



What Does an Executive Coach Do?

By Jenna Ghisolfo, Founder of Still Standing in Heels Consulting

A practical guide to executive coaching, leadership development, and turning professional potential into measurable growth.



Leadership can be lonely at the top.

An executive coach provides a confidential, objective space where leaders can examine challenges, strengthen their skills, make better decisions, and intentionally develop the way they lead.

Executive Coaching Is More Than Advice

An executive coach does not simply tell a leader what to do. Effective executive coaching helps leaders slow down, evaluate what is happening around them, identify patterns that may be limiting their effectiveness, and develop strategies that fit their role, personality, organization, and goals. A coach serves as a strategic thought partner - someone who can ask the questions colleagues may avoid, challenge assumptions, provide perspective, and help turn insight into action.

At Still Standing in Heels Consulting, executive coaching can support CEOs, executives, senior leaders, business owners, emerging leaders, new managers, nonprofit leaders, and professionals preparing for their next level of responsibility. Coaching is customized because leadership looks different at every level. The challenges facing a first-time manager are different from those facing a CEO, yet both benefit from greater self-awareness, stronger communication, accountability, confidence, and a clear plan for growth.

What Does an Executive Coach Help With?

Executive presence and confidence: Strengthening how leaders communicate, make decisions, enter difficult conversations, present ideas, and influence others with credibility.

Communication and relationships: Improving listening, feedback, conflict management, delegation, accountability, team communication, and the ability to work effectively across different personalities and leadership styles.

Emotional intelligence: Building self-awareness, recognizing triggers and blind spots, understanding how behavior affects others, and responding more intentionally under pressure.

Strategic thinking: Helping leaders move beyond reacting to daily demands so they can prioritize, anticipate challenges, evaluate consequences, and focus on the decisions that create the greatest organizational impact.

Career advancement: Identifying strengths, development gaps, leadership goals, and practical steps that prepare professionals for expanded responsibilities and future opportunities.

What Happens During Executive Coaching?

The process typically begins by identifying the leader's goals, current challenges, organizational expectations, and desired outcomes. From there, coaching sessions focus on real situations the leader is facing now - not hypothetical leadership theory. A session might involve preparing for a difficult conversation, evaluating a team problem, strengthening executive presence before a presentation, addressing missed expectations, navigating organizational change, or determining how to lead through competing priorities.

Between sessions, leaders may apply specific strategies, practice new communication approaches, complete reflection exercises, gather feedback, or work toward defined 30-, 60-, and 90-day goals. Progress is revisited regularly so coaching remains practical and accountable. The objective is not dependence on a coach. It is to develop a stronger, more self-aware leader who can make better decisions independently long after the engagement ends.

When Should an Organization Consider Executive Coaching?

Executive coaching can be especially valuable when a talented employee is promoted into leadership, an executive is preparing for greater responsibility, a leadership team is experiencing communication or trust challenges, an organization is navigating change, or a high-potential leader needs targeted development. It can also be used proactively. Some of the strongest coaching engagements begin before there is a performance problem - when an organization recognizes potential and wants to intentionally invest in it.

The goal of executive coaching is not to create a leader who sounds like everyone else.

It is to help leaders understand who they are, strengthen how they lead, and become more effective in the moments that matter.

The Still Standing in Heels Approach

Still Standing in Heels Consulting approaches executive coaching as a partnership built around the individual and the organization. We focus on practical leadership development that can be used immediately - from executive presence, communication, emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, and team dynamics to strategic thinking, navigating workplace change, and career development. Coaching may be delivered one-on-one or incorporated into a broader leadership development experience for managers, executives, or leadership teams.

Whether an organization is developing one leader or strengthening an entire leadership pipeline, the goal is the same: create meaningful growth that can be seen in how people communicate, make decisions, lead teams, handle challenges, and move the organization forward. The best executive coaching does more than help someone perform better in their current position. It gives them tools they can continue using throughout the next stages of their career.

Still Standing in Heels Consulting
Empowered People • Stronger Leaders • Limitless Impact