

## ASSUMPTIONS ARE THE FIRST TO GO

BY KEVIN LOHAN

“It’s nice to meet you”, she said. “and you”, he replied and offered his hand to shake.

The pair exchanged pleasantries and spent quite a bit of time just in small talk and then she got down to business.

“So, what do you want out of coaching?”

“Well, my business has reached a point where we need to capitalise on our success and explore new markets. So, I’m looking for ways I can grow the business through marketing.”

“That’s excellent,” she said “and how do you think I can help you with that intention?”

“I’m hoping that you can give me some marketing strategies and help me adopt them and grow new clients.” He said. “So, if I understand you correctly,” she replied. “You are after specific marketing advice from me and then I kind of ‘coach’ you through the process of adopting them.”

“Exactly!” he cried enthusiastically.

That’s about where the relationship ended. You see, the male person in this story had made a mistake that way too many people make about coaching. He thought that a coach was an expert in a particular field and when he called to make an appointment with this business coach he assumed that she had credentials and success in business. Indeed, the female in the story may well have once been the CEO of a major corporation but that’s missing the point.

You can’t expect to find a coach who by some stroke of luck, has exactly the skills you need.

No. A coach has different skills. A coach is there to help you with strategy and implementation but you need to get the other advice (in this case, marketing) from a different source.

A good coach can be helpful in this scenario, even with very little business success of their own. They use a different skills set.

By the same token though, too many coaches also make the same mistakes. For example, they may have entered the field as ‘life coaches’ and they just can’t make the shift to using their skills in other fields. They stick to a narrow vision of the future in which they are looking perhaps to explore the values and attitudes of their client and use this as a springboard to plan a better approach to their work/life balance. (I’m being over-simplistic I know and not all life coaches do this. I’m not having a dig at life coaches but rather suggesting that some among the field find it difficult to broaden the potential of their skill set.

It’s just as likely that ‘business coaches’ get stuck too.

Perhaps for example, they began their career in awe of one of the many products that explore personality or leadership style. They feel committed to applying the trade-marked profile instrument as a component of their approach and find it difficult to have a different beginning. All coaching must begin with the client completing a four-page questionnaire (and perhaps having their peers, manager and direct reports to complete a similar one) and then, at the end we discover that their leadership

style places them on the cusp of ‘Warrior’ and ‘Scientist’ and their colour profile is firmly in the purple quadrant.

Like my other example, there are coaches who adopt these approaches who also get stuck and can’t see alternative approaches.

In both cases, I want to emphasise that it is entirely possible that the coach has prodigious skills as a coach but that they may have become stuck in the groove.

I know from experience that coaching can offer measurable results and rewarding changes in the future that might have been unhappily less successful.

If we’re going to reap the best rewards from this field of our profession, we need to help spread the message that coaches use a specific skill set to help their client find a better future but that they need not have had a successful track record in the specific field being explored. Likewise, coaches with those skill sets could learn to be more flexible and start looking beyond the groove in which they might have become stuck and offer their skills in a wider variety of ways.

I’ll leave you with this, from famous American football coach, Vince Lombardi: “If you aren’t fired with enthusiasm, you’ll be fired with enthusiasm.”

Enthusiasm is one thing that any good coach can help you to employ.

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