

# Everything You Wanted to Know About Hiring A Business Coach....

By Shirley Mansfield

Your ultimate guide to hiring a business coach.

All your questions answered BEFORE you start your search and engage a business coach.

# Everything You Wanted to Know About Hiring A Business Coach

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This e-book is designed to provide information on how you can improve your business.

The purpose of this book is to inform and entertain the reader on the subject drawing on many sources of information as well as personal experience. It is published for general reference and is not intended to be a definitive guidance on your circumstances or as a substitute for independent verification by readers.

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07885 197 364



shirlev.mansfield@coachsme.



www.coachsme.co.

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shirlev.mansfield@coachsme.



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shirlev.mansfield@coachsme.



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## Welcome

As a business coach, I am constantly asked questions about coaching. It seems everyone is curious! Naturally, I am a big fan of coaching (I have had and still have my own); I see the huge benefits that result from coaching every day.

This publication is designed to answer all the questions you have about hiring a business coach. If I have missed one, do let me know so I can update this article for the next readers benefit.

The guide is split into 4 sections

1. Why Business Coaching?
2. How to Find the Best Person to Help You
3. What Happens Now?
4. How Much?

But first a question.....

## Why Should I Consider Hiring a Coach?

Perhaps it is time that you hired a coach if you:

- are going round and round in circles
- are struggling to resolve a persistent issue
- never have time to do anything properly.
- do not seem to have a life or
- seem to be solving the same problems over and over again...

A coach will help you to achieve clarity in your thoughts and goals, to pull an action plan together and importantly, to implement it.

As a business owner you are probably the 100% shareholder, and although you have a partner at home you will not want to take many business issues home with you. Having a business coach where you can share your thoughts, gain different perspectives, and have a ready-made sounding board are all very good reasons to have a business coach. If nothing else, it allows you to keep home and work separate.

If you have a business partner, it is crucial that you are on the same page. Having a clear shared vision, approach to business and ways of working enables the business to move forward. Being able to discuss issues, solve problems and agree next steps is vital. If you cannot do this with your business partner, then a coach can help.



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shirlev.mansfield@coachsme.



www.coachsme.co.

If you have never run a business before but have a brilliant business idea that you are struggling to get off the ground or getting it to grow, then a coach is a good move. If the business has taken on a life of its own then having a business coach is a fantastic way to help you get back in control, learn and plot a clear path. Ask your contacts why they hired a business coach. Coach interactions can be life changing so, read coach testimonials and case studies.

Let's jump in.....

## Section One – Why Business Coaching?

### What is Business Coaching

Business coaching is delivered by a business coach and according to Leeman Bennett... is someone who always makes you do what you don't want to do so you can be who you've always wanted to be. There is no glory in practice but without practice there is no glory.”

In sport, coaches are the norm. Many of the top golfers have several; a putting coach, a swing coach, a performance coach and a caddy to coach them during the round! They all recognise that to get to the top and to stay at the top of their game they need help. And it's not seen as a weakness, but as a strength. How many times do we see the change of coach or manager quickly having a major impact on the sports-persons performance?

In business there are so many things going on that a business owner may need someone to keep them focused on the end goal, achieving an objective, or helping them solve a tricky problem. Yes, your internal team can help and so might your external contacts but perhaps a business coach is also a solution?

Coaches bring expertise with them, but they also have a great ability to unlock their clients hidden skills, to boost their confidence and up-skill them as well.

Whenever we decide to take up something new, we look for someone that can teach and guide us, to help us learn how to do the new thing in the best way, to achieve a result. Whether it is piano lessons, learning to fly or swim or to speak French, we all need someone to help us. why isn't it always viewed in the same way in the workplace?

Coaching improves confidence, self-belief and skills such as negotiation in a coachee. Success comes in all sorts of ways.



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shirlev.mansfield@coachsme.



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## What is Group Coaching and How Does it Work?

Group coaching usually consists of 6-8 delegates who are facilitated by an experienced coach. The delegates should be of a comparative level i.e. all business owners. The facilitator will ensure that there are no conflicts of interest or conflicting businesses in the group.

The group usually meets monthly for a period of 6 to 12 months and works through a different aspect of business at each session. These groups normally conclude at this point. Some groups however may morph into peer to peer groups where the delegates have built a beneficial bond that they want to continue.

## What Does A Coach Do?

“A coach is someone who always makes you do what you don't want to do so you can be who you've always wanted to be....” Leeman Bennett

In general, I agree with the statement although there are so many types of coaches that is hard to come up with a definitive definition. I can tell you what a business coach does, and that is getting the very best out of you so that you can have the business and the lifestyle that you want

In a business setting there are several coaching options. As a business coach I work primarily with business owners and CEOs of companies but occasionally I also work with senior management teams and executive boards to drive their businesses forward.

There are options where you can have group coaching in your business or with like-minded individuals from different businesses usually called a mastermind or peer to peer coaching.

