

BUSINESS ENGLISH

Coaching to improve yourself

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Coaching is about helping to make **key positive changes** in your life. A coach can help you **identify** your **goals**, understand how to **control** the process better and eventually how to **achieve** them.

Coaching is a powerful tool in today's challenging world of business. Companies are merging, restructuring and moving and people are changing jobs far more than before. The way we work has changed and we can sometimes feel less prepared or demotivated, uncertain if what we have been doing is the right way forward. Given this instability we could consider working with a professional business coach to help us get where we want to be and **feel happier** at work.

A coach can sometimes be compared to a mentor or a consultant. However, unlike with a mentor, working with a coach is normally for a short, specified amount of time. A coach is also considerably different to a consultant, who generally looks at the whole team or company and how it does things. In addition, mentors and consultants often give advice – something a coach doesn't normally do.

So what exactly does a coach do? Here are five things:

1. A coach permits the individual to determine the direction of their conversation.

When the student meets the coach for a session, the coach doesn't automatically come with a prepared plan. It is the individual that leads the conversation; the coach **observes and listens**. As the coach begins to better understand the individual's context, they will ask more questions and talk about their observations. This process helps the individual see the situation more clearly, as if the coach is **holding up a mirror**.

2. A coach helps the student to identify goals and prioritise them.

Before one can begin on our path to development, we need to first understand exactly what our **desired destination** could be. Coaches can help the individual **connect** their business (and other) goals with their personal plans and dreams. Through this process, they can **improve**

motivation and focus. The coach then helps the individual identify the practical steps they need to take.

3. A coach asks questions to guide the individual and help understand their issues better.

Through the process of considering the **right questions**, a coach can help the individual to **focus** the conversation and truly **explore** the relevant issues. Be careful though, a good coach should not ask **leading questions** that push a particular answer, for example, Do you think “this” might be a better? or What do you think about doing it this way instead? Good coaching questions do not tell the trainee what to do. Instead, they help them to **reflect**, see things clearly and discover their **own way forward**. A coach might ask, for example, *What is the biggest challenge at the moment? What do you think a successful outcome would look like for you here? or What could you do now that would be a step forward?*

4. A coach identifies the emotions behind issues and guides the individual to understand them

Sometimes, a coaching conversation can often bring **hidden emotions** to the surface. A good coach would be able to help the individual **become aware** of their emotions and allow them to **explore** their feelings when needed.

5. A coach guides the individual to move forward, getting them to where they want to be

Many coaches set the trainee **tasks** to complete in between sessions. Over a series of sessions, the coach helps **motivate** the trainee to follow **key steps** towards success, **tracks** the trainee progress and keeps them **focused** on their end goal. The coach does not do the work for the trainee, nor do they advise them. They act as a guide to help the individual find the appropriate strategies in reaching their goals.

There are many benefits to employing an external business coach, like their objectivity and fresh perspective. But business leaders and managers have also discovered that if they acquire coaching skills themselves, this can help them improve the performance of their teams. Managers are now taking coaching training in order to have internal coaching conversations with team members who might be having difficulties, and many are now seeing the power of coaching as a way to help their businesses grow and ensure their staff are happy and motivated.

