

Call it a Rose! **Coaching Adds Cachet to Providing Traditional Functions**

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What's in a name?

A coach by another name describes the job done.

APOLOGIES TO WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

I summarized a list of traditional professionals and craftspeople who did what is now called coaching, in a published article, "Personal Coaching for Business Persons: A Plethora of Choices" appeared in the April 2008 issue of *Leadership and Management in Engineering*. The journal holds the copyright, but a copy can be purchased through the Internet or downloaded from the *Business Source Premier* full-text online Dataset available at many libraries.

One of the points made in the article was coaches were available by other names before renaming the service to coaching became a lucrative marketing practice.

To illustrate the argument, a table of 36 other names for coaches, in 12 groups of three, was listed. Longer lists are possible but will not further amplify my point. As coaching can be many things, it may help to define different services offered in traditional terms that accomplish the same goals.

In this essay, I elaborate my thoughts in creating the list. The intent is to assist you in framing the type of help needed at a particular point in time. With so many coaches offering a variety of services, there is a need to demystify the selection with common, readily understood terms.

Psychologist, Psychiatrist, or Psychoanalyst

Executive coaching began with Industrial and Organizational (I/O) Psychologists working in companies. Being on-site and students of human behavior, they were asked to work with executives who needed behavioral guidance. I/O work is usually with groups so it was natural for brethren more focused on individuals to expand their work from psychopathology to higher functioning people.

Counselor, Supporter, or Therapist

While there is an overlap between what psychologists and many counselors do, the latter usually use more concrete solution focused models. Less emphasis is placed on unraveling causes of unproductive behavior and the focus is placed on more directive advice for thoughts and actions. Distinctions often get blurred because each individual practitioner helps in his or her own way.

Cheerleader, Caretaker, or Hand Holder

Backing off from attempts to uncover causes and behavior modification are providers of blind support. Again, there are overlaps with the above, but it is a matter of degree. There is truth to the saying "it is lonely at the top." Also, on the way up the corporate ladder there are many who are willing and able to deprecate our every action. It is helpful to have a person to whom we can go to refill our *assurance* tank, so to speak. This is not the same as being surrounded by sycophants that many executives are able to keep on staff.

Teacher, Trainer, or Tutor

My undergraduate mechanical engineering did not include the management, marketing, accounting, banking and finance courses of my M.B.A. program. While competencies are usually taught in academic settings, there are coaches that focus on providing knowledge. Others, however, such as investment counselors and personal financial analysts have not changed their names to coach.

Accountant, Financial Analyst, or Planner

Laws now limit offloading of responsibility for finances. The level to which an executives delegate authority may put them in legal jeopardy. As liability is becoming harder to evade, it might be best to consider these professionals coaches, use them in this way, and monitor their actions.

Consultant, Advisor, or Guide

Advisors consulted under this category usually do not assume responsibility. They provide guidance that is to be carried out by management. Albeit, they are sometimes hired as scapegoats to assume blame.

Expert, Problem Solver, or Sage

Gurus provide special knowledge that is considered more esoteric than the assistance of consultants. Not too many years ago, computers fell into this category where the opinions of the initiated few were unquestioned.

Supervisor, Manager, or Leader

Bosses in many companies are now being instructed to coach employees. Working under someone who seriously coaches can help with career advancement.

Mentor, Sponsor, or Dutch Uncle

Being taken under the wing of someone in a position of influence is a time honored way of getting ahead. In companies with a formal "fast track" list, a sponsor integrates a protégé into the corporate culture, assures prime assignments, and touts the virtues of the "selected one." The Dutch Uncle confronts wayward behavior.

Confessor, Sounding Board, or Critic

Unlike a cheerleader, this category is supportive but more corrective than a caretaker. Liken it to a good editor who assists with grammar and organization but does not thwart the "voice" of the writer.

Hairdresser, Beautician, or Cosmetologist

Presentation counts! Whether a budding executive or circus clown, it pays to look the part to play the role. Even hippies look and act alike. People who specialize in looks are useful advisors on personal adornment.

Haberdasher, Dressmaker, or Tailor

This essay will end as it began, with a quote from Shakespeare, only not paraphrased. In *Hamlet*, Polonius admonished his son. Laertes, to dress well, saying:

*Costly the habit as thy purse may buy,
But not express'd in fancy; rich nor gaudy;
For the apparel oft proclaims the man,
And they in France of the best rank and station
Are most select and generous, chief in that.*