You could start to coach yourself by reading books and blogs for example the Grown-Up Business book which is a great read for startup's and small and medium enterprises.

If you are stuck, then think about a football manager, judo or swimming coach; they all want you to improve and be the best you can be. That's why you hire them.

## Is a Business Coach like Having a Boss?

Like most business owners, you have probably worked for someone else. You had a boss, someone who told you what to do and how to do it. You could ask them for help. They would keep you on track with deadlines and make sure that you delivered on time and within your budget. You could go home and forget about work until the next day.



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Now you are the boss, but you no longer have a boss. The question is do you need one? Let us see.

I bet you have sat in your office and said, “I’ll finish that report by the end of the week” or “I’ll make an appointment with x client” but did not do it. On Monday morning, you say the same thing; again, it does not happen. You tell yourself you are so busy you do not have time, but you will do it next week. Suddenly a month or two has passed, figures are down, and it is only now you start kicking yourself because you did not do what you said you would. A whole month’s delay: you have lost time, you have lost opportunities, and you’ve certainly lost money.

The reality is that there is no-one to enforce your deadline; no-one is going to tell you off or make you squirm. The only person who gets their stuff on time is the tax man: you cannot afford to make him angry, can you? So, who do you report to, apart from the tax man? As the business grows, you will soon be planning with and reporting to a board or your shareholders. They certainly will not be happy if you miss your deadlines.

Let us take another scenario. You have a great idea and you are so motivated that you get everything in place and launched in record time. Wow, super-productive! Soon you discover it was a really bad idea. You start asking yourself why you did not see the obvious problems, why you did not stop and think about what you were doing or whether you could have done it differently. Once again, you have lost time, lost out on better opportunities, and probably lost lots of money.

## What is a Problem-Solving Coach?

All coaching is about solving a problem. For example, I don’t know how to

- score a goal at football or a try at rugby
- find more time in the day or spend more time with family
- grow my business
- make more money
- engage my staff and customers, etc.

A coach is great at solving all these problems by helping you to clearly identify what the problem is and then help you to take steps to solve that problem once and for all.

## Can I Have a Coach for a Special Project?

Yes.



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Megan was my coach (boss) when it came to be writing my book, The Grown-Up Business. Her directions: 4000 words a week, rewrite this section, restructure that section, edit it, cut 10% of waffle words, find a publisher, do a pitch and sell the book! Only once did I miss a deadline – slap on the wrist for me, but I did not do it again. I did not want to let her down. Obviously, I wanted to get the book finished for myself, but I needed someone to be my boss!

## What Type of Coach Should I Look For?

Different coaches covering different aspects of business as well as life. There are experienced coaches and there are new coaches. There are niche coaches, only working in certain industries and there are specialists. For example, a speaking coach or a high growth coach. So, you do have choices and options.

Taking time to sit down and think what you really need is the best starting point when you are looking to recruit a coach.

You might want a fluffy coach that agrees with you every time or a tough one that is more likely to get the best from you; a ‘no excuses’ coach! Expertise and/or experience maybe what you are looking for. You should consider the coaches attitude, personality, and the way that they work.

Essentially look your coach in the eye and ask yourself whether you believe that they will do the very best job for you. If you can't answer ‘yes’ to that question, then it's time to find a different coach.

## What is the Difference Between Coaching and a Mentoring?

If you Google coaching or mentoring there are over 136 million results. There are not 136 million different opinions, but there are a few! For example, some believe that coaching is short-term, and mentoring is long-term. Whilst others differentiate on money: coaching is paid for and mentoring is free. Another opinion is that mentoring is focused on creating an informal association whereas coaching follows a more structured and formal approach.

This [infographic on mentoring](#) may help explain.

## Which is Best, a Coach or a Mentor?

As Zig Ziegler famously said, *“a lot of people have gone further than they thought they could because someone else thought they could.”*

I am often asked what is the difference between a business coach and mentor? In many respects they are very similar, they both focus on improvement in the



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shirlev.mansfield@coachsme.



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business or the person. But they are different in the way that they are delivered, how the solution is delivered and by whom.

Firstly the who:

**Mentors** have been there and got the T-shirt. They have experienced exactly what you are facing. For example, if you are selling a business then engaging a mentor who has been through the process would be very beneficial. Similarly, if you want to develop yourself into the next CEO then a mentor who has been a CEO would be a great asset to you.

Mentors commit to mentee for a set period and invest time in getting to know the mentee, their capabilities, interests and ambitions. The mentor will be knowledgeable in their field and pass on wisdom gained through their own business experiences.

Great mentors can teach and guide you through the process; it's all about sharing past experiences in order to learn.

