

How to choose a careers coach

You've read the books but are no further forward in your search for a career that makes you happy. Perhaps it's time to find a specialist career coach to help you.



**How do you make a choice?
Here are the questions you need to ask to ensure you
get the right career coach for you.**

**Brought to you by
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1: How to choose a career coach

You have probably read the books but somehow you are no further forward in search for a career that makes you happy. Perhaps it's now time to find a specialist career coach to help you.

Research shows that people who are most satisfied and motivated in their careers are people who have a career that reflects their values, interests, skills, and abilities, plus are clear on what they want out of life and what their ideal working environment is.

If you are not happy in your work, a career coach may be able to help you to uncover the right career for you.

There are many people offering career coaching, counselling and advice. Life coaches may be good in supporting you to achieve goals and step through your fear, but do they have sufficient specialist knowledge? You may prefer to work with a specialist psychologist or careers advisor.

It can appear cheaper to opt for a group programme, but most people will make greater progress by working one to one with personal attention.

Over the past few years the number of coaches has exploded and many of these are now offering career coaching, so how can you choose between them?

- Speak to at least 3 coaches and find out about their backgrounds. Who did they train with, what specific training and experience do they have to be a career coach? Coaches can set themselves up as a career coach with just a days training or even less – training programmes are available for \$99, is that sufficient background for you?
- As you talk to them see if you have rapport. To get the best from the service you will need to be open and honest, so make sure you feel at ease with them.
- Find out about their coaching style. Some may follow a tried and tested programme; others may be more open ended. Do you work best with structure or would you rather it be free flowing. Make sure the coaches style matches with your preference.
- Find out about costs. Some coaches will offer a programme at a set fee, others will charge by the month and so the overall cost may be more than you anticipated. Some people who think a programme at £800 is too much, find themselves paying for 5 months at £250 per month which is obviously more.

- Check out levels of experience – you will make far greater progress with an experienced expert than someone newly moving into this area.
- Don't just accept testimonials written on a web site, ask to see the original letters and seek out a client you can call.
- How long does the coach want you to be their client? Many coaches expect you to work with them for several months, whereas you may only need support over a couple of sessions. You want to ensure the coach is not dependent on you.
- Be careful over the assessments offered, they should be recommended by a psychologist registered with the British Psychological Society, and should offer a combination of assessing abilities, interests and personality. Interests or personality alone will never be sufficient to make a choice. Just because you are interested in something doesn't mean you are any good at something, and
- Don't expect a career coach to wave a wand and find you your ideal job. You will have to do some work too! **You will learn about yourself and be supported to find out about careers, but you need to do work yourself!**
- Using a professional may seem expensive, but measure it in terms of your increased likelihood of making a good career decision, and it starts to look more like an investment than a cost.

Be wary of

- Any company that guarantees they will find you a job.
- Anyone that tells you they have access to the hidden job market – everybody does, it is called networking.
- A company that wants a large flat fee up front and pressurises you to make a quick decision.
- Coaches with little practical experience. Just because someone has worked in HR for XX years it doesn't mean they are experienced in helping people define their career goals or with job search.

Read on to help you make a choice and please do get in touch if I can be of any help.

Wishing you future career success and happiness

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2: Would assessments help?

Assessments are very popular as support to a coaching programme. There are many free and very low cost ones available but these lack a strong research background and are likely to be as effective as a quiz in a magazine.

The most common assessments fall into 3 categories:

- Interest Inventories
- Personality questionnaires and
- Ability assessments

Interest Inventories

Popular **low cost tests** are interest inventories such as the Strong Interest Inventory assessment and The Self Directed Search – both based on the work of John Holland which divide people and jobs into 6 categories:

- Realistic - practical focused jobs
- Investigative – research and analytical jobs
- Artistic – creative jobs in an unstructured environment
- Social jobs – helping, caring for or instructing people
- Enterprising jobs – involving selling, business or persuading
- Conventional jobs – systematic jobs involving organising and processing data

With the Strong, you answer 291 questions and your answers are compared to people who like their job, are good at their work and have been in their job for 3 years or more.

However, just because we have certain interests it doesn't mean that we have any talent – I'm a close match with fine artist, but don't have the talent.

Personality Questionnaires

There are many different personality questionnaires – for career development a very popular one is the MBTI ® assessment. If you seek an assessment as used in recruitment then I recommend Savilles Wave.

With a personality questionnaire you are asked a number of questions. For example the MBTI asks questions around 4 areas:

- How am I around people?
- How do I prefer to gather information?
- How do I make decisions?
- What sort of lifestyle is best for me?

You follow this with an in-depth feedback session to enable you to verify your personality type and this can then help you to identify careers that match with your personality.

