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Be a better boss.

BY CLAIRE SYKES

# The coach approach

Is an executive coach right for you and your business?

**A**thletes and actors use them. So do pop singers and top executives. Should you, as a business professional, also have a coach? It's something more and more executives are asking themselves.

"A coach can help you troubleshoot areas that need improvement and offer insight into the psychological blockages that may be holding you back from succeeding further," says Marty Nemko, a business coach in Oakland, Calif., USA. Since 2003, he's been coaching Michael Edelstein, a clinical psychologist in San Francisco. "I had never been good at small talk, but I knew it was necessary to establish a rapport with new clients," explains Edelstein, who says he's improved his skills and increased his income with help from Nemko.

Whether you run your business from home or head up a billion-dollar corporation, you may find yourself lonely at the top. "People guiding the ship often lack a sounding board and may need to bounce ideas off of someone," explains Theresa Szczurek, of the Rotary Club of Boulder, Colo., USA, the founder and CEO of Technology and Management Solutions, a business consulting and coaching company.

Small-business owners and the self-employed usually turn to business coaches for

general guidance and direction. Senior executives and middle managers of larger corporations more often work with executive coaches who specialize in a specific area, like leadership and supply-chain logistics, marketing and promotions, personal image, or presentation skills. Working with a coach can



also help you clarify your vision and steer you in the right direction, particularly if you're transitioning between jobs or careers, or if you're unclear about your goals.

Szczurek takes her clients through a four-phase process. First, she helps them clarify their values and core competencies to arrive at their passion. Next, she helps them align that passion with a meaningful purpose and come

up with a mission statement. Szczurek then works with clients to create a strategy for achieving their goals. Finally, she follows up and assesses their progress.

"Along the way, be open, and then accept or reject your coach's feedback on its own merit," Nemko advises. "Don't feel compelled to take advice you disagree with just because you're paying for it."

As a Rotarian, of course, you have a resource that doesn't cost anything: your regular Rotary club meeting. Fellow club members, many with years of professional experience, are ideal candidates to act as sounding boards, share perspectives, and give feedback. Find someone who will ask lots of questions, listen carefully, keep an open mind, and concentrate on your needs.

If you do decide to hire a professional coach, make sure you shop around before you buy. A fellow Rotarian may be able to offer a referral, or you can

check out the Worldwide Association of Business Coaches at [www.wabccoaches.com](http://www.wabccoaches.com), one of the best tools for finding a reliable coach. Choose someone who specializes in your area of need and embraces a coaching philosophy and style you can relate to. ■

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