



Coach Approach Ministries Podcast

Episode 14: What I Need to Know Before Hiring a Coach

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Brian Miller: Welcome to the *Coach Approach Ministries Podcast* where we help people find their way with God by training the best Christian coaches in the world. I'm Brian Miller, strategic director for Coach Approach Ministries, CAM for short, and I'm joined here today by my partner, executive director for Coach Approach Ministries, Mr. Bill Copper. How you doing, Bill?

Bill Copper: Brian, I am, what they say in the south, fine as frog's hair.

Brian: Is that good?

Bill: Have you ever seen frog's hair?

Brian: Not on purpose.

Bill: That's because it's so fine.

Brian: Well everybody calls themselves a coach today. There are health coaches, financial coaches, personal coaches, leadership coaches, career coaches, and on and on and on. My favorite was a business coach I was listening to. He liked to refer to himself as a coach, and he said his favorite thing is he just loves to rip businesses apart, and then show people how to put them back together. That's not coaching. That's auto mechanics or something. I don't remember, Bill, ever having a class on ripping people up. That might be something we want to add.

Bill: Well that's one of our advanced classes. We didn't think you were ready for that.

Brian: So if you're looking for a coach, what do you need to know about this highly unregulated field in order to hire the coach that you need? In this episode, I'm going to ask my partner, Bill Copper, who's been coaching for over ten years, what people should look for when hiring a coach. Bill, what should people look for?

Bill: Well they should not look for the guy, as you described, who brags about coming in and blowing up their business and rebuilding it. I did some leadership training in a church setting here several years ago, and there was some fairly well known church management, leadership style, folks. They get up in front of the crowd, almost like they want to rip their shirt open and show their Superman emblem on the front of their shirt, just talk about incredibly gifted and skilled they are at coming in and doing things, and you can do the same thing. It just turns me off. It is the exact opposite style of what I learned about

coaches in terms of it takes some humility, that coaching takes putting others first, and so when you think about what I look for when I'm hiring a coach, and what I encourage others to look for when they hire coaches, that's probably the first thing I look for. What kind of person are they? Are they a person that approaches me with what coaches claim, which is that I'm going to be the expert as the client? Every coach says the client's the expert, but a lot of them don't act that way. So the first thing I ask people is what's the character? What kind of person do they look for? Is it a person who starts with humility, adds to that humility some confidence, some competence?

Brian: I want an encourager, and I want someone who's going to be honest with me. I don't have to wonder. If they see something, they're going to tell me.

Bill: Yeah. So I don't know. Maybe all those fall under the first category of character. What kind of person are they? Are we going to have good dialogue? Maybe closely related to that is chemistry. Are we going to get along well? Am I going to be happy to be having a conversation because a coaching relationship is a series of conversations in a relationship. So is my coach going to be somebody I want to have a relationship with? Is she, or he, going to be somebody that I enjoy having conversations with? So there's a bit of chemistry there, and chemistry is things like do they have a good presence so they can really tell what I'm getting at? Can I tell what they're getting at? Do they match my pace? I tend to go on and on. I'm a verbal processor, so I need to say things out loud. Boy, nothing disqualifies a coach more for me than a coach who interrupts that and says, "Let's get to it." You need good chemistry. Do we communicate well together? What are some things that you've thought about that you would put in the category of chemistry?

Brian: For me, I'm a very cognitive thinker, so I definitely think big picture. So I want a coach that will make me think outside of that from time to time, but I want them to be comfortable with me thinking at a pretty high level cognitively. Certainly, in chemistry, I want to feel like I really trust them to a point where I can say whatever I need to say. I don't have to be edited.

Bill: I think that's all part of that chemistry thing. That's not a small thing, and there's some other categories that I think are important categories, but I put these two first when I'm looking for a coach. Their character, are they the kind of person? The chemistry, do I feel like I want to have a conversation with this person? Do I look forward to that call, or do I fear it, or do I dread it? I don't want to have a coach who I dread having those conversations with. So chemistry and character are big.

