



Dear Friend,

Call Me Popeye

Spend any time with me, and you soon learn that I LOVE spinach! Sautéed, au gratin, on salads, in omelets, spanakopita ...you name it. If it contains spinach, I'm in! Call me, "Popeye".

Despite all that's right with spinach, there's one major problem for those of us who consume it regularly. You guessed it. It's the residual...the flecks! It's those pesky dark green remnants that snuggle in between your teeth, or that make themselves at home on your gum line, screaming to the whole world that YOU...JUST...ATE...SPINACH!!!

Don't you hate it?

You know what's even worse, though? It's when you snarf down some of the tasty stuff; can't immediately brush away the evidence; walk around for hours smiling brightly, and not knowing that you've got flecks alerting everyone to what you had for lunch; but nobody has the guts, or the desire, to tell you! Anyone with eyes can see, but no one steps forward to clue you in. (*Really?! Can you help a sista out?*)

It's amazing how often *life imitates lunch*. There are things that we all like to think...to do...to say; they're our own personal or professional spinach in a way. From all accounts, they're good. However, they too may be leaving flecks -- unintended consequences for us or for others. And, as it is with spinach, unless we regularly do mirror checks, we may be left in the dark because the folks around us, though very aware, for whatever reason, don't always speak up.

That's the advantage of having a trusted someone. With spinach, it's that friend -- that brave soul -- who'll give you the high sign about a fleck or pass you a stick of gum. With career, business, or life, it's that coach -- that neutral third party -- who's dedicated to your success and in place to help you choose from and enjoy the many opportunities available and also to help you identify and resolve the flecks that may hinder success.

So, let's invest a few minutes in this edition of **EA Insights** to explore the topic of professional coaching. What's it all about, and how do you find the right person for you? Keep reading! After all, I think there may have been some spinach in your last meal!

All the best,

June

June Melvin Mickens
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The 4-1-1 on Coaching

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Executive Advantage, LLC

As I talk with people, one of the recurring themes relates to work-related challenges:

"I thought I'd be farther along than I am. I feel stymied."

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"Quotes"

"Coaching helps you develop your leadership skills, clarify your values and guiding principles and build your reputation."
~John Agno

"We all knew we needed coaching. We had a bad reputation of being ... undisciplined[.] We wanted direction. We wanted leadership."
~Willie Anderson

"I am extremely excited about the...coaches we are adding to the program. Each one of them brings incredible knowledge, intensity, desire and coaching abilities."
~Rodney Allison

"A coach doesn't get giddy. The excitement from a coaching perspective is if we can get those guys to make improvement."
~Tommy Bowden

*"I've been lucky to be caught by the right coaches at the right time...who were able to instill in me the value of a professional work ethic. *** I don't think anybody can push themselves without some help, and there were some good lessons along the way. So for me, it was always been a lifestyle because of the coaching and examples that I've*

"I want to keep growing as a leader, but I don't know how."

"I dread going to work, and I'm not sure how to deal with it. I can't talk with anybody there; they're either a part of the problem, or I don't know if I can trust them. My family and friends mean well, but they don't understand or can't offer much help."

Such sentiments aren't unique to my network. There's a real undercurrent in the workplace today. Folks are seeking meaningful ways not only to function effectively where they are but also to enhance their prospects for the future. And, while there always will be a place for formal group-level training and development programs, more and more people are considering professional coaching as an option to augment other growth opportunities.

What I find, though, is that many folks don't understand professional coaching. So, let me answer a few critical questions and share insights from some **Executive Advantage** coaching clients.

What is coaching?

*"I credit June...for helping me in making critical decisions regarding my career goals and business plans. [She] was always there to lend support, was very thorough in her analysis, provided excellent...guidance, and held me accountable throughout the decision making process. *** June's objective and honest feedback has been an invaluable asset[.]"*

Let's start with the basics.

Coaching is an approach used in a one-on-one setting to facilitate a person's ongoing growth. The coach partners with the coachee to help that person continually learn about self, become more effective in his or her current role, and both plan for and move toward a desired future.

Sometimes people confuse coaching with other forms of support. Yet...

Coaching isn't management. The coach doesn't direct or control the coachee. Coaches ask; they don't tell.

Coaching isn't counselling or therapy. Yes, coaching does offer a safe place that encourages self-examination. However, its focus is on boosting the coachee's inventiveness, effectiveness, and development, whereas therapy is centered on resolution and healing from the past.

Coaching also isn't mentoring. With mentoring, the mentor often leads the sharing so that the person being mentored can learn from the more senior person's experiences, rather than exploring situations from his or her own frame of reference.

When is the right time for coaching?

*"Thank you for being a...voice of reason[.] I so respect and trust your feedback so I knew I was straining and overthinking[.] *** Thank you again for being a great barometer of reason."*

I see five situations that present good timing to engage in a coaching relationship.

You're stalled. When you feel as if you've hit a ceiling in your career or business growth, and don't know why that is and/or what to do next, this may be a good time to engage a coach.

You're not challenged. You may be at a good place in your business or career. Yet, you sense that there's untapped potential, and you want support both to identify it and to figure out what to do with it.

You're in trouble. The handwriting is on the wall. You just got a performance review, or the progressive disciplinary process has started. If you don't shape up, you'll be shipped out! Quite honestly, that type of wake-up call is what drives some people to a coach. The cry is for help...help to determine how things got out of hand, help to figure out how to salvage today, and help to turn it around for tomorrow.

You're seeing change in the winds. Coaching can be a great, if you're watching the trends and seeing that something new in the way of skills, approaches, or connections is on the horizon, but you need help in sorting it all out.

