

## Put Me In, Coach! Improving Your Contracting Business



By Jayme Broudy, Contractor's Business School

**Dear Jayme:**

I know a couple of guys who hired business coaches a while back and rave about them. I never thought seriously about using one, but now I'm starting to wonder. What's the deal on business coaches?

-- Dean

**Dear Dean:**

I wouldn't have stayed in this business for 20 years if I didn't know (and have a hundred or two successful clients to prove) that coaching creates more successful owners and businesses. But here are some answers to the most common questions:

**What is a business coach?** What it sounds like: someone who provides structure, training, and encouragement so that you and your business perform as well as they possibly can (and usually better than you ever imagined). Same as a personal trainer at the gym.

**Who needs a coach?** There are thousands of contracting businesses that run smoothly, make a lot of money and give their owners a very nice life. It's a very attainable standard. If you're not there, you're not performing as well as you could and a good coach can help fix that.

**What do they actually do?** The usual approach is to help you clearly define your objectives, create a program that moves you toward them, and meet with you periodically to review progress, address problems, and assign the next moves. Can also act as business advisors, confidential counselors. Lots of variations on this, however.

**Why should I hire a coach? Can't I just do this stuff myself?**

- Maybe, but if you were going to do it, you'd have done it by now. Coaches provide the discipline to keep you on track.
- You can, but you'll be doing it by trial and error, it'll take forever, the results won't be integrated and optimized, and you'll be hugely frustrated. Good coaches have done it a hundred times and know the shortest distance to your objectives.

**What should I look for?**

Look for someone who:

- **Understands your industry:** "Yeah, but my business is different". In some ways it is, but in many ways it's not. Most contractors need similar structures and systems, but those are different from, say, the manufacturing or retail business.
- **Understands your issues:** If sales is your problem, hire someone who knows how to set up a sales function, not a job-costing expert.
- **Has a long record of success**
- **Builds your skills rather than a dependency on him/her** (Teach to fish, not give you a fish)
- **Only business and training professionals:** At least ten years of success *in the coaching business*. Just understanding the *contracting* business isn't enough.

- **Cost:** Fees for good coaches can seem high, but they're highly leveraged investments (we target a bare minimum of 10 to 1 net payback for clients on our fees). Again, check results, reputation.

### How do I pick one?

Since I started my company 12 years ago, thousands of people have flooded the industry. Some are highly competent, some are hacks. Do your homework.

- **Check legitimacy:** Are they published in trade media? Authored books? Speak or conduct seminars regularly at trade shows? Webinars? Newsletters? Quoted as industry experts?
- **Comfort and chemistry:** Nothing else matters if you aren't comfortable with the coach or how they approach the coaching process. Get to know them.
- **Get references:** Hear about client's experience: Ask: Did they do what they promised? Were they easy to deal with? Did they get the results you wanted? Did you like your coach? Would you do it again? Was it a good value? Were they competent, organized, and responsive?

### What should I beware of?

- **Contracts:** Solid, competent coaches don't demand a lot of money up front or a long term contract.
- **Guarantees:** Your work creates the results and a coach can't force you to do the work, so a coach can't guarantee results without a million "ifs". If they do, get it in writing.
- **"We do it all":** You are unlikely to find someone who's knowledgeable in every trade *and* at every business function *and* at all levels of detail, despite what some may tell you.
- **Lone Wolves:** There are great solo coaches out there but a firm is more likely to have greater resources and stability. You don't want to be left swinging in the breeze.
- **Promises of quick results without much effort by you:** Ain't gonna happen. You don't get strong without lifting the weights.

Sports are the ultimate dog-eat-dog arena where people do whatever it takes to win. And every successful athlete (even Tiger Woods) has a coach. And regular business people are doing the same thing. Not because it's fashionable, not to show they can afford one, not to brag to their friends, but because they work.

**Cheers!**

**Jayne**

*Jayne Brody is the founder and principal of Contractor's Business School, a coaching, training and consulting firm specializing in helping contractors produce more profit in less time. Since 1993, Jayne has worked with hundreds of contractors in many specialty areas to build successful stand-alone businesses. Visit [www.contractorsbusinessschool.com](http://www.contractorsbusinessschool.com) or call (800) 527-7545 to get the free CD "10 Key Strategies to Build a Business that Works."*

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