

Seven Reasons why Everyone Needs a Coach

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When I was a collegiate hockey player, it never dawned on me that I might not need a coach. Not only did the coaches help me with personal skill development like skating, passing, shooting, and checking, but also how to develop my team play so together we could be successful. Although I had good coaches and poor coaches, I always knew that I needed a coach.

Why then did it not dawn on me that I needed a coach when I was supervising 120 employees just months after graduating from university? It was not like I had a super-mentoring boss because I did not, and I don't think I was arrogant and thought that I knew it all. Why did I not think I needed a mentor?

While it is true that my management career began long before Bill Gates affirmed that “everyone needs a coach”, I have often reflected on why it is that people still today think they don't need a mentor, or a coach or consulting help? These few thoughts are intended to help encourage business owners and managers to seek a coach, mentor or consultant.

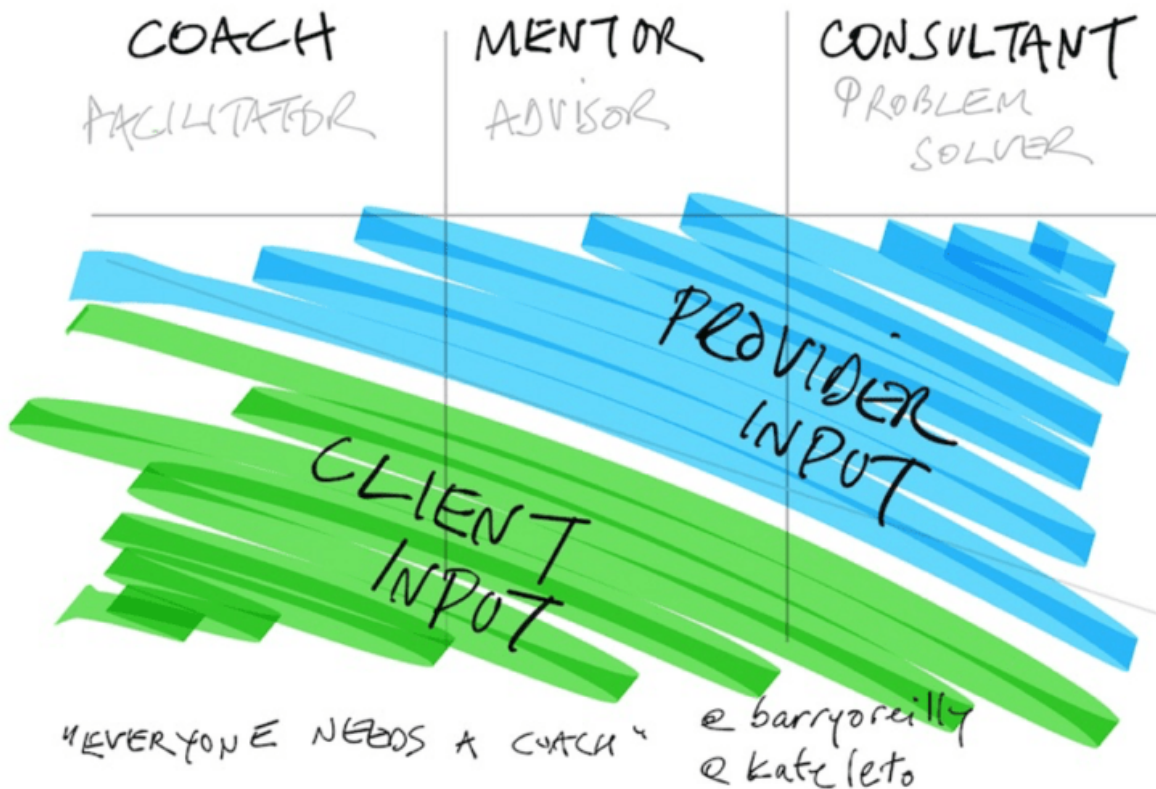
IBEC recognizes distinctions between the three terms defined here by Barry O'Reilly:

- **Coaches** facilitate the development of personal or professional objectives. The coach doesn't provide you with the answers to a challenge or even tell you what to do. Instead the coach acts as a facilitator to help you ask better questions and explore your own answers. They serve as a guide while you create a plan, define outcomes, and experiments to move your thinking forward. Think “facilitator” and “action-oriented.”
- **Mentors** give those with less experience advice or assistance in a specific area. For example, when mentoring someone in product management, we may cover specific techniques and tools that they'd like to understand better—like Discovery, Story Mapping, user interviews, etc. Mentors may even advise on the skills needed to move up to the next level in a client's career. However, unlike a coach who helps you discover your own answers, a mentor teaches, sharing their experiences and knowledge on industry related questions and challenges. Also, mentors are often a voluntary or unpaid role. Think “advisor” and “teacher.”



