

# GET SET FOR SUCCESS

A PERSONAL EXECUTIVE COACH COULD BE  
JUST THE CAREER BOOST THAT YOU NEED,  
ARGUES NICKY CAREW



There are few professions for which qualifications are more essential than financial services. Industry standards and compliance mean that continuing professional development is a never-ending journey of new rules and regulations. It may seem that it is all you can do to keep abreast of this shifting carpet.

But successful careers are founded on more than just technical brilliance and intelligent financial management. To keep on top of your game, you need to invest in your own development so that you can build your reputation, stand out and succeed in a competitive environment.

At different points in your career, personal executive coaching may be the trump card that will give you the competitive edge or help you through a challenging patch.

### What is personal executive coaching?

Top sports stars have personal coaches who help them to do the best they can. When Toni Minichiello took Jessica Ennis-Hill from raw beginner to Olympic heptathlon champion, he was not a better athlete than Ennis-Hill – of course he wasn't. Olympic gold medallist Sir Chris Hoy credits cycling coach Shane Sutton as being hugely influential in his success, but his main contribution was not just to better Hoy's technique; sports coaches deal with motivation, personal goals and mental fitness, as well as physical fitness.

A personal executive coach is the career equivalent of a sports coach. Coaches help to maximise your strengths so that you are more effective, and to minimise the impact of traits and anxieties that get

in the way of your continual improvement, and to help you to achieve your personal career goals.

### Coaching vs mentoring vs training

Training works best when you have certainties or knowledge that you need to learn. How you communicate and use this knowledge is part of your personal impact, and this is where coaching is so powerful.

Mentoring is often confused with coaching and, in fact, there is often a grey area between the two. But, in general, mentoring involves a peer or senior imparting valuable experience and wisdom on to you.

## Your coach will broaden your perspectives and help to create solutions that suit your personal style. In coaching, you are achieving and learning at the same time

A well-matched mentor can advance your career with contacts and networks.

Coaching is an 'action-learning' process based on what is important to you at that time. This may entail navigating a complex transaction, motivating your team, managing your time or dealing with one of the many niggling frustrations that we all have in work from time to time. Your coach will broaden your perspectives and help to create solutions that suit your personal style. In coaching, you are achieving and learning at the same time.

This type of personal support can be as important to your future success as technical excellence in treasury. Why?

### Achieve your goals

You may have the reputation for being a 'high flyer' in your organisation, but are you really fulfilling your potential? You should be investing time and energy in your development so that you can achieve your true potential and stand out from your peers. While the organisation's needs are centre stage, your goals and ambitions can often be neglected. High achievers should be high achievers for themselves, as well as for their organisation, if they are to be happier and even more productive. Your coach can help you to plan for success, take control of your medium- and long-term goals, and be

able to take advantage of opportunities as they arise.

Coaching will help you to improve your personal impact so that you succeed at a higher level. Whether you are looking for promotion, a better salary or more recognition, coaching will quickly give you an advantage.

### Manage stress at work

Stress in a financial career is pretty much what we expect and sometimes we thrive on it. But there are times when it feels remorseless. Specific markers in the financial calendar, such as year end or a refinancing deadline, bring added pressure.

Excessive stress at work affects your performance, your judgement and your wellbeing. Coaching can

help you to clarify the sources of your stress and help you to develop stress-management strategies, refocus your energy and get your life back. It will also help you to develop self-confidence and resilience so that you will feel more in control and able to better manage stress in the future, whatever the source.

### Improve relationships for success

Developing good relationships with people at work is one of the top predictors of success. There are many different personalities and egos in office politics and these can be difficult to navigate. Some of us can feel that we don't fit with our team, peers or colleagues and are not able to manage conflict with confidence. You can easily get into a spiral of trying to please others and end up feeling even more demoralised.

Coaching supports you to create better strategies for handling difficult people in a way that suits your personal character and style, allowing you to take better control, have more productive relationships and make a greater personal impact.

### Improve work-life balance

We can't always separate work and personal life, and they often affect each other. Trying to please everybody and do everything can feel impossible and lonely. The relentless stress in finance jobs can prevent you from having the time to step back and make sense of what balance means in your life.

Your coach would be your confidential ally to explore the various strands of your work and personal life. Together, you create a way

## HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT COACH

The relationship between you and your coach is an important one. You are investing your time and sometimes your own money. What you should experience is a productive and challenging time working together, so it matters that you choose a coach who will deliver that for you.

Here are tips and questions to help you choose the right coach:

- **Are they qualified from a recognised coaching programme?** Always check what their credentials are and what kind of training they have. That is not a guarantee of a good coach, of course, but why would you entrust your development to someone who has not taken the trouble to develop their own coaching ability and understanding?
- **Do they understand your business?** Your coach needs to understand the kind of environment and dynamic that is familiar to you. Remember, though, a sports coach would not need to be 'better' than their athlete to make significant improvements in their coachee's performance. Similarly, in business, a treasurer who is at a more experienced and successful stage than you would be a good mentor, but a coach needs to stand back and have objectivity. A good coach will have a wide range of experience and be able to offer new perspectives to you.
- **Insist on meeting the coach face-to-face first.** Was there chemistry between you? You should be at ease with your coach and feel that they are interested in you. Were they attentive to your needs and did they understand what you want from coaching? This is going to be a challenging relationship and you need to feel comfortable discussing your issues with that person.
- **Discuss what will be the structure of the coaching and how you will work together.** What tools will they use? You should be looking for some flexibility here, as tools should be the servant of the need; otherwise, as they say, a man with a hammer sees every problem as a nail.
- **How will you measure outcomes?** Executive coaching is a development programme and an understanding of what you are trying to achieve should be agreed in advance. The coach should revisit this frequently. In fact, a good coach will not only make a contract for the programme, but also for each session.
- **How is the programme constructed?** Coaching can be done by face-to-face meetings only or via telephone conversations and email contact, too. How would you prefer to sustain your relationship to be productive? Does the coach offer the flexibility to contact them outside prearranged meetings or work around your needs?



- **Does the coach have an ethics policy or code of conduct?** This should encompass confidentiality, data-protection procedures, maintaining competency and what they have in place for their own professional supervision.
- **Finally, a coaching relationship doesn't always work out through no fault of either party.** If you are not feeling comfortable with the person you selected, what procedure is in place to enable you to change to another coach?

to balance work and family life that suits your situation. The outcome is a more sustainable and happier life for you and your family, less stress in your work and you'll become more productive, too.

### Meeting challenges

Some challenges we relish; others take us out of our comfort zone. As you build your career, you must demonstrate that you can deliver, respond to tough targets, communicate complex financial issues and navigate your way through office politics. This could be the time for professional coaching to give you that competitive edge.

Your coach would show you how to deliver improved performance and turn these challenges into personal success. Coaches work with you to create strategies to handle tough situations and get the best from the people around you. And they show you how to ensure that the people who matter know you have risen to the challenge.

### Job changes

Changing jobs or career needs to be handled well. You can't afford to waste opportunities. If you have an interview to prepare for, need to present the best curriculum vitae or would like to take a more

strategic look at your career, coaches will help you.

Making the right choices for your future may mean using a range of coaching support, such as personal career management and career planning. You could be planning for an internal move, working with a new employer, starting a new career or starting your own business; all would be more successful with expert coaching support.

When you are faced with a job change or a complete career change, engaging a coach could be the difference between you falling into the next job or finding the dream job.

A demanding career can be daunting, with unpredictable twists and turns. You deserve professional support in your career; you don't have to be alone. If you play it carefully, a personal executive coach could be your trump card. ♡

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