Brian: I love what you said about do I look forward to the call? I want a coach where I can't wait till that comes around, and I have a chance to be on that call.

Bill: And, you know, that challenges me, as a coach, to be that for my clients. I want them to look forward to those calls, and when I have a mismatch with that client, I can tell that I'm not a good coach for them if they dread those calls, or if they pick them off, or if they cancel. Obviously things come up, but that's one of the early signs to me about whether we're a good match as far as coach and client go, is if the person doesn't seem like they're looking forward to those calls when they get there. That's what I want.

Brian: I've had a coach who didn't feel like they were prepared for the call and were surprised that I was calling, wasn't in a location that was convenient for coaching, and that's just disqualification for me. I want a coach who wants to coach.

Bill: Yeah, and I think that gets at, when you think about preparation, that gets at maybe competence or qualification of a coach. So is the coach, because of their training, their experience, are they qualified to coach? That includes things like they show up, they're ready, they're professional, that they treat me as if this is a real conversation for which I'm paying. So I look at qualifications like what kind of training have they had. There are plenty of people, as you know, that call themselves coaches. They have a different meaning of that word. As you mentioned, it's wildly unregulated, and so you can call yourself a coach, and you can make a good living at it without ever having training. That's why it's important to look for a credential.

Brian: I had somebody come through even our 501, our foundations class, who already had training in personal training, in being a personal coach, and her realization after the class was, "I didn't know anything about coaching. I just had a certificate that said I could tell people what to do." Oh my goodness.

Bill: And that's why you have to look beyond just training, and look to credentialing, or if not, at least look at the source of training, the competencies they've learned. A great way to do that is to look at any kind of credentials, or certifications. I wouldn't book any coacher, or even consider hiring a coach, who wasn't an ICF credentialed coach, or if not fully credentialed, at least their approach and their training matches that of the ICF. Certainly all of our CAM coaches, that's the training they get. That's the definitions they get, and so I wouldn't consider anyone who didn't follow that principle of coaching, that definition of coaching.

Brian: The ICF is the International Coaching Federation, and on the website, it's coachfederation.org, and you usually see credentials like ACC, or PCC, or MCC behind the name of the coach.

Bill: Yeah, and what that signifies is that the ICF, International Coaching Federation, a third party, has looked at the training, and experience, and competence of this person, and said, "Yep. They meet our qualifications." ICF doesn't offer training. They don't offer mentor coaching. They simply look at the coaching you've done and say, "Yeah. It matches what we think coaching is about," and I think that's a good hands-off, arms-length way to be credentialed. So I certainly look for that because what it says is this isn't somebody who just decided yesterday, "You know, I think I'm ready. I think I'll be a coach today." Somebody who has some intentional training, has got some experience. In coaching that I believe in which is the client's the expert, this is not about me telling people what to do, the coach telling people what to do, and kind of that philosophy of coaching. So I look for a credential.

Look for, as I said, some training. Also look for some experience. I want somebody who I'm not their first client. Although, everybody has to have a first client. It's sometimes hard for people to get experience when they don't have any experience, and there are ways. We offer some ways to do that, but I want somebody whose experience is commensurate with my own in terms of what I can expect. If somebody is a brand new coach that just learned about coaching last week, well, I as a coach who has a few thousand hours of coaching experience and a few hours of specific training, I want a coach whose experience is commensurate with my own. So that all kind of fits, for me, under the category of qualifications of a coach. We talked about character, their chemistry, and their qualifications.

Brian: Under qualifications also comes ethics, and that's something else I like about the International Coaching Federation is they have a long list of ethics so that it's really clear what's appropriate and

what's not appropriate, and I think that's a key piece to make sure you're hiring a coach that has your best interest in mind.

Bill: Those same things fit under character. Do they bring a standard of personal ethics and professional ethics that is going to put me first? Right on the money for that.

Brian: What else is there, Bill?