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- **Consultants** are brought in to answer specific questions or address specific challenges for an organization. They provide recommendations — based on their own experience, market trends, research, and many other inputs — and are often asked to be responsible for implementing those recommendations within the client’s organization. Again, a key distinction from coaches is that a consultant provides the answer — and maybe even own delivering of it — while a coach helps you facilitate your own answers. Think “problem solver” and “implementer.”¹



What I learned from experiencing and watching Coaches and Mentors

I am grateful that I finally realized the importance of coaches, mentors and consultants for everyone. I took coaching training from a great coach, Bob H. When I formed IBEC, I was fortunate to observe great coaches and consultants on the job primarily in Asia. Here are some things I think I learned.

1. **Coaches see the big picture.** If we are not very careful, we can get immersed in routine and our own challenges so that we cannot see the “forest for the trees”. We do not know what we do not know. It is immensely helpful for an outsider to come into our world and bring perspective from his or her experience. Blind spots are the unknown aspects of our career, business, or lifestyle that are holding us back. A savvy coach will use smart questions to help us shine a bright light on these blind spots and build up the courage (or whatever else is required) to move past them.



I observed Ken use the simple SWOT format to help a business in China see more clearly that the business which three partners were starting was off to such a rocky start. He ultimately recommended a gigantic pivot. Before long, the couple decided to go back to teaching in the university and abandon the business idea to someone else. They have been successful there for years. I believe we saved them from disaster because Ken could see the big picture and got a handle on it in a four-hour SWOT exercise.

2. **We need to be challenged in skill development and personal growth.** A good coach improves his own skills, knowledge, and capacities. We can benefit from his self-study in communication, leadership, technical skills, healthy habits and coaching techniques that are all useable. Anyone who can help us grow and develop should be considered a positive blessing.

When I was a college student pursuing a business degree, I had the good fortune to spend the weekends with a family about 45 minutes south of the university. Ray constantly asked me questions about what I was reading and stimulated me to apply it to my present issues of my part-time job and also with hypothetical questions related to my future. He had a mentality that all of us should be continually growing – and I have never forgotten that.

3. **Coaches help clarify roles, objectives, values, and strategy.** The coaching experience helps us identify objectives and values and helps make sure our work and actions are supporting them to the fullest extent. When starting and operating a Kingdom Business in another culture where the language is complex and complicated, an individual will need all the help they can get. Investors want us to succeed, but they have a reason for their capital. Therefore, those values must be understood and be directive. Intentional activities must correlate with the intended outcomes, and coaching can give us a clarification we can easily miss.

It was a stimulating experience for me to be in India for the beta test of a tour company, designed to bring tourists to a lesser travelled part of the country. IBEC consultant, Gary, was our leader, as we experienced the first company tour, took note of our observations, and processed them with the owner after the week-long tour. We met at a hotel in the state capital at the end of the event and spent a full day which resulted in over one hundred observations, questions, and recommendations. Some of our comments were just “cold, hard truth” and we feared the owner would be discouraged. To our great pleasure he thanked our group profusely and set about making changes the very next day.

The power of a coach asking thoughtful questions is the story of the first meeting between Warren Buffett and Bill Gates in the early 1990s. One simple insightful question by Mr. Buffett made Mr. Gates totally re-think Microsoft. He asked Bill, “Hey, Microsoft is a small company, IBM is this huge company, what can you do better? Why can’t they beat you at the software game that you’re playing?” Essentially, the question forced Gates to solve the question of competitive advantage over IBM.

4. **We all need expertise and proven strategies.** The right strategies can save us years (or more) of experimentation and struggle. No matter what we are trying to achieve, someone else has struggled with a similar challenge and achieved success. Instead of reinventing the wheel, learn from others who have mastered the skill you desire. Sometimes this person is



considered a consultant, but certainly a good one will exercise coaching strategies by using questions to expose you to beneficial expertise and strategies.

