



*Creating success through strategic and intentional change.*

## **Do You Need to Hire a Career Coach?**

Are you stuck in a dead-end career or not sure of the first step in starting a job search? Has it been awhile since you've gone on a job interview? In a saturated job market, how do you ensure you get a "leg up" on the competition? Hiring a career coach might be the answer.

If you can relate to any of these scenarios, perhaps it is time to invest in a professional career specialist to walk you through the process of finding a new job. A career coach can help you with assessing your career options, provide you with contacts and resources, and be there to support and encourage your progress.

Most people wonder if working with a career coach will have a significant impact on finding a job. It can, say career experts, but a successful outcome depends upon several factors. You need to understand exactly what a career coach can, and cannot, provide in terms of your next employment opportunity.

A career coach doesn't perform miracles, said Regina Olbinsky, president of The Career Group, LLC. A career coach won't find you a job or do the work on your behalf. Instead, a good career coach will guide you through the process. It is important that you understand what your goals and expectations are before hiring a career coach.

The first step when working with a career coach is an exercise to define your goals, and then to take a look at your strengths and your transferable skills. From there, the career coach will offer you feedback and prepare you for updating your resume based on that information.

"A good career coach will look at your background and your experiences and marry that with what your goals are for your next job," Olbinsky said. "A career coach will take a look at your transferable skills and show you how to position certain accomplishments in your past that highlight the competencies needed or required for your targeted job."

Olbinsky often gets calls asking her to write a resume for the client, but that isn't part of being a good career coach, she emphasized. Instead, she works in collaboration with her client, and makes sure they do the actual writing.

"Otherwise, I am doing them a disservice by just regurgitating what they tell me. I'm really not being effective for them. If they get stuck, I go through an in-depth interview process to help them define their accomplishments," Olbinsky said. "That also helps them significantly prepare for any upcoming interview. It helps them uncover their strengths and some examples they can use."

### **What to look for in a coach**

The first place to start when deciding on a career coach to hire is to ask people you know for referrals. Inquire at career centers within the community or check with your local college or library for a listing of resources.

Next, make sure the career coach fits your specific needs, whether it is for a broad-based search or within a specific industry.



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“If specific, it’s very important that the career coach has worked within the industry you are targeting,” said Kerry Tobin, a career coach who gets a lot of referrals through Cleveland State University. “You want more than theoretical approaches. You want someone who can speak from experience.”

It is also good to look at the basic credentials and educational level of the career coach, as well as his/her licensing and memberships in professional organizations. Also consider what the most comfortable setting is for the working relationship, be it face-to-face meetings or by phone. If meeting in person, will it be a more casual place like a coffee shop or a more formal setting like an office?

One of the most important things, said Tobin, is having an initial meeting to get to know one another, gather information and ask questions. It generally only takes about 30 minutes to gauge if the coach is right for you.

“Get to know what you can expect within the coaching process. What are the possible outcomes and goals you can expect to achieve? Establish what is realistic and make sure you have a comfort level,” said Tobin about that first meeting.

Using the services of a professional career coach can cut your job search time in half. But, said Tobin, you must be willing to take the time to find the right coach as well as do the required work.

“Just as we were students in school and wanted to please our teacher by doing our homework assignments, working with a career coach is the same sort of thing. You know you have a certain amount of things to get done before your next session,” she advised. “You’re probably going to get it done a lot faster than if you were just working by yourself.”

### **How can a career coach help?**

- Evaluate your goals, strengths, transferable skills and offer honest feedback
- Give you a better sense of the job market in your areas of expertise
- Help you develop a resume that will serve as a marketing tool
- Provide interview coaching tips and practice
- Identify the right search path to follow through networking, ties to recruiters and staffing agencies, ads and use of social media
- Provide assistance in negotiating terms of employment
- Most importantly, offer ongoing coaching and advising with regard to the search process

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