

Could You Use A Business Coach?

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Chris Nadeau played professional hockey before he founded [Evolving Solutions](#), a company that helps small businesses with digital marketing, sixteen years ago.

The career switch was huge, but there was one thing about the hockey life Nadeau missed as he learned the ins and outs of running his own company.

“When I became an entrepreneur it kind of felt weird not to have someone coaching me in some respect like I would have when I was playing hockey,” he says.

Then he heard about executive coaching.

“I thought a coach could help me work on a few things that I’ve been struggling with as an entrepreneur, because sometimes as an entrepreneur you’re kind of on your own,” Nadeau says. “You have your team that you work with, but sometimes there something you might want to bounce off of someone else, or someone else to help you figure things out on your own.”

“It kind of made me feel like my old hockey days when I had a coach help me get to that next level where I wanted to go.”

As the name implies, executive coaching helps business people become better leaders, therefore improving their company overall. Nadeau worked with [Vision Coaching](#), a Saint John-based firm that offers executive leadership coaching, along with team coaching and employee assessments such as EQi and the Myers Brigg tests. About 60 per cent of their clients come from Atlantic Canada while 40 per cent are from elsewhere, including countries like South Africa, Ireland and the United States. Around 80 per cent of their business is corporate or small/medium enterprise clients.



Dave Veale

Vision Coaching founder Dave Veale, says people seek out leadership coaching for one of three reasons: a current executive sees room for improvement; a current executive is doing great but wants to up their game, or an executive is completely new to the role.

“They’re transitioning into maybe a leadership role and they want to be as effective as possible and ramp up quickly. Often we get calls to support people there,” Veale says. “What we’re doing in each case is doing an assessment of where they are. Are they ready for coaching? Because there’s a bunch of different ways to support leaders, coaching is just one way.”

Once it’s determined the client ready for coaching, what often follows is some sort of assessment. Often, it’s a 360-degree assessment, where everyone around you to assesses you anonymously and a report is created. Using the report, the client

and the coach can determine strengths and areas for improvement. From there they develop a plan.

“We try to create smart goals to help people get access to developing leadership skills and competencies and/or business challenges,” Veale says.

Executive coaching sessions can be done in person or on the phone and are completely confidential. The experience is tailored to the individual. To many, it can be an overall positive experience, but it can also be a tough one. Clients should expect to feel vulnerable and receive objective advice that can sometimes be hard to hear.

“People call it therapeutic. But I think what is, is that you’re talking to someone and they’re listening to you in a different way and they’re trying to understand your thinking. They’re trying to disrupt some of your thoughts and patterns,” Veale says. “For some people, they haven’t really had anybody to listen to them and support them in that way. Some people don’t slow down enough to even reflect on what they’re challenges are.”

This was something Alex Bloomberg, founder of [Gimlet Media](#) learned recently. On a recent episode of his [Startup podcast](#), he sought the guidance of an executive coach Jerry Colonna, also known as the “CEO Whisperer.” Bloomberg was referred to Colonna by one of his investors, Troy Carter, who founded a firm called Cross Culture Ventures. Carter encourages every founder CCV invests in to get an executive coach from the very beginning.

Let’s just say, Colonna dug deep into Bloomberg’s challenges that arose from his 360 assessment.

“Two years ago, if someone had told me that starting Gimlet would one day lead to me sobbing in a studio about the patterns of my parent’s marriage, it would have seemed insane,” Bloomberg says at the end of the episode.

Veale says leadership coaching shouldn’t be confused with skills coaching. People often get placed in leadership roles because they’re great in their area of expertise, however leading and managing a group may require a whole new set of skills.

“We’re not talking about developing a subject matter expert. We’re talking about helping someone develop and lead others effectively. It’s called leadership coaching for a reason,” Veale says. “We would have everyone from heart surgeon who’s become a division head ... to the trial lawyer who wants to build his area of practice ... to the executive from a Fortune 500 company to anyone in between.”

The process can be challenging at times, but the results are worth it. For Nadeau, Evolving Solutions wouldn’t be where it is today without it.

“There have been lots of people who have helped me as an individual and entrepreneur to get to where I am today, but the coaching has been a big part of that, because it helped me see things that I wasn’t seeing on my own and they helped find the path to get to those things that have helped our business grow, change and evolve over the years,” he says. “We’ve been in business for 16 years and we’ve had to evolve and without the coaching, I don’t think we would have done that as efficiently as we have.”

Veale says the impact coaching could have on the company can be huge. In many cases, [employees leave bosses, not companies](#). An executive with strong leadership skills can elevate the entire operation.

“At a minimum, it’s the tide that raises all the boats. It’s helping people identify what they’re doing really well and getting more of that. And also identifying what might be tripping them up a bit. Then creating a plan forcing the enforcing the discipline that they agreed to make sure they are executing and creating new habits,” Veale says.

“If you work with a really strong leader ... you look and see what they’re doing. They’re role modeling good behavior. They’re interacting with you and getting your ideas and pulling you along. If you look at what you’re output is, it’s going to be stronger.”