**Business coaching** is all about improving and developing people and their businesses to achieve their goals, whatever they maybe. A coach is not a consultant; they do not direct you or do it for you. In fact, great coaches will help you to discover, define and then do. A coach will be an inspiration, a sounding board, a boss, a confident, a shoulder to cry on and a challenger too. A coach has a great ability to ask those individual, difficult but critical questions and a great coach can ask questions that plant a seed in the coachee's mind that grows and then takes their thinking to another level.

The key is the clarity around the engagement with the client are they being coached or mentored?

## Should I Hire a Mentor Instead?

Possibly.

Sometimes it is a tricky task to find the very best person to help you. Perhaps it is better not to look at the label but rather the person and how they can add value to/for you. What are you looking for, what do you need, why do you need it, when do you need it and how do you need it? These should be the questions uppermost in your mind.

When I have a client who is looking to raise a significant amount of finance through either angel or VC investors I may pair them with a finance raising mentor who not only knows the system inside out but also has a fantastic black book of investors.



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If you are looking to exit your business, you might also want to work with a mentor who has done it themselves and knows all the pitfalls that they come along or a coach with a great track record in this area.

So, the answer to this question is, it depends.

## Is a Coach or Consultant Better for Me?

In general, a coach coaches and a consultant does.

If you need something done for example a marketing plan constructed, then you would be better employing a consultant. However, a consultant will do the work for you, but you will not have learnt how to do it yourself or potentially be bought into the outcomes. On the other hand, a coach could help you to develop your own marketing plan that is specifically tailored to your business; you will own it and be able to do it yourself next time.

## How Does Coaching Compare to Training?

Whilst coaching isn't typical training, it is an opportunity to learn, improve and grow. Everyday can be a training day - a day when you learn something but not necessarily in a training room.

Coaches have huge kit bags of skills, stories, experience and expertise to share with you if you want to learn.

## Should I Have a Business Coach or Join a Mastermind Group

You can have a business coach **and** join a mastermind group as well. There is nothing to stop you. Experiencing both will help you to understand which benefits you get from each one.

## Should I Try Different Coaches?

Of course. It might take time to find the perfect coach for you. That is why the research that you do before engaging a coach is important. Make sure that you take up references and recommendations from people that you know and trust to help you find the best possible coach at the earliest opportunity. Expert coaches will also be able to tell you whether they can coach you and get the best out of you rather than just taking your money.



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shirlev.mansfield@coachsme.



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A little time spent thinking about and finding the 'best fit' solution is always preferable to jumping in, starting to flounder, and trying to change coach half way through the game!

## Instead of a Coach, Who Else Could Help Me?

There are several options. But who do you choose instead of a coach?

- a mentor: they will help guide you to become accountable
- a business partner: joint directors can hold each other responsible
- a non-executive director or a formal board
- an advisory board if you do not have a formal board
- investors or shareholders: they will be looking for their return, so they will make sure you stay on track

If you want someone who has been there, done it, and got the T-shirt, then you need a mentor who will guide you through the maze. A business coach will keep you on track, tease out your own goals, identify and overcome problems with you.

A formal board of directors will be there to help direct the business, to ensure everything is legal and correctly run. Non-executive directors bring an external perspective, expertise, experience, and a precious black book! An advisory board advises you but does not direct you. They meet with you regularly to assess progress, adjust plans, reforecast, and help to knock down any barriers that your business encounters. Advisory boards are commonplace in the tech start-up arena.

## Section Two How to Find the Best Person

### Does Every Business Owner Have a Coach?

Let me share a story....

One of my new clients was at a seminar talking to some guests – when my client mentioned (quite quietly) that he had just started working with a business coach and in that split second wished he hadn't! He thought that they would think badly of him. But to his surprise and relief they said “coaches are great aren't they – I've had one for a while and what a positive effect he has had on my business.” I'm not sure how the conversation continued but my client was thrilled to know that others had had a great experience.

If you are feeling that you are under-performing, not sure what to do next, then perhaps an exploratory meeting with a business coach could help you.



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shirlev.mansfield@coachsme.



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## Are Coaches Just for New or Inexperienced Businesses?

Time for a story. This is an email I received from a client which answers this question.

“As a 20 year old business we had done well, very well; good growth, good profit, innovative products that customers wanted to buy, a successful business. So why did we engage business coach?

Well, we didn't know that we really needed business coaching until we met Shirley Mansfield but we are really pleased that we have Shirley as part of our business team and our expert business coach.

In the two years since we have been working with Shirley we have

- Grown by +30%, +25% in the last two years, and this year is tracking to plan
- Employed seven new staff
- Established a great management team
- Ensured that we have clear sight of how our business is performing. We can now use information we did not have before Shirley arrived to:
- Make much better decisions
- Profile and forecast what impact any possible changes in our business might have
- Addressed any poor performance
- Expanded our operation into the US, Australia and Europe
- Become an industry recognised trailblazer for RFID solutions to festivals
- Supplied 18 out of the 20 major UK festivals last year
- Moved smoothly from first to second generation

From our very first session Shirley has really focused us on the business and what we wanted to achieve. We didn't want to retire yet so we have a plan to drive continuous future growth and everybody at ID&C knows what we do how we do it and why we do it.

