

Virtual Executive Coaching Guidelines



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Executive Coaching is partnering with leaders one-on-one, as part of a coaching effort within a broader organization or in small groups in a thought-provoking, measurable goal oriented and creative process that inspires leaders to maximize their potential including successfully navigating current and anticipated challenges within the organization. Whether it is an experienced C-suite executive, an entry level manager or a leader somewhere in between, executive coaching is a non-clinical process that can accelerate professional development on multiple fronts. Whether during a time of crisis, particular challenges or for ongoing professional development, the coaching process provides the support needed to navigate strategically and successfully.

Historically, coaching services were predominantly provided during in person meetings or via telephone. However, as a result of the pandemic [and technological advancements] there has been a multi-year digital transformation that has transpired in less than a year.

A significant increase in human use of technology to engage in many things previously done in person. What does that mean for the coaching industry? The majority of coaching services are now provided virtually coupled with artificial intelligence tools, digital practice simulations, phone calls and with email used for follow up on assignments and resources outside the coaching session. Although the underlying coaching models remain the same, the delivery method, tools and the modality have changed.

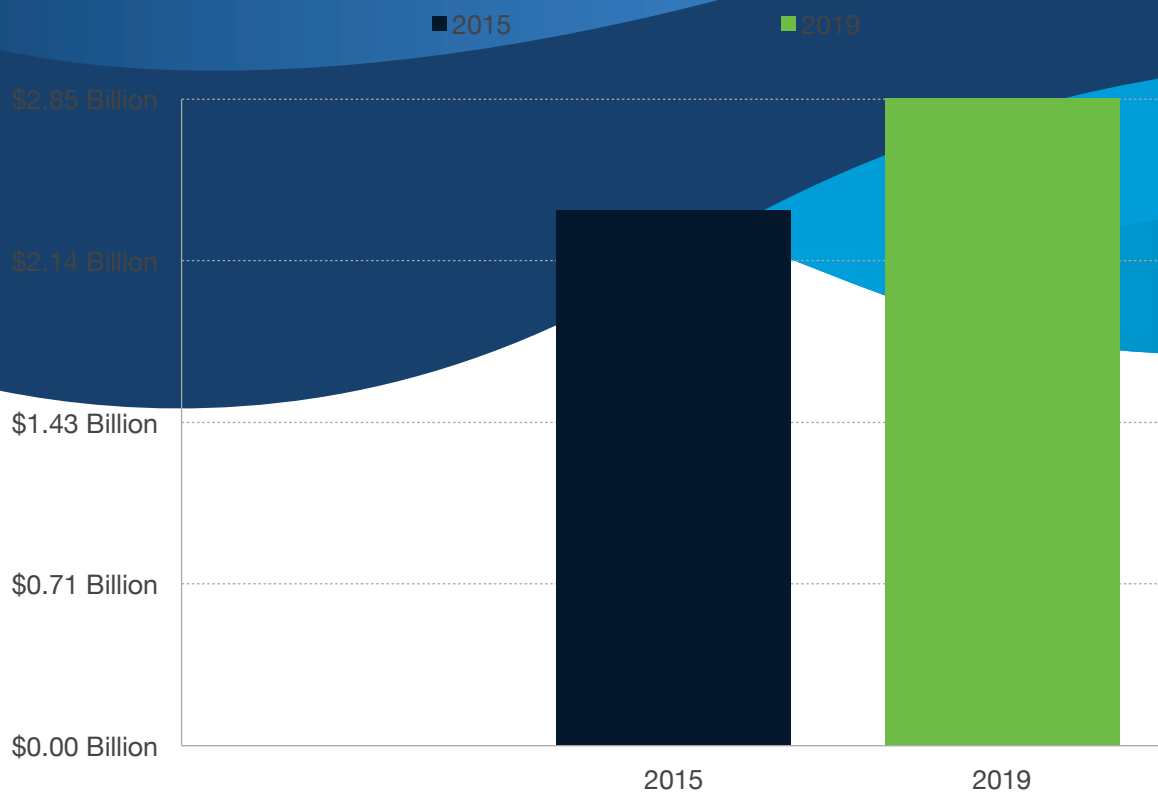


Coaching Access and Efficiency. The physical geographic distance between coaches and their coaching clients is no longer a factor with the use of virtual coaching. Expending time traveling and incurring the related expenses are not necessary to engage with coaching clients throughout the world. Time is valuable.

The result? Coaches can engage in more coaching sessions per day and regardless of their physical location their reach is global. From highly dense major cities to rural towns, coaching services are accessible as long as the needed equipment, digital applications and a high speed reliable internet connection is available at each end of the coaching connection.



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From 2015 to 2019 the Coaching Industry realized a 21% increase with estimated industry revenues of \$2.85 U.S. billion dollars. There are sentiments that the industry may see a slight decline in 2020 and rebound post pandemic with estimated continued growth between 1% and 6% through 2026.





Ask the Question - Training and Credentialing? One challenge within the coaching industry is the lack of a required credentialing process to “qualify” a coach to provide coaching services to the public. The International Coaching Federation (ICF) is recognized as a self-regulated “credentialing” body within the industry, although neither membership nor certification is required. Coaches pay a membership fee to join ICF after their applications have been approved to qualify for one of the coaching certification levels. It is important for executive coaches to have proper training to maximize effectiveness and adhere to ethics and high coaching standards in. When retaining a coach, it is recommended to select one that has relevant formal training. Ask to see their resume, gain an understanding of their experience, education and follow up with references. It is important that the coach and client are a good “fit” to ensure a trusting relationship is established and there is effective communication throughout the coaching process.



