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What Coaching IS and AIN'T - The Unvarnished Truth

*Coaching is a good thing – but only when it is a **real** coach that is doing the coaching and when the commitment to achieve authentically resides in the mind of a coachee*

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I stepped onto the swimming pool deck for my first coaching assignment in 1973. After graduating from college I coached national level swimmers aspiring for world-class competition and learned invaluable lessons on how to be an effective coach that I use to this day. I then started my own business where I applied the coaching skills I learned on the pool deck to develop my employees and business approach; subsequently experiencing such rapid growth and notice that business people around me started asking me to coach them on how to be more successful with their businesses. My first business card that said “Business Development Coach” was printed in 1984 and I have been coaching business people ever since. Most that I have worked with will tell you that they wouldn’t be where they are today if it weren’t for the relationship they had with me, their Coach.

Why the story, risking arrogance? You need to know that I know what coaching is about so that you pay attention to what I am about to say in this article. As any great coach, I don’t pull punches and I have years of experience on the subject. You can trust what you are about to learn.

So without further preamble, there are two very important things you need to know about coaching. The first is this:

> ***You need a coach. Everyone that is reaching for new levels of achievement does.***

Over the years I have observed two main misconceptions about having a coach:

1 – *"If you need a coach you are weak or wimpy because you can't do it yourself."*

Ok Hoss (or Hossette). If you want to be that arrogant – go for it. Alone. But I'm betting on you slamming square up against something you don't know how to handle (and of course you will run into things you've never experienced because your goals wouldn't be goals if they weren't destinations you haven't been before) – and when you do you will be confused, feel defeated and likely stop. Then you'll make an excuse (or blame someone else) about why it didn't work out as planned and start out for yet another goal – headed for the same experience. (Didn't someone once call that insanity?)

2 – *"How could a coach possibly help me if they don't know about _____ (my business, my situation, where I live, what it feels like to be as old as I am, as young as I am, a man, a woman…blah, blah, blah.)"*

You're missing the point.

A Coach is an expert in mindset and navigating obstacles and leveraging resources.

A good Coach knows about the principles of achievement and how to apply them to **any** situation. If you want a roadmap, hire a consultant or ask your competitor that is ahead of you.

But if you want a collaborative partner to guide you through learning fundamentals that you can apply to anything you

endeavor to achieve, hire a Coach.

The second important thing you need to know about coaching is that not everyone that calls themselves a coach is a coach. The good news is that in most places in our marketplace, the idea of having a coach is embraced. The bad news is that many people that really don't have a clue how to be an effective coach are trying to convince everyone around them that they are indeed coaches: bosses, speakers, trainers, gurus, doctors, therapists, accountants, consultants, bankers, infomercial spokes people. Whew, at this rate we'll be hearing that kids should start calling their parents "Coach".

Here's the truth: Just because a person has an opinion that they think you should adopt, doesn't mean they are a coach. I'm not sure how we got this place, but the guy that wrote a book, the gal that is your new boss, the guru-trainer that has 100 CD programs – none of them are coaching.

Here's why.

Very simply, a Coach is in the game with you.

They aren't espousing opinions and directives and generic lists of "here's what you do, step 1, step 2 and step 3". A Coach is, as I've said, a collaborative partner that literally is on your shoulder encouraging you – but at the critical moments when inevitable obstacles or opportunities pop up, they are there to help you think through solutions. Then with a plan, a good coach will hold you accountable for following through with the plan – your plan, not theirs. And then…as you take further steps the process repeats until you are finally celebrating achieving a new destination. And the coach is there to help you process what you learned that you can apply to the next goal adventure.

Coaching is a process, not an event or an instance.

A speech is not coaching. A workbook isn't coaching. A CD isn't coaching. Why? Because the communication goes only one direction. There must be a **dialogue** between a coach and a coachee for there to be a benefit.

So there's one final point in this rant about what coaching is and what it ain't.

> ***Because coaching is collaborative and because it is a dialogue – both parties need to be skilled.***

That is, the Coach needs to know what he or she doing as a skill – not as a self is proclaimed "position" or "title". And this takes practice, development, training and – yes – coaching.

But the other side of the dialogue is you – the coachee. And you have to be skilled as well. What skills? Three things really: *listening, staying in action and openly communicating.* Listen, because you don't know what you are going to experience – remember? Stay in action because achievement is about your feet moving, not you lying on a couch or sitting on the sideline listening to soothing encouragements from *another* spectator. And openly communicating with your Coach about what you need, what you are learning, what's getting in the way and what feels right.

Coaching is a good thing. It's a great thing – but only when it is a **real** coach that is doing the coaching and when the commitment to achieve authentically resides in the mind of a coachee to the degree that they are humbly willing to take on a skilled, genuine collaborative success partner. Find one and get to it. There's an exciting road ahead of you.

Steve Dailey is the Founder of PrimeFocus Coaching and AchievementBridge, Inc. Upon graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in Exercise Science from Colorado State University, Steve Dailey launched his first career as a professional swimming coach. During what he calls a "laboratory experience in human performance, psychology and motivation" he built "feeder" programs for aspiring national level swimmers in Colorado, Oklahoma, Illinois, South Carolina and Texas.

Most recently, Steve has focused his passion for coaching in developing high-yield achievement systems for Sales Professionals, Business Executives and Entrepreneurs that include web-based tools, leading edge coaching methods and executive "coach mentoring" programs where business leaders learn to be effective coaches to their own teams. You can find out more about that at his website: PrimeFocusCoaching.com