

## Executive Coaching: Managing your Expectations

As executive coaching professionals we often are required to manage the expectations of our clients on many aspects in the coaching process. What can happen however is that we don't manage our own expectations and sometimes don't practice the very thing we preach.

I would arguably like to make the assumption and say that many executive coaching professionals have the expectation that their clients will reach certain understandings, change certain behaviours or reach certain milestones at particular points in time.

This is often brought about by the pressures of achieving results and the time constraints place upon them. There are numerous unwritten ground rules and implicit promises made by both parties at the commencement and throughout the executive coaching process. These can be anything from having the commitment to change, taking the required actions or being on time for a coaching session.

The point is that these expectations are usually only broadly touched upon and ultimately can contribute to the downfall of the success of an executive coaching program. What if the expectations of both the executive coaching practitioner and the client are set out clearly and specifically at the commencement of the program?

All aspects that are key elements to the achievement of the coaching outcomes and relationship dynamics need to be considered. These are too numerous to discuss in full however factors such as the amount of time that the client will give to the coaching process, willingness to change, degree of total transparency and honesty and feedback are important aspects.

This also forms part of building one the essential elements in the executive coaching dynamic that of building trust. Trust cannot be developed without meeting the key expectations of the parties concerned. Let's face it how much trust can exist if what is expected does not show up?

But what if the executive coaching professional reaches the point of realisation that his client is not moving forward and that perhaps he may not be the best person to coach this particular person? Is there an expectation that the client will raise the issue and is there an expectation that the coach will do the same and find another professional to take over?

Naturally other contributory factors will affect results so there needs to be clarity on the causes of stagnation. Sometimes it may even be the case that unrealistic expectations are set in the first place and that the process was sabotaged from the start.

Either way and in any case expectations will be a factor and setting, managing and communicating them are crucial for without this the executive coaching process can be jeopardised.