

Executive Challenge #12:

“It’s lonely at the top – who can I turn to for an objective perspective?”

What are the biggest challenges facing successful business people today? In my work as a certified executive coach for C-Suite Executives, Directors, Managers, and Entrepreneurs, there are many recurring themes that seem to surface. One at a time, I’ll be sharing with you 12 of those top challenges along with hints, tips, and steps you can take to avoid or eliminate altogether these key issues that might be holding you back from achieving the kind of success you are aiming for.

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It’s just the sheer nature of the beast. At your level, everyone you turn to for advice has a hidden agenda. No matter how hard they may try, their perspectives cannot help but be “biased.” This includes your spouse, your children, your boss, your Board of Directors, your subordinates, and your peers. So, where can you go for an impartial viewpoint? Who can you turn to for a truly objective discussion?

Executive Coaching may be the answer. There is an unfortunate myth about Executive Coaching that it’s only about “fixing problems,” but nothing could be further from the truth. Coaching isn’t consulting, counseling, or therapy. It isn’t about regretting a past that can’t be changed. It’s about focusing on a future that can be changed. Executive Coaching helps leaders who are already successful achieve even more in the future.

The original definition of the word “coach” was a vehicle – usually horse-drawn – that took someone from one place to another. More and more executives are recognizing that this is what they can gain from an Executive Coach – a means of getting from where they are now to where they want to be. They understand that the skills which got them their current positions may not be enough to advance their careers or even keep them competitive at their present level.

Here are just a few of the top reasons that executives turn to coaching:

- Develop stronger leadership skills / core competencies.
- Transition successfully into a new position.
- Help high potential employees succeed.
- Reduce / better manage stress.
- Improve time management and work/life balance.
- Foster better self-coaching behaviors.
- Implement a new strategy, vision, or direction.
- Develop conflict management skills.
- Create a more positive workplace environment.
- Achieve greater overall business success.
- Find a truly objective sounding board for ideas and issues.

So, how do you find the best Executive Coach for you? First and foremost, do your research. Look for certified coaches at the website of the International Coach Federation (www.CoachFederation.org), and interview a few coaches until you find one who feels right. Ask to see training certificates and testimonials. Talk to past

clients, if possible, and request a free trial session. A coach may be very talented, but the chemistry between you needs to be spot-on in order for you to achieve your goals.

Here are some questions you might ask an Executive Coach before you hire them:

- What types of people and situations have you worked with?
- What kind of results did you achieve?
- What is your coaching model and process?
- Where did you get your training?
- Is there anyone you would turn down as a client?
- How would you define the difference between therapy and coaching?
- What is your greatest strength as a coach?

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Cost and Payout?

What does executive coaching cost? The range varies widely across the world and in Thailand, too, and depends upon the coach’s level of experience and track record. Harvard Business Review has reported that rates range from \$300-\$3,500 USD per hour. One thing you can do to keep costs down is ask for a volume discount if your company has multiple managers who need coaching.

Make sure you get a good return on your investment (ROI) when it comes to executive coaching. Two recent large-scale independent studies amongst thousands of executive coaching clients across the world said the return on their investment was anywhere from 600-700% of the cost of the initial investment. Nonetheless, take the time to quantify the results of hiring an executive coach. The costs of weak leaders in today’s marketplace are great, but the benefit of having strong leaders is priceless.

If you take the time to find an Executive Coach who will work well with you, the benefits can be enormous, whether you simply want to advance and grow in your profession or you have something specific that you want to accomplish.

Brenda S. Bence is an internationally-recognized branding expert, Certified Executive Coach, dynamic trainer and Certified Speaking Professional, and the author of several award-winning books, including the *How YOU™ Are Like Shampoo* personal branding series and *Smarter Branding Without Breaking the Bank*.

With an MBA from Harvard Business School, Brenda’s career has spanned more than two decades and has included developing mega brands for Procter & Gamble and Bristol-Myers Squibb across four continents and 50 countries.



Now, as President of Brand Development Associates (BDA) International, she travels the world speaking, training, and coaching individuals and companies to greater success through creative, yet practical, corporate and personal brand development. Brenda’s client list includes companies such as Citibank, Microsoft,

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