Bill: Also look at... Oh what's the best way to say this? The niche, or expertise, that this coach brings. That'll often change for me depending on what I want coaching around. When I'm hiring a mentor coach to help me develop my coaching skills, back when I was investing a lot in mentor coaches in years past, I wanted someone whose niche was helping coaches develop. That's a niche you and I have. A lot of people who are looking to develop, and that's a niche, and here's a distinction I want to make. I don't look for somebody... I say that's a niche of theirs. I don't look for somebody who that's their expertise so they can consult me and tell me what I need to do, but I do want somebody who that their niche, so they have some familiarity with the topics I'm going to bring. They have a comfort in talking about that. We share a same language, and that could be... Whether that's a mentor coach, that could be around finance, that could be around job search, there's a lot of niches that coaches carve out.

It can really be helpful for their clients. Not because they bring expertise but because they bring a familiarity with what the client is going through. The best coaches use that familiarity not to say, "Alright. I know what you're going through. Here's what you need to do," but rather, "I know what you're going through. Here's what I've seen. Here's some of the different options that people have taken. What's a good path for you?" They really do combine that familiarity with a coach approach. I think that could be important in looking for a coach is, "What am I going through? What are my issues? What are my states in life, and is there a coach with a niche out there that has enough familiarity with that?"

Brian: And I think expertise can come from coaching experience as well. So I may not have been a leader of a huge organization, but in my own case, I think I am now coaching enough top leaders that you start to see patterns, and you start to see successes and failures, and I think that's helpful in that sense. Also as an expert, not to consult, but also not to let the person walk off a cliff when they didn't know there was a cliff there. With some familiarity you can say, "Hold up a second."

Bill: I think that's really good, and two excellent points there. Somebody who has a niche, it doesn't have to be because they spent 20 years doing that. It could be because they spent the last ten clients learning about that because each of those clients has been in that area. They've developed a heart for it, a familiarity with it. I don't think the niche has to come out of personal experience in that area. In fact, that may tend people to be too much of an expert.

Brian: Especially in the area of leadership, I find. People that are really strong leaders just do it so naturally, they just get frustrated with trying to bring people along. Whereas a coach has more empathy, more concern with who the person is, how they're wired, how they can best bring it out.

Bill: And so maybe that brings up another good point. I want somebody who even when I'm looking for someone who has a certain niche, or expertise, I want their coaching to be coaching me and not my issue. So think about the powerful combination. Somebody who has great familiarity with the area that I

want to be coached in, and who's interested in coaching me, not my problem, not my issue. That's a really powerful combination.

Brian: Right. I love that piece. So we've talked about character. We've talked about chemistry, qualifications. We've talked a little about expertise which I think's an issue that gets a little foggy sometimes because coaching's about the client's the expert. I think we've done a great job talking about that. What else do we need to talk about? What else do we need to think about when we're hiring a coach to get the best coach for us?

Bill: A big factor is what's it going to cost? The range of what coaches charge and how they charge, that's another area, is that can I fit this? Is this a good value for me? There's some coaches out there who are just excellent, but what it costs me to hire them, I don't believe I'd see the value of the return. So that's a factor. Can I afford it?

Brian: How do you figure that out because coaching can be high, so how do you figure out whether it's got enough value?

Bill: I think you look to see, what do you hope to get? What is your end result that you're hoping for? Try to assign a value to that. If I'm looking for a new career, if I'm looking for a new job, and I hire a coach to walk me through that, and I do an excellent job because of the coaching, what can expect the outcome to be? If I can expect the outcome to be a job in this kind of salary range, and I wouldn't necessarily get there without the coaching, I can see a difference in value there, and I've assigned a value to the coaching, and give me an idea of whether the investment is worth it or not.

Brian: If I want to develop an organization to a certain level, and I really feel like this coach can help me do that, then it would be well worth it, but if the organization doesn't have a lot of room to grow, and it's just more of a personal development, then you have to ask.