Personality questionnaires are also useful for personal development to understand how to develop yourself to be more effective in the work place and to communicate effectively with people that are different to you.

Ability Assessments

To accurately understand your natural abilities people will choose to take an ability assessment such as from the non profit Johnson O'Connor Foundation or The Highlands Company whose battery is available as an online assessment and followed by an in-depth discussion.

Whereas interest inventories and personality questionnaires are self report, based on what you think you can do, ability assessments provide an accurate assessment of what you can actually do.

The Highlands Ability assessment comprises 19 different work samples looking at personal style, and abilities of problem solving, idea productivity, spatial relations, verbal, number and design memory, visual speed and accuracy and more.

Find out more:

- [Strong Interest Inventory](#)
- [Myers Briggs Type Indicator](#)
- [Highlands Ability Battery](#)
- [Savilles Wave](#)
- [Johnson O'Connor Foundation](#)

3: Why hire a career coach

1. To help you **understand who you are**

The more you know yourself, the easier it is to choose a career that suits the person you are and contributes to the life you want to have.

2. **To understand your natural talents and strengths**

You don't focus purely on skills, what you have learnt to do, but your underlying talents, the more you use these, the greater the chance of personal fulfilment at work.

3. **For an independent perspective**

You can be honest, you don't have to say what your boss wants to hear, and you can also share any concerns and fears that you don't want to burden family or friends with. Plus you get clear feedback.

4. **As an investment in your future**

Top sports people and successful business executives have their own coach to help them to get to the top in their chosen profession, (I pay for 2 hours a week with my personal trainer as I know I'm reaching my goals faster with him than working alone). Have your own career coach to support and challenge you and make sure that you are reaching your potential, taking your wider life into account alongside your career.

5. **To help you to get a job faster**

A study by outplacement firm Lee, Hecht, Harrison found that individuals who used a career coach found a job 46% faster than working alone.

6. **To help you focus your job search campaign**

It's not enough to just create 1 CV and apply to jobs, you need to adapt your CV for different jobs, increase your online presence via blogs and comments in discussion forums. Make sure your career coach is up to date with new technology.

7. **To keep you motivated and hold you accountable**

It's easy to get sidetracked and a career coach can keep you on track, making sure you focus on effective action and helping you rethink when your approach isn't working

8. **To help you be more successful**

Career coaches are not just for when you are unhappy in your job; we can also help you develop your career. For example, should you take an MBA? Is that promotion going to help your long term future goals? How can you improve the way you work with others? Do you stay as a specialist or move into a generalist role? Working with an experienced coach will help with your personal success.

4: Do you need a career coach?

Step 1 – career exploration and discovery

Ask yourself these questions

- Are you happy in your current job?
- Are you working to your full potential?
- Do you feel secure in your job?
- Do you understand your natural abilities and talents?
- Can you describe your top skills?
- Do you know how to best use your qualifications and experience?
- Do you know what your values are?

The more times you say no, the more you could benefit from working with a career coach.

Step 2 – job search support

Ask yourself these questions

- Are you happy that your CV will get you to interview?
- Are you confident in applying for jobs you see advertised?
- Do you know how to research potential job markets?
- Do you understand about the unadvertised job market?
- Are you confident you can sell yourself at interview?
- Can you motivate yourself through rejection?
- Can you negotiate effectively when you are offered a new job?

The more times you say no, the more you could benefit from working with a career coach.

Step 3 – career management

Ask yourself these questions

- Are you making the progress you want within your career?
- Are there opportunities for promotion or development within your company?
- Do you have a plan to get there?
- Do you have someone to use as a mentor/advisor to deal with difficult work situations?
- Do you know how to get yourself ready for promotion?
- Do you know how to increase your profile at work?
- Do you understand how to get the best out of conferences and other networking opportunities?

The more times you say no, the more you could benefit from working with a career coach.