We really value our sessions. Shirley is challenging but supportive, a taskmaster but also a great trainer too. She doesn't tell us what to do, but she helps us discover exactly what we need to do.

It's really beneficial to us to be able to bounce ideas around and have a really good knowledgeable sounding board. This helps us to discover all our options and then to work through each one so that we make the very best decisions every time.

Shirley brings her wealth of experience and business expertise to the table every time she is with us and equally valuable is her 'black book' of great contacts.



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shirlev.mansfield@coachsme.



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Without Shirley we would have grown, but not in such a controlled and sustainable manner, and certainly not with as much speed. If you don't have an expert business coach to work with then we can highly recommend that you get one and quickly, if you really want to grow your business.

## Where Do I Find a Great Coach?

Usually the very best coaches are not out networking at morning breakfast or advertising heavily, they are working with super successful businesses who are continually referring new businesses to them.

Yes, you can search Google. A good starting point for you if you do not know anybody who has their own business coach. Local influencers will know the best business coaches around and can help you with your search. One of the best ways to find a coach and check them out is to talk to some of their coaching clients. If coaches have websites, they will have testimonials posted from previous clients which you can check. Alternatively ask your peer-to-peer or network groups and uncover people who know and can recommend a business coach. Have they used one themselves and if so, what was the outcome? Now you can find out more and decide whether it is the right route for you.

Don't just find any old coach: you've got to work with them! Find someone who has the right skills and values, someone you can get to know, like, trust, and respect.

Talk to other business owners. Do they have coaches, mentors, or advisors that they could introduce to you?

Decide if you want someone who knows you and your faults or an outsider, who is not going to let you get away with anything.

Prepare a checklist *before* you start to approach prospective coaches, to make sure that you find the right person.

Sit down and make a list of everyone you know who might fit the role. Now cross out the ones that do not feel right. For those that remain, take a little more time to think if they are the right person for you.

## How Important is 'Experience' When Hiring a Coach?

If you are making an investment you want to make sure you are backing the right horse. Having an experienced coach might be the solution. Experience and expertise are both important attributes, but they may not be the sole criteria for you.



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shirlev.mansfield@coachsme.



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## Are all Coaches Licensed?

No. They are not licensed in the same way that an accountant or lawyer is licensed. Most countries have a governing body for coaching, but this only applies to coaches who are members of that organisation. So, you need to employ the 'buyer beware' philosophy.

If things go wrong, you will have to seek redress with the coach. Most coaching associations insist that you solve the problem with your coach, they do not get involved. The only power they may have is an option to strike them off their register.

## What Qualifications Should my Coach Have?

As with most industries there are coaching qualifications. Some of these come from the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) in the UK where there are coaching certificates at different levels.

There are numerous coaching federations who 'qualify' people as a result of case studies they have submitted and time spent coaching. They maintain a register of recommended coaches who have followed their process and passed their qualification.

There are coaches who are experts in their field despite having no formal coaching qualification. But they have a significant number of years of continued and consistent success with a range of clients. If your coach does not have a qualification but you feel that he or she can work with you, you might prefer to ask for references or opportunities to speak to past clients. These would normally equal qualifications in terms of your comfort level.

## What Interview Questions Should I Ask Before Hiring a Coach?

You should interview a prospective coach as you would a prospective employee. You can be certain that the coach will be interviewing you to see if you fit the bill!

This is a blog I wrote several years ago but it is still valid today. It is one of my most popular blog posts.

As a business coach I would say that you should have a coach, wouldn't I? When people discover I'm a business coach, I can generally predict the next 7 or 8 questions – And here they are.....



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shirlev.mansfield@coachsme.



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Questions	My Answers
Should I have a coach?	Perhaps. Why do you think you should have one?
How do I choose a coach?	Chemistry, credentials, recommendations, experience and respect are a good starting point.
How much do coaches cost?	It is your investment – how much are you prepared to invest? You should pay what it's worth to you.
Who do you coach?	Business owners who really want to be coached; willing participants, businesses I choose to work with.
Do you have a coach?	Yes, I do.
Can I just ask you this question that's been niggling me and I don't know what to do...?	Of course, let's book a session then I
What is your coaching style?	That depends on you and how you respond. I'll adjust my style to suit you but don't expect fluffy!

The question I love to be asked is “how will I know coaching works for me?”

- You have a sounding board that challenges you to get to the best outcome.
- You make better decisions – you are forced to get the facts, consider other options, look at both up- and down-sides.
- Confidence improves
- You start sleeping better
- Your business starts out-performing your peers
- You have more free time; you can choose how you spend your time
- You have clarity, a clear head
- You solve a problem once and for all
- Consistency and predictability both arrive along with more positivity
- Knee jerks, stress and illness disappear
- You are ready to grab opportunities instead of letting them pass you by.



