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Ridler 2013: Credibility voted top quality in coaches

Credibility and gravitas are the most important qualities for sponsors seeking external coaches.

Some 99 per cent of respondents to the latest Ridler Report rated these qualities as the most important, followed by "listens well" (97 per cent). Credibility and gravitas are associated with a track record of successfully coaching business leaders, a broad business understanding and appreciation of the sponsor's business context, underpinned by their experience, and "generally sounding and looking like they would relate easily to senior business leaders", according to interviews with sponsor organisations. Also important is the coach "coming across as open and sincere" (88 per cent) and showing "an interest in, and appreciation of, sponsor's organisation" (88 per cent). The latter is valued more highly than coaches' knowledge of the organisation (74 per cent).

Personal chemistry was highlighted in the 2011 Ridler report as the highest rated characteristic sponsors look for in external coaches. Once a coach is hired, the most important qualities are to do with their expertise, including working "insightfully to raise coachee's awareness of their ingrained patterns of behaviour" (83 per cent), delivering "challenging feedback to coachee" (82 per cent) and working "strictly within professional boundaries" (77 per cent).

Developments deemed potentially risky to the success of an assignment include the client rearranging/cancelling sessions frequently (94 per cent), assignments lasting longer than two years with no sign of reaching a conclusion (90 per cent) and the coach not engaging with the "below the surface" dynamics of clients.

Other findings include that the growth in internal coaching is expected to continue over the next three years (79 per cent), although most senior leaders prefer an external coach (85 per cent).

Independent coaches sourced by the sponsor have the largest share of the market (49 per cent), but specialist providers with multiple coaches may be catching up. The latter currently hold 39 per cent of the market share.

Some 145 organisations participated in the research, including: GlaxoSmithKline, Barclays, News International, Santander, Metropolitan Police, Deutsche Bank, Dairy Crest, VTB Capital, PricewaterhouseCoopers and KPMG.

The report was carried out by Ridler & Co with the European Mentoring & Coaching Council UK.