach-able one. A goal such as "I want a new job" might be better met with a more specific

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outcome in mind. What is it you really want? To feel appreciated? More time with your family? Lower stress? What's the optimal outcome you'd like to see from coaching? Though a good coach will help you further clarify and finesse your goals, you'll be best served if you have a good idea of what your end goal looks like, even if you can't yet see the path to get you there.

2. Know your style. Are you structured or more of a maverick? Do you like rules and boundaries or welcome free-wheeling of ideas? Do



Q&A

you want an outside perspective from somebody who's never worked in your field or insider's knowledge from an experienced professional? Knowing a bit about the way you work and what's important to you will help you find a coach that's a good fit.

3. Be specific in your search for a coach. Organizations such as the Professional Coaches and Mentors Association (pcmaonline.com) and the International Coach Federation (coachfederation.org) offer search tools online that use algorithms to match your criteria. You can also find many through search engines if you include all the criteria important to you such as a specialty, geography, or experience.

A search like "career coaching for entertainment Los Angeles" will get you specific results. A search for "coach" can get you a handbag, rental of a bus or someone to show you how to kick around a soccer ball. Similarly, put a specific request out to your network. Coaches have an idea of who they want to work with, too, so if you connect with a coach who isn't quite the right fit, he or she will likely connect you to somebody who is. Similarly, there are a few companies like mine that deal in the business of matching coaches and clients together. Ask around, take a look online and you'll find many good options.

4. Know how to spot the B.S. Use your instincts when you hear somebody promising you the world. Coaching is an incredibly effective process that requires you to participate in it. Be wary of any person who promises to deliver you unbelievable results. A reputable coach will help you see a vision of what's possible, define ways of getting there and support you in doing so but it's you who still does the heavy lifting.

5. Be prepared to do things differently. More than anything, you have to be open to new ideas and ways of operating. If you're rather enjoying your habits (good or bad) and the stability of routine, this is probably not the best time to hire a coach. Getting coached means shaking things up, changing ways you think and do things. Know that the best time to use a coach is when you're ready to change.

6. Be ready to change. The majority of people are ready for change; very few are ready to change. In the former, people are not yet ready to commit to taking action. Don't hire a coach until you're ready to take action. If you do, you'll simply waste the coach's time and your time and money.

Ask Mark • Mark Goulston, M.D., is a Santa Monica-based business psychiatrist, executive coach and author of "Get Out of Your Own Way at Work." Ask him questions at mgoulston@markgoulston.com.