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The Difference Between Coaching and Mentoring

I call myself an executive coach, and readily admit that there's some confusion among clients and consultants about the difference between coaching and mentoring. Duncan Bertoft, an executive coach in the United Kingdom, offered the following description. I have deliberately left the English spellings and the word "coachee" for your enjoyment.

DB – My own short summary of the key distinctions between the roles of Leadership Mentor and Executive Coach is given below.

A leadership mentor has specific relevant knowledge that the mentee wants to tap into. The content of the support usually focuses on career development and/or business related issues and the goal is often set out by the mentor (or may even be part of a prescribed programme). The coaching style is likely to be a little more directive than executive coaching, but will (should) always default to a non-directive style. Finally, the mentor is more likely to be internal to the business and thus the mentoring relationship may be less confidential than a coaching relationship, especially if the mentoring is part of a company programme - the mentor may be 'reporting back' elsewhere.

An executive coach does not require specific knowledge of the issue or the 'problem to solve' and the coaching can focus on anything – career development and business issues, or personal issues that are in the way of

progress. The coaching is generally towards the non-directive end of the (coaching skills) spectrum and more often the coach is external to the organisation. At times the content of the coaching sessions could be quite unstructured - 'help me to work through my thoughts' - and is nearly always about coachee behaviours. The coaching will develop its own structure over time (coaching should move the coachee from 'awareness' to 'responsibility' to 'action'). Finally, the coaching relationship is VERY confidential – there will not be any 'reporting back' elsewhere, other than possibly in general terms about progress of the programme

Tom



The appearance of this article one month after I "signed off" is no guarantee of future publications . . .

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