



Veteran CEOs or C-Suite professionals seeking to elevate their careers can opt to become an executive coach.

Check out this 8- point checklist to harness your full potential in mentoring other people to spur growth.

## 1. You have a fundamental understanding of business

An executive coach must have an executive background, one with P&L responsibilities. With this, you can easily relate to CEOs especially when they're challenging you or when CEOs are experiencing some challenges.

For CEOs or business owners, it's important that their coach has "been there and done that".

An executive coach must avoid being a consultant. It can be hard to not tell people what to do. **Take note that a coach serves to question the leader and enable him or her to find his or her own answers.**

## 2. You know how to ask good questions and be an active listener

You must not talk all the time and do not partake in a one-upmanship with the other person.

For example, if someone tells you: "I went skiing this weekend and I had a great ski trip" – you can't jump into, "Oh, I went skiing there too." You must ask another question. "Oh, really? What slopes did you ski?" You must dig in and get the person to share his or her own experiences.

If you have the same experience, keep it to yourself. As a coach, it is not about you.

You can check out many books highlighting different ways of asking great questions. However, it's difficult being a coach if you're not genuinely curious nor an active listener. **You need to ask questions to hear the answers**, and not produce the next best question or solution. Yes, you must really listen.

Say, you have a specific experience in an area of business and a CEO is seeking a specific advice. You could say: "If it were me, I might do this." Or you may give a few options for the CEO to consider.

Most times, you will not be doing the aforementioned. You will just be asking questions and guiding the CEO to his or her own conclusion. This is the right approach because the CEO must be responsible in producing the solution. He or she should succeed or fail on his or her own with the coach's support.

### **3. You can help a CEO visualise and set goals for the future**

The key is to help a business leader achieve his or her goals and move in his or her desired direction.

An executive coach must help a CEO to gain clarity for his or her vision and goals. The former must also point out facets of the CEO's business and leadership that the latter was unaware before.

**A coach plays the role of devil's advocate** in defining the vision and then making the leader accountable for implementing strategies to meet the vision.

### **4. You can identify a leader's strengths and areas of growth**

**An executive coach should identify a CEO's strengths and areas to improve.**

For example, I've mentored a high-performing CEO and another who is not. Having witnessed their differences, I've found the need to meet each of them at where they are in life and business before helping them to develop the required skills to move in their desired directions.

It's important for an executive coach to perform a leadership assessment before producing a development plan based on data gathered and a CEO's desired outcomes.

### **5. You can challenge a CEO and hold him or her accountable**

Difficult conversations will take place albeit in a supportive space with great privacy. This may be uncomfortable but necessary.

An effective executive coach will push a CEO, sometimes to an uncomfortable extend. Later, the CEO may reckon: "I'm not happy that he or she made me talk about that particular issue, but I am glad that he or she had pushed me into confronting it."

**There will neither be any learning nor transformation without difficult conversations, and a CEO will not be able to overcome challenges.**

Indeed, an executive coach is present to harness leaders' full potential.

## **6. You are willing to support CEOs in difficult times**

My personal mission for the people whom I've coached: To remember that I'd challenged them in making changes to become a leader who makes better decisions and results in life and business.

A coach often partakes in difficult personal conversations and it's important that my clients know they can rely on me day or night. I believe a top-notch coach does whatever it takes to help other people, especially when they're facing crises.

**A CEO feeling isolated is a real problem.** Being a leader's confidant is vital when one feels lonely at the top.

Some CEOs are unable to discuss certain topics with their spouses, employees or friends. However, they can seek their coaches' advice and unbiased feedback. They want a sounding board – someone without an agenda and is focused on what is best for them.

I'd like to say as a coach, you're playing on a five-yard line with your CEO, asking tough questions to help him or her make better decisions.

"Do we punt? Do we pass? Do we run?" – you're providing support for the leader in that critical moment of the game. If a CEO requires assistance, an executive coach will help in seeking a useful resource for him or her.

## **7. You are an entrepreneur at heart**

An executive coach must have the mindset of running a new business. Be an entrepreneur at heart – you are starting an executive coaching business. **This solopreneur endeavour** is where you do not rely on any employees.

Those considering executive coaching are usually corporate executives who had previously helmed companies and delegated work. An executive coaching business involves grunt work and you are solely responsible in realising all aspects of operations daily.

## 8. You have the financial runway to get started

From a Vistage Chair's perspective: Those who are considering this path can absolutely make a handsome income but will need a good solid year as their financial runway to get the business going.

You will be setting up your own business including recruiting CEOs as members of your peer advisory group. With financial security at such period, you can focus on kick-starting your business.

### **So, you want to become a CEO or entrepreneur coach?**

Being a CEO or an entrepreneur coach and Vistage Chair is a privilege. You must have passion in helping other people, patience when meeting them at where they are in life and business, and strength in pushing and realising their full potential.

Having natural curiosity is also a must. Executive coaching requires two top skills: To question and to listen. You must be driven in elevating individuals in various ways. Help them on their leadership journey.

It's not easy coaching CEOs and business owners, but the results are rewarding for all involved.

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