You're not seeing a training ROI. You're checking off a respectable number of training sessions, but you're also forgetting what was covered as quickly as you leave the room or seeing little in the way of resulting change. If you're wondering how to get more from the valuable time and resource investment you're making in training, then coaching is an option.

How does coaching occur?

"Thank you! Your wisdom and support is always timely and



had over the years."
~Sean Burke

"We've got some great coaching, the level of...support is going up..., and we're getting some results to speak of. It just shows all the hard work that's been put in...is really paying off."
~Chris Cook

"Good coaching ... motivates and educates..., and that shows itself in your [outcomes]."
~Greg Gibson

"He typifies the kind of [people] I've been coaching, someone who's a worker rather than someone who's gifted."
~Bob Hurley

"Over the past [few] years, executive coaching has mushroomed from a sideline on the motivational and consulting circuits to an expected perk in virtually every executive suite. Most coaches are now called in to smooth a CEO's rough, my-way-or-the-highway edges that may be driving top talent to rivals. Companies used to be able to function with autocratic bosses[.] We don't live in that world anymore."
~Rosabeth Kanter

"Having him around is like having a library of knowledge. He's been coaching 25 years and in that time there probably isn't a [situation] he hasn't seen[.] You just don't find guys like him, with that much knowledge, sitting around."
~Scott Lang

"I know and respect him a ton. He has such a refreshing and unique outlook on coaching[.]"
~Dave Leitao

"Coaching helps you take stock of where you are now in all aspects of your life, and how that compares to where you would like to be."
~Elaine MacDonald

"We're blessed to have someone like

*precise[.] *** You know how to ask the right questions[.] *** Thank you for helping me to prepare for the meeting and for helping me begin clarifying what [comes next]."*

While each coach is unique, you can expect to see a few common aspects to a coaching engagement.

First, expect to have scheduled meetings. Whether held in person or by virtual means, coaching is most effective when meeting timing isn't left to chance but rather follows a specific timetable.

Second, sessions may be planned around a certain curriculum, or they may be more informal in nature. Whichever approach is taken, for coaching to be truly meaningful for you, the coach must be skilled in helping you to dig deep; to examine yourself honestly -- thoughts, needs, actions, dreams, goals; often to stretch beyond what's comfortable; and to map out what you'd like to achieve and the means by which you want to accomplish it.

Finally, although the coaching engagement may focus on a particular issue, you also should expect to carve out time at each meeting to grapple with current events. These discussions may tie back to the underlying purpose for the coaching; however, even if unrelated, attending to them permits you to deal properly with distractions that could hinder the progress you're attempting to make in other areas.

How do you find the right coach?

"You've been a great inspiration to me. As a matter of fact I was sharing with someone the joy of experiencing personal coaching, but of course you MUST HAVE THE RIGHT PERSON. God blessed me with YOU!!!"

Needless to say, this client's words touched my heart. But, they also are right on point.

What do you need to know to find the right coach...for you?

What's the person's approach; in other words, what can you expect during your meetings?

How good a listener are you dealing with? After all, if the intent is to facilitate *your* ability to grow and develop, that will be hard to do if the coach is doing all of the talking.

Do you trust this person? If not, it will be difficult for you to be vulnerable and open, which will prevent you from going beyond surface causes and solutions and hinder your efforts to make real strides.

Can you reach out between meetings? You know that challenging situations don't only arise right before a scheduled coaching session; so, you want reasonable access to a sounding board when it matters most.

Does the person's background make his or her feedback credible? This is more than finding a coach with certifications; it's identifying someone with a background of leadership and professional accomplishment that permits the coach to understand and facilitate your conversations based on knowledge and experience and not just on theory.

*"I enjoyed our discussion today. *** I cannot thank you enough for the support that you've provided to me. I've grown over the course of the year as a leader because of your thoughtfulness and guidance. I'm very grateful to have you as a coach."*

At the end of the day, why choose coaching? You want to grow and accomplish things that are important to you. As you think about the coaching experience, you want to be able to smile and to realize that, while you may be required to put in some hard work (*after all*, you are making, and it means much! *muscle building takes effort!*), it is worth it! You can see the progress



Are you ready for coaching? If so, I invite you to call on **Executive Advantage**. Why don't you see if we're a good coaching fit for you? [Contact us today.](#)

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About Executive Advantage

At **Executive Advantage**, we are committed to providing results-based business and management consulting, leadership development, and coaching support. We partner with business leaders to build healthy, well-functioning organizations, where goals are met and people thrive. We also partner with individuals to create professional (and personal) lives with clearer direction, improved results, and greater balance.

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her. She's an incredible role model. She's ... at the highest level, and she brings a perspective to coaching that is different[.]"
~Kirk Nelson

"I'm excited about it. One of the great things about coaching is there's a difference between potential and performance. And one of the goals is to close that gap from where you actually are and where you can actually get to. I know we need to get a lot better[.]"
~Joe Philbin

"Better coaching is why I feel I've gotten better in all aspects. At least in the past two years, I've been working my best to be here. Now, it's paying off."
~John Pycraft

*"I feel like we're able to take coaching. You know the coaches are going to ... try to challenge you. Now we're taking it in and learning from our mistakes instead of getting mad at the coaches. We understand now that's their job. They're just trying to make us better. *** It's just a learning process."*
~Al Thornton

"Coaching helped me be a more effective leader..., helped me to reflect on my strengths and weaknesses and adjust leadership style to different members of the team."
~Susan Turner

"Effective leadership coaching can happen on the dance floor of conversation."
~Unknown