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shirlev.mansfield@coachsme.



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As I was penning this blog, a great article from Jodie Shaw popped up in my LinkedIn timeline. Called [12 Things Your Coach Won't Tell You](#), it's a great read.

Take time to prepare for your 'coach interview', do you have your list of questions and scoring sheet ready? Now, what's your next question?

## What Happens at a Free Consultation?

This is an opportunity for an experienced coach to understand what you require, what added value they can bring and whether they feel they can get the best out of you. They are interviewing you.

You too, get the opportunity to look your coach in the eyes and ask yourself whether the coach can deliver what you want. It is an opportunity for both of you to establish how each other works, decide if it is a good fit. If so, set some ground rules and outline objectives before you start.

## Will my Coach Also Coach Everyone in my Team?

It is highly unlikely as a business owner you have a coach that also coaches your subordinates. There is a conflict of interest in this scenario. But you might engage a coach as a senior management team or Board coach in which case yes they would coach you and your direct reports but as one project, together, at the same time.

If your subordinate requires coaching, then you need to engage a second coach. This might be a specific performance and /or development coach. Expert coaches often work together and are happy to introduce or recommend additional coaches for separate solutions.

## Who Else Does My Coach Work With?

Business coaches will have a list of past and present businesses that they have worked or continue to work with. You should avoid conflicts of interest. As soon as your coach understands your business and field of operation they will exclude themselves from engaging in coaching you if they have a client or past client in a similar industry or market.

You may wish to ask your coach before you meet them whether there is a potential conflict of interest. If you are very keen to work with the coach even though they work with a conflicting business, please remember that the coach would have to clear that with the other company before speaking to you.

It is always hard to ensure Chinese walls and experienced coaches will generally walk away if there is a conflict with a current client.



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## What Should I Expect from My Coach?

You should expect openness, honesty, transparency, experience, expertise, fairness, and complete confidentiality. Your coach will always do the best for you.

Most coaches have a statement that describes what they do and how they work. Some call it their Mission, Vision and Values statement. I prefer a manifesto and here is mine....

- I will help business owners, who want to be helped; to make more money, by solving issues & problems rather than ignoring them.
- My primary offering is to help you become a Grown-Up Business, so your business gives you everything you want it to.
- I will share information that I consider is 'value-adding'. My focus is on quality not quantity as well as the 'less is more' principle. Inappropriate or value-less communications wastes my time, and yours.
- I am a Thought Leader and Master Problem Solver who helps businesses find solutions through my
  - Books, including [The Grown-Up Business](#)
  - Training programs; seminars, presentations & workshops
  - Coaching, mentoring, and facilitation
- I value what I do, so I work with people who are prepared to pay for my expertise.
- I am focused on doing the very best for my paying clients; they deserve it. Requests for coffee, free advice or to 'pick my brains' may be graciously declined.
- I employ expert staff, out-sourcers and work solely with partners who "get" me and who add value to both me and my clients.
- I will recommend really great people; no second best.
- I continue to strive to be the highest quality business problem solver in Kent and do whatever it takes to ensure that the quality of service is unmatched anywhere.
- I coach, mentor, write, speak, facilitate and train. I get paid from my expertise not my time.
- I help those that help themselves. I do not waste my time pushing against a closed door and I do not chase those running faster than me.
- I concentrate on my personal development to be the best I can be.
- I strive for perfection but can accept that good is good enough.
- Not everyone understands or 'gets' what I do, and that's fine.



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- I work with people and businesses that I want to work with. I add value; if I cannot, I will find someone who can.
- Mediocre is not good enough.

Above all as a coach and business improver, I will give you a big return on your expectation and investment. I freely give you a 60-minute taster session and my work is backed by my 100% money back guarantee.

**Be Innovative. Smile Lots. Make a Difference.**

## **Should I Ask My Coach to Sign and NDA?**

Experience business coaches pride themselves on their professional integrity and that means keeping your coaching sessions confidential, private and not shared with others. None of these coaches would be insulted if you ask them to sign an NDA and should that satisfy your concerns, then by all means ask them to sign your NDA.

## **Should My Coach Have Professional Indemnity Cover?**

All business coaches should hold professional indemnity cover and supply you with evidence. Business coaches, coach businesses at different levels and therefore the requirement for a specific amount for professional indemnity may vary. Remember a coach is there to coach you rather than tell you what to do. Your business decisions are always your responsibility. However, the comfort of knowing your coach has professional indemnity cover in place is a great way to mitigate any possible risk to your business.

You should discuss with your coach the level of professional indemnity that you require before starting out.

## **When Does a Coach Celebrate!**

When they have helped you learn how to fish!



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# Section Three - What Happens Now?

