

The perfect match

There are many benefits to working with a coach, including improved profitability, production and a fulfilled workforce. Here, **Jane Lelean** explains how you can find a great business coach, for you and your practice

Aims and objectives

The aim of this article is to explain to dental practice owners the key features of a good business coach, so that they can recruit that will assist them in developing and growing their profitable practice.

Many international, national and SME companies recognise the benefits of working with a coach in terms of improved profitability, production and a fulfilled workforce.

In times of economic downturn many companies are recruiting business coaches to ensure business success, but how do you choose a great coach? Table 1 shows a recent Google search for coaches.

With that quantity of listings and reports such as this one from Simon Coops, chief executive of Acuity Coaching: 'Coaches are charging up to £1,500 per hour and there are no means of telling good from bad.'

In this article I will guide you through the top 10 points to consider when selecting your coach, and enable you to find the right one for you and your business.

1. Know what you want

Before you commission a coach you should know what area you want to work on with them. It could be an issue about a business development, management/leadership performance or even a health or behavioural problem you may have. Whatever it is, know what you want to achieve. If you don't know what you want, but you

know what you don't want, or what you are not prepared to tolerate any longer, that works too. If your outcome is a little hazy, a good coach will spend time with you, tuning, tweaking and clarifying so that you are crystal clear about outcomes that fit you.

2. Check their qualifications

Once you have decided that you are ready to make a change and work with a coach, the next step is check their qualifications.

'It's worryingly easy to do a short course and set yourself up as a coach and, even though there are a number of accreditation bodies, they have varying reputations,' says Kevin Bright, director of Business Psychologists, YSC. Moreover, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) journal, *Coaching at Work*, says, 'Don't ▶



Business Coach	10,300,000
Life Coach	8,400,000
Dental Business Coach	1,780

Table 1: The results of a recent Google search

accept qualifications at face value. Some reputable sounding organisations hand out coaching diplomas for a three-day course.'

John McGurk, CIPD Adviser Learning Training and Development recommends, 'Find out what training and qualifications they have and if you are not familiar with them, follow them up'.

Ask your prospective coach details about their coach training, who they trained with, their trainer's providence as a coach, how long it was and how much coaching they did as part of their qualifications. Be mindful that coaching is a powerful process for achieving change that is currently unregulated and there are many people in the market place that are using the title 'coach' with little or no coach training.

3. Check their accreditation

Once you have ensured that that your coach has qualified from a reputable organisation, such as International Teaching Seminars, you will next need to check their accreditations.

John McGurk, CIPD, recommends, 'Find out if they are a member of a professional body, and at what level. In other words, have they joined on the web and paid £10 or does their membership mean signing up to things such as continuing professional development or a code of conduct?'

Professional coaching bodies provide guidelines for best practice. They are to coaching what the General Dental Council is to dentists, or the Law Society is to Solicitors. In the UK, professional bodies include the International Coaching Federation (ICF) and the Association of Coaches. ICF accreditation cannot be achieved

without a rigorous level of training, a comprehensive log of coaching hours, adherence to a code of conduct, demonstration of core coaching skills, active supervision, commitment to post-graduate education, a written examination and a practical coaching exam. At present this cannot be said for all other professional bodies that have different criteria for accreditation.

4. Choose coach involved with supervision

Coach supervision is a formal process that your coach is involved with, regularly working with a more qualified coach, reflecting and evaluating their performance with clients and sharing expertise.

Supervision has two purposes, ensuring the continued learning and development of your coach, and providing a degree of protection for their clients. Ask your prospective coach about their supervisor, their supervisor's qualifications; how long they have been in supervision and how often they meet. Coaching supervision is essential for maintaining standards, and yet a recent study by the CIPD has found that only 44% of coaches are involved in supervision although this rises to 75% of coaches who are members of a professional body.

5. Continued professional development and post-graduate education

By now you have found a potential coach that is qualified, next you need to check that they are involved in a process of continued professional development and post-graduate education. Ask your coach what courses, conferences and workshops they attend, which coaching journals and books do they read regularly, are they involved in coaching networks and co-coaching groups.

6. Experience, references and testimonials

Now you will have honed down the potential coaches you have available to you and are ready to start asking how much experience your potential coach has. Coaches involved with ongoing accreditation processes will keep a

coaching log book and will easily be able to give you an accurate number of how many hours coaching experience they have, the numbers of clients.

John McGurk, CIPD recommends, 'Specifically ask them how many hours coaching they have and how many assignments they have delivered on, including what kinds of issues. If they don't have a coaching logbook then it could be that they've trained and never practiced, which is as useful as a teacher who has never taught'. Some of your friends may be unwilling to admit that they have worked with a coach reluctant to share their great experiences. Your coach will have a collection of testimonial letters and comments. Ask to see it.

7. Coaching tool kit

How comprehensive are your coach's resources and how flexible is their approach to coaching? Be wary of coaches who use one coaching model in all situations, as with clothes, one size does not really fit all. Coaches with NLP backgrounds, particularly if they are master practitioners will have a vast number of coaching skills at their fingertips with the flexibility to move between and combine models. This ensures you get what you set out to achieve, coping with whatever issues come up in your session. Ask your coach about their coaching philosophy, style and what range of coaching tools they use.

8. Whose agenda does your coach work to?

Coaching is all about you and you reaching your goals. Make sure that your coach is prepared to work to your agenda when it comes to scheduling sessions, and be flexible in your approach. Do you want a one-off session, and then return again later, or do you want weekly sessions, or a combination of the two? Most coaches agree that the clients that achieve the most are the ones that are committed to a frequent and regular coaching sessions. Discuss with your coach what is right for you. Do you want your coach to work with you face-to-face, or on the telephone? You will experience massive insights when you meet your

coach away from your home or workplace, and you can be inquisitive about how powerful telephone coaching is. Alternatively, choose a combination of the two.

9. Choose a coach who has a coach

By now you are coming towards the end of your selection process and are probably intrigued by how committed to the process of coaching your coach is. Would you buy meat from a butcher who wouldn't eat his own produce, or expect your patients to visit a dentist that never visits a hygienist? Choose a coach who is so committed to the environment of change that coaching provides that they have their own coach. Ask your coach about their coach, how long have they been in coaching, what are their significant outcomes as a result of coaching? Choose a coach with integrity and who 'walks the talk'.

10. Book an initial intake session before committing

You will now be at the place where you are ready to commission your coach. Before you sign up to a coaching programme, book and pay for an initial intake session.

Intake sessions typically last two or three hours and will give you and your coach ample opportunity to find out how well you are going to work together.

Use this time to discuss how you would like your coach to support you, what level of accountability you want them to hold you to, explore what you want to achieve and the evidence for that. This time is for you to design the coaching alliance that will be supporting you in the future.

Now you are happy with your coach's credentials, experience and skills, commission them and start to live the life that until now you have only dreamed of. [PD](#)

[Comments to pd@fmc.co.uk](mailto:pd@fmc.co.uk)

Dr Jane Lelean is an accredited coach with the International Coaching Federation and is a member of the Association for Coaching. Jane has gained over 20 years experience of running a business and being involved in patient care as a dentist and business owner. Having trained as a coach for the last few years, Jane has now sold her dental practice to dedicate herself full time to providing coaching, NLP and training to business owners and individuals who have a desire to make their careers, life and relationships healthier and wealthier.

Jane can be contacted on 01296 770462 or at jane@healthyand-wealthy.co.uk.



Turn to page 38
for CPD