



[DR. SHIRLEY'S CAREER CORNER]

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Need a career coach? Five key factors to consider

The 11th Annual International Coaching Week took place Feb. 1-7. Jerri Udelson, master certified coach, founded Coaching Week in 1999 to provide a week each year to educate the public about the value of working with a career, life, business or executive coach. Though the week has passed, the information provided is still extremely viable.

With more than one million individuals out of a job and predictions for even more this year, career coaching is an option many people may consider. Based on research data from a study conducted by the international outplacement firm Lee Hecht Harrison, "... people who work with a career coach find jobs 15-46 percent faster than those who don't" (varies by income level). So, if you're thinking about hiring a coach, there is much information that needs to be understood for you to make an informed decision. My column this month will focus on five key factors that should be well thought-out.

1. What is coaching? Coaching is a supportive relationship with a trained professional that enhances your ability to learn, make desired changes, resolve issues and move forward to achieve goals. Coaching differs from consulting or therapy because it is not focused on giving advice, healing dysfunction or analyzing behavior. A coach acts as a catalyst that will support you in strategizing solutions, choosing the right direction, building your personal skills and raising your awareness. Coaching doesn't spend time in the past; it concentrates on where you are today and how to get where you want to be tomorrow.

2. How will career coaching benefit me? If you have recently lost your job, are in a career transition or need to find more fulfillment in your career, coaching can be a tremendous asset to you in today's competitive market. Regular coaching sessions provide clients with dedicated time to focus on what they truly want and what must happen to create it. Coaches help their clients design action steps to meet their goals, then hold them accountable to their own stated desires — providing perspective, feedback and smart questions along the way. As a result, clients stay motivated, make significant changes and achieve more than they may have thought possible.

3. How much does coaching cost? The typical investment for individual coaching can range from \$300 to more than \$800 per month for a series of regularly scheduled sessions (this varies depending on experience of coach and specific geographic region). To achieve significant results, most coaches ask that clients commit to work with them for at least three months. When considering the cost, ask yourself three questions: (1) What is the value of the results I am seeking? (2) Is it in keeping with the fee? (3) Do I currently have the resources to pay the fee without straining my finances?

4. How will I know if I'm coachable? To get the most from a coaching relationship, you need to be willing to learn new ways of doing things and make changes in your attitude and behavior. Anyone who is open to considering new perspectives, is willing to question how they are cur-

rently acting and clarify values/priorities, and is ready to take on new challenges in their career or life will likely be coachable and can benefit from working with a coach.

5. How can I find a reputable career coach? To locate a career coach, begin by asking friends or colleagues if they can recommend a coach they have worked with to accomplish simi-

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lar goals. To widen your search, use one of the many coach referral services offered by training schools and coaching associations, such as the International Coach Federation (www.coachfederation.org). Interview two or three possible coaches for comparison. Ask about their background and the type of results they typically help clients achieve. You should also ask to speak with two or three references.

The personal fit between client and coach is important as well. In your initial conversation, assess not only the coach's ability to assist you in reaching your goals, but how comfortable you feel interacting with him or her. Some coaches offer complimentary coaching sessions for prospective clients so you can experience what it would be like to work with them.

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