

**GETTING THE MOST OUT OF
EXECUTIVE COACHING**



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Congratulations! You have made the decision to work with an Executive Coach and you may be experiencing a range of emotions from apprehension to excitement. You want to enjoy the process and reap real benefits to make the experience one that you look back on as a major growth time in your career. You may also be apprehensive regarding what lies ahead, which is to be expected. This handout has been designed to assist you in deriving maximum benefit from this coaching opportunity.

Also included is feedback from 75 leaders who have most recently experienced coaching with A.J. O'Connor Associates (AJO).

AJO offers the following strategies and guidelines that are part of every successful coaching program. Understanding these from the beginning will help you go faster and farther in achieving your goals. The first strategy is to enroll your leader and other key stakeholders in your success; the second is to select the right coach for your needs; the third is to use the skills, talents and experience of your Executive Coach to gain the greatest traction. Let's take a closer look at each strategy.



1. ENROLL YOUR SUPPORT TEAM

Engage Your Leader, HR, Peers, and Direct Reports. A critical success factor is enrolling the people around you in support of your coaching process. At a minimum you will want your manager's active participation and sponsorship for the goals you set.

By enlisting your manager, HR, peers and even your direct reports in your learning process, you gain greater ability to try new behaviors, practice new skills, and experiment with a different leadership approach.

Your AJO Executive Coach will provide you with proven examples of how to fully engage the people in your circle of influence as part of the coaching process.

There is nothing in the world like having a partner and sounding board by your side to help you get where you want to go. That's what AJO's Executive Coaching is all about.

2. SELECT THE RIGHT EXECUTIVE COACH

Selecting the right coach begins with a coach-fit interview; AJO recommends speaking with at least two coaches before making your selection. Here are some ways to get the most out of your coach-fit interview:

- **Begin With the End in Mind.** Set some goals before you interview your prospective coaches. By asking yourself: “What am I looking to accomplish?” you will be better able to answer the question: “What kind of coach will best help me achieve my goals?”
- **Initiate the Interview.** Explain a significant challenge, an ethical dilemma, or a major mistake you’ve made and ask prospective coaches how they would coach you through this situation. Also, listen closely to the questions you are asked by each prospective coach. Do they touch on the core of your learning challenges? Do they provide insight and immediately help you shift your thinking?
- **Be Confident.** Ensure that you respect, trust, and have an affinity with your prospective coach. You’ll be spending a number of hours together, and beyond fit with your goals and coaching competence, you will want to enjoy being with your coach. Ask yourself: Is this a person that I can open up to? Is this someone with whom I can be myself? Do I sense this coach genuinely cares about me and will do what it takes to help me succeed?



Additional recommended resources:

- [Selecting an Executive Coach](#) provides a three-step process for selecting the best fit coach.
- [Executive Coach Interview Worksheet](#) will guide you through the process of selecting the best coach for your needs.

3. MAKE THE MOST OF COACHING

Once you begin the coaching process, consider the following best practices to help you get the most out of each session and ensure you achieve your goals:

- **Craft a Bold New Future.** Challenge yourself to move up to a whole new level as a leader; envision an ambitious future. Be open, willing and eager to create change. Ask yourself: Am I willing to stop or change behaviors that limit my success? Try new behaviors that may feel uncomfortable for me? Expect great things from yourself and the process.
- **Be S.M.A.R.T.** Working closely with your coach and manager, firm up your goals. A good approach to goal setting is to use the “SMART” model, that is: specific, measureable, achievable, realistic, and timed. And while it’s to be expected that your goals may change during the coaching process, you’ll accomplish more if you begin with a clear set of goals.
- **Commit Wholeheartedly.** Learning new behaviors and changing old behaviors is the ultimate success factor of each and every coaching engagement. Leave each coaching session with at least one specific action that will advance your leadership; commit to completing this action. Ask yourself: Am I investing the time in learning, practice and growth? Am I making consistent and persistent effort to achieve my goals? Prioritize and put your growth first!
- **Drive the Process.** Before each session prepare by assessing your progress and defining next steps. Take charge and facilitate the change you desire. Ask yourself: “What is working well for me? Not working for me?” Evaluate each session and discuss with your coach; ask questions and ask for what you need. For once, it really is all about you.
- **Celebrate Success.** Take time at each session to talk about your wins and revel in your progress. Coaching can be an intense and stressful process; remember to enjoy the journey.

What was the single greatest benefit to you from this experience?

- *“Being challenged to leave my comfort zone.”*
- *“Tools and techniques that will stay with me for the rest of my career.”*
- *“My confidence in my abilities increased exponentially.”*
- *“I have more confidence and a different lens with which to assess situations.”*
- *“Better prepared leader.”*
- *“Clear next targeted career/leadership opportunity that was identified through coaching insights.”*

What had the most impact on you during this coaching engagement?

- *“The constructive feedback from the 360s and interpretation on how to translate the feedback into goals and actions.”*
- *“Understanding the 360 comments from my business partners and peers.”*
- *“My coach helped me further understand my strengths and development needs as a leader. Sometimes you do not recognize the strengths and how to leverage those strength.”*