Bill: And even that. That's harder to put a value on. How do you put a value on understanding myself, really getting clear about my values, my strengths, my goals for the next five years? There's definitely some value in that. It's less concrete, and then I think the cost equation comes down to, what am I comfortable affording? Those are definitely factors. There have been twice in the last several years when I've considered a coach and just felt like the cost was going to be too high for me. One time, it was in terms of value. Once in terms of, I'm just not comfortable paying that much. I will say that most of the time when that has been an issue for me, and when that has been an issue for my clients, a conversation about that with them has resulted in there being a shift. A lot of times my clients say, "I think we have great chemistry. I think we work well together, but I just, I can't, I'm not comfortable paying that right now." We'll find a different way. We'll make it work often times.

Sometimes it's not possible, but I guess what I'm saying is, I'm looking for a coach. Don't let the cost that's been communicated emitting the rule that... Have a conversation about that. Most of us coaches, this is the way we make our living, but we're also here to help people. We can accomplish both of those. Don't be shy about asking.

Brian: And something I've heard you say is we have a network of coaches that we know that are different qualifications and credentials, and we could probably hook you up with somebody that's in your price range that would still suit your needs at some level, but I will say that the best coaching that I have received has been the most expensive coaching that I've had. There's no doubt.

Bill: That's true about many things in life, maybe even most things. Not everything, but most things in life is that when we pay for it... And in coaching it's maybe even more so because you require so much of us, but when you write that check, Brian, to a coach that costs the most, you show up dressed and ready to play.

Brian: I do.

Bill: You get the most out of it because you know what it costs you, and that's not a small thing when considering hiring a coach is if they're too inexpensive, I may not get as much out of it because I won't see the value. If it costs me a little more than I'm comfortable with, I'm going to work hard at it and get more value out of it.

Brian: So Bill, I know coaching costs are all over the board, and I'm sure they're going to change as time goes on, but here we are in 2016, what should people expect to pay for coaching.

Bill: Well, as you said, it's all over the map, and coaches charge what they charge. Some charge little, some coaches charge more. We see coaches who are fairly new starting out, maybe haven't quite gotten a certification, or quite gotten to the level of being credentialed, and they charge often in the \$35-\$50 per session range. We see other coaches who have gotten that first level of credential, and they're charging more in the \$50-\$100 range per session for those. Fifty to \$75 to \$100 with that first credential, ACC. Coaches who are somewhere between ACC and qualifying for PCC are often times in the \$75-\$125 per session range. Once you get a PCC, most folks are in the \$125-\$175 range, kind of in there, and it goes up from there depending on the level of coaches. I know coaches who cost you a thousand bucks a session for them, and those are typically coaching people at a very high level in an organization, having a huge impact on the organization, but for most of the folks that we're talking to on this podcast, most of the range is from fairly beginning coach all the way up to PCC, early MCC coaches that are in the couple hundred to \$250.

Brian: That's fantastic. Well we've covered a lot of stuff, and I think it's been really helpful. Anything else, Bill, that we need to think about when we're hiring a coach?

Bill: Well maybe the initial consideration is, do I need to hire a coach or not? If you're asking yourself that question, almost always the answer's yes. You'll benefit from hiring a coach. Once you've determined that you would benefit from hiring a coach, use these criteria to determine who's the best coach for you. If you don't know where to find one, let us know. We can help you find coaches. We are coaches. We have a vast network of coaches, and so we'd be delighted to help you find someone who meets these criteria for you.

Brian: Hey Bill, I appreciate you spending some time with me today thinking this through, and we want to thank everybody else just for joining us. That's our purpose is to get some information out to you, to try to help you to understand coaching, and what it is, and how you can do it even better. You can find out more about us by going to coachapproachministries.org, and downloading our free eBook, *The Beginners Guide to Christian Coaching: How to Have Powerful Conversations that Really Make a Difference*. Hey Bill, thanks for joining me today.

Bill: Good to see you Brian.

Brian: We'll see you next week.