## What Should I Expect in my First Full Coaching Session?

It will be tough. Expert and experienced coaches will ask you those difficult questions that you really do not want to answer. The ones you have been putting off answering which has led you to where you are now.

It will be a positive and uplifting session although at times you may feel like you have the worst business in the world. This is quite natural. You are hiring a business coach so that you can get your business in the best shape possible to conquer the world.

It will be tiring, you'll feel exhausted afterwards, but you will also have a weight lifted off your shoulders, if not fully certainly partially, positivity returns. You will feel like you are making progress already. You will have some homework to do. You'll be looking at the side of a mountain wondering how you're ever going to get to the top but knowing that you have taken the first step with your coach will help you to take the next one, the next one and the next one....

## What Happens in a Coaching Session?

Some larger coaching organisations have a formula and a process that they work through during their contract with you. This may be a prescriptive process that these types of business coaches follow.

Independent coaches will have worked with you to establish a tailor-made plan going forward. This follows the, first very necessary process of uncovering the underlying issues. In some cases the underlying issues that need resolving are not the original issues that the business owner had identified. For example, 'I need to raise finance to buy new stock' could be the challenge, but the reality might be they need to sell the old stock first then they wouldn't need finance for new stock.....

Ask your prospective coach what happens in their coaching sessions. You should also understand what is not included within the coaching program for example can you write my business plan for me is not a coaching task but a consultants task

## Do Coaches Follow a Prescribed Formula or Process?

Some coaches do.



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Coaches that work under the banner of a large coaching organization pay to follow their formulas and that is how they will work with you. Other, independent coaches have their own processes that they have developed from years of experience to ensure that the coachee gets great value.

Experienced coaches will discuss options with you before finalising the action plan or implementing a process. It is essential that they understand the root cause of the problems rather than pushing you through a defined process.

## How Much Do I Tell My Coach?

Everything if you want them to really help you.

Be truthful, don't tell the coach what you think they want to hear, tell them the truth otherwise you are just wasting your time and theirs. However bad you might think it is, rest assured an experienced coach will have heard worse.

At the start of a new coaching engagement it is important that both the coach and the coachee know exactly what is expected of them. In the same way as you build a house, you need to fix strong foundations on which to base the coaching program. As you progress through the action plan you will continue to add layers to the work.

## Is a Coach A Good Sounding Board?

Absolutely!

A coaching session provides a risk-free setting for you to try out thoughts, plans, options, opportunities, challenges, risks, in fact you can bounce around anything with your coach. They will assist you order and clarify your thoughts particularly when you have options to choose from.

## How Flexible is a Coach to my Needs?

Expert coaches have coached many different people in many different scenarios.

Whilst delivering the core essentials of coaching, they will use their expertise to deliver that in the most flexible way possible that gets the very best out of their client. This might be as simple as early morning or late evening coaching sessions. They may be virtual or face to face.

A dedicated coach is always ready to work with a client as opposed to against them and working with them means that flexibility becomes part of the process. However, flexibility must stop at some point and the late cancellation of coaching



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shirlev.mansfield@coachsme.



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sessions does not fall under the category of flexibility and usually incurs a cost from the coach.

## **Which Coaching is Best, Face to Face, Phone or Video?**

Most coaches have their preference, face to face or video conferencing. Some successfully coach via the telephone, whereas some coaches would resist this because they are unable to see reactions from their coachee.

Distance may mean that video conferencing is the only option. Following the coronavirus lockdown more and more people have become comfortable with video conferencing and this may become the new normal for many coaching engagements.

## **Where Should Coaching Take Place?**

Regardless of face to face or video conferencing coaching you should always be in an environment which is comfortable for you and allows you the privacy necessary to be open and honest. Having cryptic conversations with even more cryptic questions in public places such as a café, does not help the coaching process.

## **How Often Should I Have Coaching Sessions?**

This varies from individual to individual. You might need one session to clarify your thoughts and help you determine a clear way forward. On the other hand, you might need a lot of interventions from your coach to help you move forward, for example, revamping your entire company! You may be moving into a different field of operation or a challenging time for example acquiring a new business where a coach would be invaluable.

Discussing your challenges with your coach helps you to decide how often you require sessions. Your coach will guide you. Whatever schedule you agree, get all the dates booked in now so you avoid any clashes or last-minute cancellations.

Most coaches allow diary time for 'emergency sessions' for ad hoc last-minute sessions because you require help with unexpected problems.



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## How Long is a Coaching Session?

This depends on the type of coaching you have. Perhaps an hour for a Skype or Zoom video conference call or telephone call to maybe a half day face to face session at your premises.

Agree the schedule before you start.

## How Long Will I Need Coaching?

It depends on

- how much progress you can make in-between your coaching sessions?
- how complex the issue requiring solution is?
- how dedicated you are
- whether you continue to get value.

