

A professional video background showing a man in a green button-down shirt gesturing with his hands while speaking. He is standing in what appears to be a modern office or conference room. In the background, there's a whiteboard, some plants, and other office equipment. The lighting is bright and even.

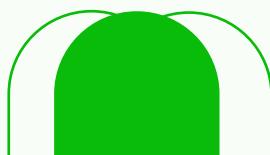
# So you want to be an ICF **Accredited Coach?**

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- I receive at least two or three messages a month from people who want to have a conversation with me and talk to me about how I went about becoming an executive leadership coach. The most common question I receive is how to get certified as a coach so that the person can start a coaching business. The drive to be a coach usually comes from the desire to help people and serve as a mentor, based on their own experiences working as a leader. This also happens for HR Heads and Talent and OD (organizational development) Professionals.
- While certification and formal training as a coach are important, I strongly believe that a coaching certification is not the main prerequisite to being a credible and successful coach to leaders. As someone formally and informally serving as a coach to executive leaders for nearly two decades, I do have a point of view and some specific advice for people who are considering making it a career.
- Coach training and subsequent certification provide an important body of knowledge and acknowledgment of a certain skill level in the art of how to coach someone. The training is intense and emphasizes the art of asking probing questions and setting a safe environment for the client to self-reflect. A key assumption of the training is that the client has their own answers and that a skillful coach can help a person come to their own conclusions. The potential coach also learns how to help drive a client to action and accountability and that coaching is not the same as consulting. All of these things are indeed key in being able to coach anyone effectively.
- The reality is that these skills are indeed applicable to any type of coaching one seeks to provide. They are fundamental coaching skills, but they are not all-encompassing when seeking to establish credibility and competence with clients with leadership roles in organizations. In my experience, here are the three important elements that are essential when serving as a coach to leaders. These will distinguish you from the increasingly crowded landscape of certified coaches and ultimately contribute to your credibility and competence as a leadership coach with clients in leadership roles in organizations.
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# **1 Understand the context of leading in an organization.**

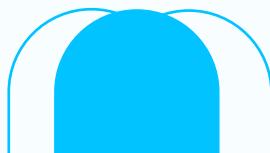
If you are attempting to help someone in a leadership role by serving as their coach, it is important to have insight into the context in which they are operating. It doesn't mean you have to be an expert in their industry, but it is important to have some sort of leadership experience in an organization. There are unique challenges leaders face leading organizations. It is difficult to understand the nuances of organizational politics, navigate the complexity inherent in working in organizational systems or bureaucracies and the interpersonal norms in a hierarchy if you have only been exposed to those dynamics in theory. Experience leading in an organization will go a long way to establish your understanding of the contextual realities your potential clients are facing.

# **2 Have a body of knowledge in skills like Dialogue, Conversation**

Experience working as a leader is a great foundation to add to your coaching certification, but it doesn't suffice as the only requisite to be a leadership coach. Having done something in the past doesn't necessarily equip you to help someone develop their leadership effectiveness and range. Instead, having in your head some basic concepts and models of leadership effectiveness, emotional intelligence and organizational systems theories will further enhance your ability to coach a leader. You can provide not only a space for self-awareness and self-reflection but also serve as a guide for the leader to find relevant resources and ideas that will help them expand and develop a greater leadership range.

# **3 Demonstrate a mastery of self.**

Everyone is in a different place in the journey of personal growth and development. In order to be an effective leadership coach, you must be able to regularly demonstrate and model the fundamental personal and interpersonal leadership skills your clients are aiming to develop.



## Ask yourself these questions:

- ▶ Can you manage your emotions effectively?
- ▶ Are you aware of your own judgments and preconceived notions, and do you self-monitor them?
- ▶ Are you nervous, insecure and riddled with self-doubt when dealing with certain people?
- ▶ Do you personalize interactions?
- ▶ Can you adjust your interpersonal and communication style away from your personal preferences and to the needs of your client?
- ▶ Do you know your master script? Worth, Safety, Mastery, Autonomy or Thrill

Self-awareness, self-monitoring and self-management are critical to your effectiveness as a coach, and they are pronounced when you are working to help someone develop their leadership skills. Modeling self-leadership requires you to spend time doing some deep work on yourself first before you can attempt to help others.

Coaching is a rewarding endeavor and profession. It can profoundly impact the leadership development journeys of the people you are working with. It is important to realize that a coaching certification, while definitely an important component to the preparation required to coach leaders effectively, only scratches the surface of the self-work, experience and knowledge you can ultimately bring to the table. In addition to pursuing a certification, prepare yourself with real-world context, knowledge of leadership and organizational development content and doing the deep self-work it takes to serve others effectively.