How to choose a career coach

Step 1: Career Exploration and Discovery

Question	Denise	Other
<p>What relevant qualifications do you have? Many career coaches have chosen to specialize based on personal experience or attendance at a one day course, others will use a specific book as a guide but lack the breadth should a different approach be required. If you need expert advice as well as someone helping you to find the answers within you, you need a specialist recognised by the British Psychological Society or Institute of Careers Guidance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Chartered Psychologist specialism in careers counselling and career management, with counselling and coaching qualifications; ongoing professional development through courses, reading and supervision. ✓ Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society ✓ Registered Guidance Practitioner with the Institute of Careers Guidance. 	
<p>How long have you been offering this service? You want to choose someone with significant experience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Internal career counselling as part of job for 15 years. ✓ Independent careers counsellor/coach since 1998, total of 20+ years. 	
<p>What is your track record?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Worked one to one with over 1000 people at all stages of the career cycle, from understanding who you are to help with job search. ✓ Worked with 3 of the largest outplacement companies including one where she was paid on results. 	
<p>What assessments do you use? There are many free and self created inventories available, people have access to for minimum cost and qualifications. For assessments that have been proved to measure what they set out to measure, and thus be of real use you need assessments recommended by a Chartered Psychologist and administered and discussed with someone with BPS level A and B qualifications.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ As a chartered psychologist I have access to the most reputable assessments including: Highlands Ability Battery – to assess natural abilities and talents; Myers Briggs Type Indicator to assess personality; Strong Interest Inventory to identify interests; 16PF5 and CPI for personality assessments used in recruitment plus many more. ✓ All are highly reputable requiring significant training recognized by the British Psychological Society. I am qualified to level A and B with the BPS. 	
<p>How will you help me to find out what job I should do?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ I use a combination of coaching/counselling and advice along with creative and structured exercises and assessments. You will gain a real in-depth understanding of yourself which will be helpful in your career decisions. I don't tell you what to do, but help you to draw up a list of jobs to explore based on a thorough and holistic understanding of you. ✓ The Gold Career Programme was awarded a National Career Award in 2007 	

Step 2: Job search support

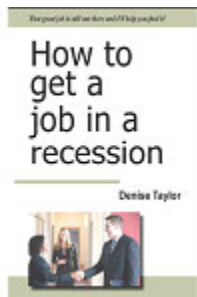
<p>What qualifies you to do this work? You want to have someone who has worked in outplacement and is also an experienced interviewer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Denise spent 5 years working with 3 of the leading outplacement consultancies, including one where she was paid on results. If her clients were not successful in their job application, she only got 50% of her fee. She only missed out once out of 50+ clients. 	
<p>How long have you been offering this service? You want to choose someone with significant experience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Denise has worked as an assessor and interviewer since 1989 and in job search support work since 1997. She has been an independent careers coach and job search strategist since 1998. 	
<p>What experience do you have of interviewing and recruitment? You want to choose someone who can provide interview feedback based on actual interview experience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Denise has interviewed literally thousands of individuals from graduates to senior executives, using interview and the full range of assessment centre exercises. ✓ Denise interviews for approximately 5 days a month to maintain her level of expertise. ✓ Previously Denise was head of assessor training for the Post Office, responsible for all assessor training throughout the Post Office businesses and designing assessment centres for a wide range of jobs. 	
<p>Can you provide feedback on my CV? You want to know your CV is going to be an effective self marketing document.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Denise reviews hundreds of CVs a year, has helped over 100 people to create winning CVs (which draw complimentary comments) and gets great feedback for her CV eBook 	
<p>Can you help me set up systems to keep everything organised? It helps to use systems that work, rather than to create your own.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Denise has a high ability in systems and organisations and has created forms to suit every requirement! 	
<p>How successful are you in finding people a job? Do they have a track record?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Denise has worked one to one with over 200 clients, all found jobs using a variety of techniques. ✓ Worked with 3 of the largest outplacement companies including one where she was paid on results. 	
<p>Do you really know about the unadvertised market? Find out what people mean about this.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Denise will help you to understand what this means and guide you through how to approach this market. Don't worry it's easy with a guide, and many of Denise's clients find work this way. 	

Step 3: Career Management

<p>What qualifies you to help me to increase my profile at work? You don't just want the theory, or advice from a book, but specific and practical advice from someone who has done this.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ I learnt the hard way that doing a good job is not enough, you need to raise your profile and get involved with the key decision makers. ✓ I have personal experience of significant success at work, gained from a rapid climb up the corporate ladder. ✓ I'm most proud of the move from professional psychologist to general management. Let me share my experience with you. 	
<p>How do I know you can help me to deal with a difficult boss? Again, does the person you choose to work with have experience of how to handle this, plus the knowledge to get improvements?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ I've had difficult bosses as well, and increased self understanding helps, plus knowledge of personality type to enable you to adapt. Of course they might be a horror and nothing might work but we can work out a strategy to deal with it. 	
<p>Should I undertake additional study and would an MBA be right for me? You need to discuss this with someone who has a breadth of knowledge of different courses and qualifications, plus what is required in the market.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Denise has taken masses of part time qualifications, and has also chosen not to take specific courses that are not seen as useful by employers – having a PhD can be a disadvantage for a number of jobs. ✓ With a MBA herself, Denise can help you decide if this is the right option for you. 	

If you have a question that isn't included here, just pick up the phone or email Denise

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