Reflect after every session on progress, successes and what the next session will be. Your coach will be keen to 'let you go it alone' when they think you are ready. You might also pause to implement a large piece of work and then re-engage months later. Some coaches have clients on a 3-year cycle, some for an annual check-up or a quarterly review.

## How Do I Know Coaching Works for Me?

You will have to try it and see. Set yourself some clear objectives and dip your toe in and experience a coaching session.

## Who Benefits from Business Coaching?

Every business owner or manager or senior management team or board benefits. Ultimately everyone in the business benefits, albeit indirectly from coaching. Employees feel it and so do customers & suppliers. Entire teams can benefit greatly.

Start-up's, micros and small businesses, solopreneurs, entrepreneurs, in fact any type of 'preneurs' can benefit from business coaching.



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## What if Coaching Doesn't Work for Me?

Coaching does not work for everybody first time. It is generally a case of finding the right coach to get the best out of you.

If you look at a sports scenario, you see top class golfers change coaches to get even better. They have different coaches at the same time who focus on different aspects that require improvement. For example, putting, nutrition, weight training, the long game, the short game, and the game played in the 6 inches between their ears....!

It is the same in business, sometimes you need a specific coach to help you with, say, public speaking or writing or finance. Other times you require a person that can coach you to be better. All great coaches will provide a prospect with an opportunity to experience coaching before they sign up.

Coaches that require a retainer would, I hope include a cancellation clause. Other coaches operate on a pay as you go basis, and many offer a 100% money back guarantee, but you should check this before signing up.

## Section Four – How Much?

### Is Coaching a Good Investment?

Virtually every business owner that has had a business coach would give you a resounding yes! Business coaching can be life changing, transformational and that's why great coaches continued to coach. They love being part of several really, really, really, successful businesses. Your investment should be returned to you over and over again if you implement the plan.

### Can I Afford to Hire A Business Coach?

A great business coach will help you earn much more than their fees. It is just the same with an accountant – the money and tax they save you should be far less than their fees.

### How Much Does a Coach Cost?

The short answer is it depends. But let me try to be more helpful and share the aspects that affect the cost both up and down. This will help you decide what you want and what you can afford.



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## Business Coaching Options

The most effective and targeted coaching is obviously one on one. But, just as within sports coaching you could select group coaching sessions. These might be called 'peer to peer groups' or a 'mastermind group'.

They're generally groups of 5 to 7 people (no conflicting company's) which is regularly facilitated by the coach. You will be expected to commit fees for a period, say 3 to 6 months. Some groups operate over a meal in which case you budget for food and refreshments.

Group coaching is less expensive than one to one business coaching.

Virtually all coaches will offer a free session, albeit a shorter session so you can try before you buy.

## Business Coaching Experience & Expertise

Inexperienced coaches are cheaper than experienced and expert coaches who have a successful track record with companies and business owners.

There are coaches that specialise in certain aspects or areas of business which may or may attract a premium price.

An expert and experienced coach is more likely to offer a coaching money back guarantee and a shorter return on investment (ROI) period.

All coaching is designed to accelerate your achievements and in business that is making more money, so your fees should be 'repaid' quicker by using an expert coach.

## Location of Coaching

Face-to-face business coaching, in your office is more expensive than a Skype or Zoom coaching call. Telephone coaching could be less. Some coaches will charge for their travelling time in addition to charging a mileage rate, so you'll need to take this into account too.

Several coaches will only coach via Skype or Zoom and some prefer face-to-face. There will be a cost difference, but you should decide which works best for you; your coaching preferences matter.

## Time Commitments

How long do you think that you will need coaching? You may need a quick boost or longer-term support; perhaps a mixture of the two. Naturally you'll work with the coach to determine a plan to achieve your objective.

Coaching and check ins should be scheduled in advance. Coaching sessions could be fortnightly, monthly or quarterly and interim check ins.



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In general, for every hour of coaching you will need to invest 3 hours of your own time to build on the work you have done with your coach.

Coaches, particularly remote coaches, will allocate a time slot for your coaching. This could be between one hour or three hours. Face to face coaches will also book a time slot with you and because they travel, they will have a little flexibility with time. You need to understand what happens when your time slot runs out and you're right in the middle of something really important.

Weekend and out of hours (pre 9am and post 6pm) coaching sessions are available but expect to pay extra for these times.

Experienced coaches will require preparation time which may or may not be included in your coaching fees; you just need to make sure that that is clear.

### Business Coaching Contracts

Some coaches will only work with you under a contract. This maybe a minimum engagement of say three to 12 months or a rolling contract with a cancellation period. Coaching companies tend to offer 6- or 12-month coaching programmes where you need to commit to this time frame at the outset.

You should check out the terms before signing up. Other coaches work with a monthly retainer where you have a monthly coaching session and then any interim support that you need in between coaching sessions.

An increasing number of experienced coaches will offer 'Pay-As-You-Go' options. Here you have one session and pay for it with no obligation for another one.