I observed this in Africa this year with my friend Dave. He has had a lifetime of experience in the livestock feed industry, and we were in Zimbabwe and Zambia helping build a state-of-the-art feed mill for the dairy and poultry industry. Dave had proven success over a 40-year career, yet he asked questions about the climate, breeds of the area, employer strategies, the country economics, the customer base and much more. Before long, his expertise was being integrated into the context in Africa. The client was extremely appreciative of Dave's coaching style, because he brought expertise, a proven product, and shared it in an empowering manner.

5. **Coaches and Consultants can be useful analysts and problem-solvers.** Every manager needs someone to process urgent problems giving him skills, information, and experience which he or she may not have. It is somewhat analogous to outsourcing a task to an expert, but the person functions as a coach.

I was VP of Operations for an agency which had nineteen people in Haiti, along with investments in real properties when the mega earthquake hit Haiti in January 2010. Communications and transportation systems were compromised; thousands of people had died, and many more lost everything. Certainly, I had never faced this problem before. Fortunately, I knew an experienced consultant named Bob K, and I gave him a call requesting his experience and help in coaching me through this. I agreed on a contract and flew him to Haiti on a specialized flight, found a safe place for him to stay, and outlined what I needed from him. A week later, he flew back to our office in Pennsylvania where he reported to my team. He then helped us develop a plan for responding to the crisis.

In a more recent example, last year a company in the Mideast retained an IBEC coach to help them look at issues of organizational strategy. This partnership involved evaluating a franchise model for their consulting group in the Gulf region. In this case and in the Haiti example, coaches brought analytical expertise and problem-solving skills in much needed situations.

6. **A coach can be a safe place to discuss tough issues and experience accountability.** Sometimes managers are in a difficult situation where it is difficult to discuss a personnel issue with the owner, and there is no one to talk through HR policies and procedures. Sometimes, then an outsider can be a sounding board, and even provide advice and suggestions to the client in ways that are not intimidating.

Last fall, we wrote an IBEC blog illustrating this. Consultants Dave and Lynn (from Canada) were able to provide a biblical approach to dealing with a manager in Central Asia, who had been socialized in the Soviet model of management and did not demonstrate a fair and decent way to handle female employees. The owners seemed immobilized, but the outside coach approach allowed Bahar to see how to be firm in his decision-making, while doing so in a gracious manner. He responded well, and Dave and Lynn discovered a way via the internet to hold Bahar accountable, when they returned to Canada.

7. **Coaches support and empower.** Everyone benefits from encouragement. It increases levels of confidence and self-awareness and improves one's emotional intelligence. Well trained



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coaches empathetically listen, provide constructive feedback, and use powerful questions to help the coachee to oftentimes solve their own problem. Nothing is more empowering and supportive than when the coach invites and then encourages a discovery. “It promotes self-awareness, acknowledges an individuals’ context, optimizes the power of the human brain and empowers the client to develop thinking and solutions that they are connected with personally. Ownership and authenticity allows the client to create meaningful, bold outcomes and ideal solutions for themselves that are much more likely to be followed through with.”²

IBEC Managing Director, Bob Bush, cites an example of a client in the Philippines where he served as coach. His assignment was to identify specific areas of the business that needed to be improved. It was not long until he was working with management on an opportunity for growth by improving the management of expenses. As a result, they established a mantra within the company that everyone could easily implement within their own area of responsibility, and created a company discipline, camaraderie, and unity which was empowering.

By peeling back areas of the company, opportunities were exposed which when addressed, showed employees that they themselves had capacity to problem solve and contribute to an improved outcome. In Bob’s own words, “In this case, it was the optimization of expense control that paved the way for increased discipline and growth within the organization. As the company has gotten stronger, the positive impact for the Kingdom has grown as well.”

In short, I believe that everyone does need a coach or mentor; certainly, everyone who owns or manages a BAM company needs to have a coach and have access to Subject Matter Experts and consultants.

¹ [Barry O’Reilly: Everyone Needs A Coach](#)

² [Agape Conferences: How Professional Coaching Can Advance Human Potential](#)

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<https://ibecventures.com/blog/seven-reasons-why-everyone-needs-a-coach/>

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