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## MAKING THE MOST OF A BUSINESS COACH

By: Jan Norman, Writer  
Small Business section, Orange County Register

Many athletes, singers and actors have coaches.

Now, many chief executives do too. The coaching experience can be helpful, but as with other performers, the outcome still depends on how the executive works.

"Effective coaching requires more than talent," says David Rohlander, a business coach in Orange. "It requires trust, respect, understanding, empathy and resolution."

It's more art than science. And not everyone gets good results from having a coach.

Bill Bancroft, chief executive of **Patrol One**, a security company in Santa Ana, has benefited from coaching.

"I built two businesses up and at some point I hit a wall; I couldn't get beyond a certain point," he says.

Patrol One's revenues were about \$6.5 million, but he realized that he had trained all his managers and that he might benefit from an outside expert with no agenda other than helping him succeed. He had known Rohlander for 30 years and turned to his coaching two years ago.

Rohlander, a former business owner, has coached other owners for nine years. A believer in a combination of peer advisory groups and one-on-one coaching, he works with **Vistage International**, the new name for **TEC**, the nation's largest CEO membership organization based in San Diego. Individual business coaching can cost \$200 a month and up, he estimates. Vistage membership ranges from \$210 to \$995 a month, depending on the individual's management role. Anyone who wants to achieve more can benefit from coaching, Rohlander says. But chief executives who don't want feedback, are not candid or won't follow through on corrective action won't reap those benefits.

Tom Hernandez, partner at **Artistic Maintenance**, a landscaper in Lake Forest and another Rohlander client, agrees.

"If you wonder whether you need a coach, you probably do," he says. "If you say, 'I don't need a coach,' even if you had one you probably wouldn't be open enough to get maximum benefit." To achieve those benefits, different business executives prefer different styles of coaching. Some prefer "life coaches" who concentrate on personal life. Coaches like Rohlander focus on the person's business activities.

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Many executives just want one-on-one coaching.

Groups like Vistage International have an additional element: small groups of executives in noncompeting companies who meet monthly to discuss common issues.

"Groups provide camaraderie and accountability," Rohlander says. "The executive gets multiple points of view, independent points of view."

In Vistage, the monthly group meeting is all day, part of which may be taken by a speaker on specific business topics. Then Rohlander meets with each member privately each month for 90 minutes to two hours to hash out issues unique to that executive.

Bancroft says that the groups and business coaching have confirmed that some of his decisions were right but also has given him the opportunity to step away from the daily fray to see the big picture.

The experience encouraged him to increase prices and provide more service. He didn't lose a single customer.

Hernandez uses not only Rohlander and Vistage, he has brought in coaches who specialize in finances and human resources.

"It does take time, but on the other side, the (financial expert) can do projections and cash flow management in a fraction of the time that it would take me." He says.

He's sold on the value of coaching. "It's been a rousing success for my business. We have grown vigorously, improved the bottom line dramatically."

Improved financial results are common, says Rohlander. Among Vistage members, revenue growth rates average 5.1 percent, compared to 1.7 percent before joining.

However, an executive won't achieve those or other positive results from business coaching without work, Rohlander cautions.

"I had one member who kept bringing up the same issue every month," he says. "It got to the point that another member asked when he was going to do something about it. The member quit."

In addition, coaching won't achieve anything without good communication, and that depends, in part, on compatibility between the executive and coach, Rohlander says.

Watch out for people who talk a good game but don't perform, Hernandez adds. "I have experienced coaches like that or who try to sell other services. Those are coaches you want to steer clear of."

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If you would like to discuss business coaches or mentors, please contact one of our Directors at (714) 668-9500 or [Info@ClientAdvocateNetwork.com](mailto:Info@ClientAdvocateNetwork.com).