An extension of the PAYG business coaching option is offered by many coaches; a money back guarantee. A 100% money-back guarantee is quite common. This a good way of finding out whether coaching will work for you.

### Business Coaching Versus Mentoring

Business coaching and mentoring are two distinct skills sometimes blended together to help the coachee. You need to be clear which you require, mentoring and/or coaching because this will attract a different fee structure.

### Cancellations

Coaches commit a time slot to you in advance. The same way you book a dental appointment or a holiday. Many coaches apply a decreasing penalty fee structure should you cancel your session within say 48 or 72 hours. Make sure you understand your commitment for coaching sessions and any penalties that might apply if you cancel a session.



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## Ongoing Support

Lots of coaches will provide notes, action points or minutes following the coaching. They are a useful checkpoint for you after the session. Most coaches will permit you to record the session to listen back to later. Preparation of these notes obviously takes time and coaches may charge extra for this.

Above all you should find out what is included in the fixed fee and what are additional services that you might have to pay for

So, as you can see it depends.....

## Should I Ask My Coach for A Guarantee?

It is up to you. Most experienced coaches offer a 100% money back guarantee on their coaching session.

## Will I Have to Commit to a Contract or Retainer?

Some coaches only work on a contracted or retainer basis, other are more flexible. This could be for a fixed or rolling contract or retainer. Other coaches work on a pay-as-you-go basis, you have a session, you pay for it and if you want another session you book another session.

If you are not comfortable with a retainer, you should still have your 100% money back guarantee to fall back on. But if you do not want to retainer or contract at all, ask the coach if they will vary their terms. They will say yes or no.

## What to Expect on a Coaches Monthly Retainer Package?

This depends on the coach and your terms of engagement with them. Make sure you understand what you are paying for before you sign up.

## What Return on Investment Can I Expect from Business Coaching?

This is determined by your objectives.

You may want coaching to help you to delegate tasks so that you have more time. Perhaps you want to accelerate the growth of your business or divest a division or set up a new production line or branch out into an export market....

Right from the first session, your coach will be adding value to you by helping you get closer to your goals. But a financial return on investment may take a little while to be delivered depending on the industry that you are in and the challenge you



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shirlev.mansfield@coachsme.



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must overcome. The return on investment conversation must take place at an early stage. It will be something that your coach will be keen to agree with you.

## How Do I Know I Will Get a Return on my Investment?

Business coaching is an investment for the future. Financial returns may not be instantaneous. Any business coach worth their salt will offer a 100% money back guarantee. In general, they will also offer you an introductory meeting, normally free of charge, so you have an opportunity to establish whether you can work together.

Some coaches will guarantee a certain return on investment. For example, if they are a coach that specialises in saving you money, they may set a figure for that. One coaching organisation guarantees you will make the fees back with 17 weeks.

Getting a return on investment means that you know what you want to achieve. Your primary objective might be to clawback a significant amount of time that you are spending in the business. So, getting a measurable return on investment would be easy to establish. Some businesses are focused on increasing revenue. Your return on investment might take longer if you have a long sales process compared to other businesses.

Even after an introductory session you should have already received great value from your coach. This might be an introduction to somebody, or a quick tip.

After every coaching session, you can reflect back to your coach whether you received great value and where you go next.

## And Finally,

Business owners who have successfully engaged a business coach will testify to the huge benefits and say that they wished they had done it earlier! Those who did not take the time or make the effort to find the best fit coach had a very different experience.

Of course, I would recommend that every ambitious business owner engages with a coach, a mentor or trusted adviser, I've seen first-hand the positive and in most cases transformational change and huge success that is available to those who recognise that they need some help.

I wish you every success with your business and now you know how to engage a business coach, I hope you do.



07885 197 364



shirlev.mansfield@coachsme.



www.coachsme.co.

## Additional Reading

You might like to try my latest e-book **7 Reasons Why Your Prospects Buy from Your Competitors** which you can [download here](#)

When You're Ready here are four ways I can help you build your business:

1. Register for **Business Owner Insights Newsletter** for regular tips and news.
2. Follow me on Twitter or Linked In and share the business challenges keeping you awake at night that you want to solve. Click here to email me.
3. Grab a copy of my book, The Grown-Up Business (paperback & Kindle). Get the tools and inspiration you need to go to the next level of wealth.
4. Work with me on your growth business to overcome the blockages, hurdle & problems that are holding you back. Join the community and just email me with 'Let's Get Started' in the subject line.

## About the Author

I'm a highly experienced business coach, mentor and master problem solver. My 35- year apprenticeship continues and since founding CoachSME in 2012 I have continued to work with ambitious business owners to maximise growth and achieve their business dreams. My other passion is golf and I'm working hard to reduce my 13 handicap because my coach believes I can be a single figure golfer!



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shirlev.mansfield@coachsme.



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