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BEST PRACTICES FOR VIRTUAL EXECUTIVE COACHING



In today's technology driven world, humans are accessing a variety of digital applications throughout their work day and at home. The pandemic has accelerated the use of technology in many areas. Including, many employers now allowing remote work vs. office based jobs, where previously the employee's physical presence was required in the office. There has been a shift in the work environment as a result of the pandemic.

The coaching industry is increasingly utilizing technology as the service delivery pathway as well as digital tools to enhance the coaching experience and facilitate accessibility. The following are specific guidelines for successful virtual coaching.



Internet Connection. It is critical that there is a high speed and reliable internet connection at both ends of the coaching – client conversation. This is especially true when coaching through a video with audio platforms. Having “dropped” connections that interrupt the flow of communication during a coaching session is disruptive and can have a negative impact on the coaching experience which in turn may adversely affect outcomes or the clients’ willingness to engage. Investing in a reliable internet provider along with the related equipment (e.g. modems) is necessary.

Equipment & Digital Tool Investment. To ensure the virtual coaching experience is maximized for both the coach and client, investing in computers, monitors, docking stations, microphones, cameras and lighting is necessary. There are a variety of brands and options to choose from, accessing professional and consumer reviews to aid in the decision-making process is recommended. It is recommended that the coach use a 24-27” monitor, when possible, to facilitate the ability to clearly observe the client’s non-verbal communication during the coaching session. It is understood that about 93% of our communication does not involve the actual words spoken.



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There are a growing number of online Artificial Intelligence (AI) applications and simulation tools that can be used by coaches. Having a client utilize virtual simulations in between coaching sessions to practice concepts being developed may be useful and provide valuable feedback to both the coach and client. AI has the ability to track the client's eye and body movement, response times and a plethora of other data points that a coach may want to utilize during the coaching process.



However, a word of caution in regard to the use of AI. It is important for coaches to consider the client's level of comfort and willingness to utilize AI in the coaching process. Client's may become uncomfortable and self-conscious knowing their every move and word is being tracked and analyzed. The use and/or overuse of AI has the potential to interfere with open communication between the coach and the client, having an adverse impact on the overall coaching experience and outcomes.

Background, Lighting & Noise. As a coach, it is important to pay close attention to the background you are presenting oneself in. It should be clear from clutter and professional. Less is more in this area.

- 1) It is not recommended that coaches use virtual backgrounds due to the holographic affect that is created and projected when the body moves. This can be distracting to the viewer. Perhaps in the future, new technology will alleviate this current issue.
- 2) It is recommended that lighting be placed behind and above the monitor so it illuminates the coaches' face.
- 3) Sitting in front of a window during the day should be avoided as it can create a shadowing affect. A soft light in the background can be used if desired.

4) Decrease extraneous noise in the environment, as much as possible. Realizing while working from home there may be sudden unexpected noises. If this happens, casually mention it so the client understands what the noise is; however, quickly resume discussing the topic at hand.



Virtual Platforms. There are several video with audio platforms to consider when providing virtual coaching services. It is important to remember that confidentiality is a key component of coaching ethics and establishing a trusting and productive relationship with the coaching client. Therefore, it is recommended that coaches utilize a Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) compliant platform. For example, Zoom and GoToMeeting offer HIPAA compliant products. It is recommended that coaches review product options in the market place and choose one that meets their business needs.



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Zoom Fatigue. Zoom fatigue phenomenon is COVID 19 inspired. It is described as a feeling of tiredness, burnout or worry associated with the overuse of virtual platforms for communication purposes. During the pandemic, the amount of people using Zoom is more than 300 million per day. Of course, when the other virtual platforms are added into the mix, the number is even higher.



The factors that contribute to this fatigue are believed to be multidimensional and complicated. Virtual audio is a significant contributing factor due to the millisecond delays in verbal responses that require people to expend more energy and concentration to effectively communicate. Additional factors include: financial stress, unemployment and feelings of isolation caused by the pandemic, stress related to employees' inexperience performing job duties in this virtual environment. There is also a subconscious psychological "lack of reward" in the virtual communication – social interaction and the way we process information while in a virtual environment differs than when in person. This is also believed to be contributing factors to the fatigue.

To avoid Zoom Fatigue the following is recommended: 1) Avoid multitasking, 2) Build in breaks that do not include screen time, 3) Reduce onscreen stimuli, and 4) Switch to phone calls and/or emails instead of solely using video conferencing.



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Client Centered. At the start of the coaching engagement it is recommended that the coach review with the client the coach's suggested approach to virtual coaching, including the use of any digital tools. The coach should explain to the client the pros and cons for each, how to navigate the virtual environment, assess the client's comfort level with the recommendations, make reasonable adjustments and then move forward with a virtual coaching plan that is mutually agreeable.

Questions about Executive Coaching or Management Consulting? Contact BETERI Consulting Group @ admin@beteri.com or visit www.beteri.com

BETERI's Mission: Partnering with leaders to accelerate and maximize human potential, create innovative solutions and achieve beyond what thought possible!



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