

5 Problems HR Professionals Encounter When Hiring An Executive Coach



Thinking of hiring an executive coach?

Here are five common challenges you're likely to face and what you can do to mitigate them.

As an HR professional, you know your people. You know when they're at their best. You also know when they could improve.

Training helps prepare you for your tasks, but executive coaching helps you make improvements. It provides focus, clarity, confidence, and greater creativity.

There's just one problem: getting your team on board.

Here are five of the most common issues we see when HR professionals try to hire an executive coach—and what you can do to troubleshoot them.

1. Getting Support to Bring an Outsider in to Solve Sensitive Internal Problems

One of the biggest issues comes up before the coach ever comes on board: getting support to bring an outsider to solve sensitive internal problems.

The benefit of an outside coach is that they're an outsider. They bring a fresh perspective and a breath of fresh air on familiar problems, which often allows you to shake off the same old rut and take a new approach. Unfortunately, this also makes your team wary—especially when the coach is brought on for sensitive internal issues.

When there are sensitive issues at stake, people are usually wary of being embarrassed, being made a scapegoat, or being made to look foolish. But in general, resistance to an outside perspective and a coaching project to take the business in new directions is often connected to resistance to change. This happens for several reasons, including:

- Loss of control
- Uncertainty
- Loss of habit
- Concerns about competence
- Unwelcome surprises
- Loss of face
- Past resentments

The best way to address uncertainty is to acknowledge it. Recognize that employees are uncertain and work with them to develop understanding. Help them understand what the coaching plan is, put the emphasis on positivity and growth, and don't be afraid to have personal conversations about any simmering resentments. You want everyone to feel comfortable going into this experience.

2. Articulating the External Coach's Value Proposition

Another common issue in bringing on a coach is articulating the coach's value proposition—not just what the coach can do for you in qualitative terms, but why it's worth spending money on a coach, the ROI of hiring one, and how it translates into your bottom line.

This is an especially common concern among small businesses, or even mid-size businesses that operate on a streamlined budget. After all, money you spend directly affects profits, so it's easy to justify not spending money. Why hire someone when you could easily fix the problem on your own, right?

Here's the problem: chances are, you're hiring a coach because you've already tried to fix the problem and it hasn't worked. Or you're hiring a coach because you know the problem requires expertise that you don't have. Either way, you know that you need outside help.

Whenever you're trying to gain support for a new idea, your first step is to make it as small and specific as possible. This will allow you to clearly articulate the issue you're trying to solve and how your effort can provide a solution. Your stakeholders are more likely to buy into a specific goal than broad, lofty ideas.



From there, do your homework to demonstrate ROI. Show how this project will drive value in concrete terms and how bringing on a coach to assist will actually earn money in the long run. In other words, you're selling value, not price.

3. Relaying the Strategic Objective to the Coach

Once your team is on board, you have a different issue on your hands: getting the coach on the right page. After all, if you relay your objective to your team but not to the coach, the coach won't be able to guide you properly.

This is where preparation can help you. If you did your homework to convince your colleagues and bosses before hiring the coach, you should already have a strategic objective prepared, along with specific goals within that objective, deadlines to meet them, and a plan for how the coach will help you get there, or at least an idea of what the coach will change in order to drive that objective.

If you didn't articulate a strategic objective before talking to your coach, you need to generate one. Otherwise, you're asking a coach to help you toward a goal without having a clear idea of what that goal actually is.

Need somewhere to get started? A good approach is to use SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely). This will make it easier to articulate what you want to achieve so that your coach knows what you need.

4. Keeping the Coach Accountable for Results

You've got buy-in, you've got your value proposition, and you're on the same page with your coach. But you're not quite home free yet—once you begin working with a coach, you have to keep them accountable for their results.

First, be clear about what you're trying to achieve. Set SMART goals and use your strategic objective as an opportunity to get crystal clear on what you're trying to do here.

From there, follow up regularly to ensure you're on track to meet your targets. The easiest way to do this is by setting a regular meeting schedule. Checking in seems obvious, but it often gets lost in the frenzy of putting out day-to-day work fires. Setting aside a specific time ensures that you don't shrug off check-ins in the name of other priorities.

5. Obtaining the Buy-In of the Executive Participating in the Coaching Sessions

Last but not least, you need buy-in from the executive participating in the session. After all, this is meant to benefit them, and if they're only loosely paying attention, none of it will stick.

As with generating buy-in elsewhere, it's important to stay specific. Be crystal clear about what you're trying to achieve, what's expected, and how you're going to get there. Drive value for the executive before you set foot in the meeting. Then, structure the session to drive back-and-forth between the executive and the coach—this already makes it easier to tune in.

Hire an Executive Coach Who Strengthens Your Business

You know your business could do great things. Our job is to make it happen.

We know the power that a great coach can have over your business. That's why we help you find expert coaches to drive success in your business, whatever that means to you, and we work with you to focus on your vision and help you grow.

So if you're ready to help your business thrive, we're here to support you on the journey.

