



SECOND-STAGE ENTREPRENEURS

Entrepreneur's Resource Center

Coaches Strengthen Your Performance

Professional athletes often rely on a personal coach to help them cope with competition and play to their maximum potential — a concept that's scoring points in the business arena.

Even if you're a seasoned veteran, coaches can be a valuable resource, accelerating your progress and keeping you focused on goals. A coach doesn't need to be an expert in your industry. In fact, it may even be a benefit if an adviser is unfamiliar with your particular market niche.

Granted, dispensing advice without first-hand knowledge of an industry may sound suspect. Yet it's possible because the fundamentals of coaching remain constant, regardless of what a student is trying to achieve, says Deb Giffen of Learn Inc. in Mount Laurel, N.J., who has coached high achievers in numerous industries.

Coaches don't necessarily tout a degree or license. They provide direction much as a mentor might, except that the process is more formal. A few tips before signing up:

- Interview three to five coaches.
- Thoroughly check credentials.
- Note if the coach either has achieved your goal or has coached others who have.
- Get references — and call them.

Using a career coach to your best advantage remains a devise-it-yourself proposition. Marilyn Moats Kennedy, author of numerous books on career management, advises that you and your coach establish tangible goals that you can realistically achieve. "Don't try for 100% improvement," she advises. "A 15% improvement is the difference between a mediocre player and a star."

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