

TRAINING FOR TRIUMPH

BY MICHELLE MOORE | PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT CUNNINGHAM

As part teacher, part motivator, Vincent Thomas Lombardi came into this world with an ability to inspire greatness. This didn't only apply to the most talented and dedicated football players, but also to athletes strewn across a variety of ages, backgrounds, skill sets and commitment levels. His ability to turn any player into a winning machine earned Lombardi a spot in history as one of the most famous sports coaches of all time. One of his best-known mantras is "The price of success is hard work, dedication to the job at hand and the determination that whether we win or lose, we have applied the best of ourselves to the task at hand," and it's likely that his players still have that passage etched in their memories.

It's undeniable that great coaches can push us to achieve extraordinary heights in any field. Today, using a business coach to achieve that success is more common than one might expect. Several types of business help are available: there are business coaches, therapists, strategic consultants, mentors and gurus, not to mention books, podcasts, seminars, webinars and retreats all out there to inspire you. Superior coaching is worth its weight in results.

Undeniably, great coaches push us to achieve extraordinary heights on any playing field. They push us to win, no matter how we define it. For each of us, that feeling we associate with winning is rooted in the reaction we have to achieving our goals.

If you've earnestly evaluated yourself or your team and believe that you can achieve more than what you currently have, it may be time to think about hiring a business coach. As working with a professional business coach is an investment that can range from thousands of dollars to several hundred thousand, researching your proper fit is important. Credentials, experience, track record, methodology and chemistry are all things to consider when figuring out what is right for you. Before you even Google "business coaches," ask yourself a few specifics. Do you need a coach or consultant? What expectations do you have regarding the process? What growing pains or business issues is your team facing that would indicate that a coach is necessary? What coaching process would work best for you or your team? Most important of all, if you were to achieve success, what would that success look like?



COACH VERSUS CONSULTANT

Larry Hayes is a business coach. Don't call him a consultant because, while he's happy to consult you, he'll take off his coach's cap to do it. The namesake of the Columbus-based Larry Hayes Partners, Hayes separates the two concepts even though coaching and consulting are often used synonymously. "A consultant is paid to give advice and determine the answer and game plan for you," he explains. "A coach helps you get there for yourself by figuring out where you are, where you want to go and what resources work within your skill set, team and environment to get you there." In today's marketplace, many individuals and teams are hiring business coaches for survival alone, as surviving in the professional world is a skill that requires a mental toughness everyone does not inherently possess.

Steve Siebold, President of Gove Siebold Group in Boynton Beach, Florida, works with the Mental Toughness University Program — a six-hour live seminar employed by companies like Johnson & Johnson, Procter & Gamble and Toyota. His clients feel that mental toughness is critical in today's market. "The days of easy money, two-hour lunches and employment for life are over," says Siebold. "Survival of the fittest is the new environment in business. Companies can no longer afford to carry employees

who don't produce results. There's a line of people waiting to take the low performers' place and he or she will gladly work for less money."

More like an NFL coach than a life coach, Siebold tells his corporate clients that they should let him do his job or fire him. "[The process is] about getting results, not making friends. I'm not usually the most popular consultant on the payroll, but I'm usually the one who delivers the best results," he says, championing a philosophy that would make Vince Lombardi proud.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Whether you want to grow, survive or thrive, it's important to know what wins you need before you begin meeting with prospective coaches. Hayes claims that he helps people grow. It's not as if they need every point mapped out before they call him — that's a journey he takes with his clients — but they do



Left and above: Larry Hayes, business coach and namesake of Larry Hayes Partners.

“Most business owners spend so much time working *in* their business [that] they are not spending enough time working *on* their business.”

need to have an idea of what they are hoping to gain from the experience. “The people I work with are very, very good, but there’s still more for them to achieve,” Hayes says.

He reports often seeing executives who have an exceptional functional ability that catapulted them quickly up the ranks. Reaching the next professional strata, they’ve learned that the next move isn’t a step but rather a leap. This is because the skills they used to soar may not be skills useful for them to thrive in a higher role. Becoming a leader is typically more about consensus building, conflict solving, media interaction and motivating others and less about functional expertise.

Wes Mayer, a Columbus-rooted coach affiliated with FocalPoint International, says that sometimes the people who run businesses are excellent technicians who look at their businesses as jobs where they are self-employed when they should be viewing them as businesses that need leadership. “Most business owners spend so much time working *in* their business [that] they are not spending enough time working *on* their business,” says Mayer. It’s his job to ask the right questions to help business owners improve their businesses by way of improving sales or performances, bettering the work-life balance or any number of skill-based areas necessary to guiding a winning team.

“A good coach will force you to pay attention to the things you might otherwise ignore or not realize are important,” emphasizes Stephen Balzac, President of Massachusetts-based 7 Steps Ahead. “The job of a good business coach is to teach skills, act as a sounding board for strategies, hold you accountable, provide encouragement when things are going poorly and keep you focused on success.”

EVALUATING YOUR CURRENT GAME

While a variety of organizational problems — slow sales, internal conflict, looming crises and eroding market shares — prompt business owners to call coaches, the desire to be better at what they do often pushes them, too. Several of Hayes’ clients admit that while they are good leaders, they are not great leaders. In his experiences, those people are already at the peak of the business food chain. The drive to constantly improve is what keeps them there.

Doug Hall, of W.D. Hall Company in Austin, Texas, calls his coaching practice “business therapy.” He says that his work improves the odds of business success, as he is part sounding

board, part confidant and part accountability taskmaster. His clients are almost always on the lookout for better prospects of all sorts.

Though it would seem unfathomable, many business coaches engage clients who don’t have their goals clearly defined or have those goals confused with a wish list. “A wish might be increasing sales by 20 percent,” explains Hayes. “A goal includes a defined metric for success and a road map to achieve that success.” The former ends up as an item to be discussed twice a year at a board meeting, ultimately producing little to nothing, while the latter leads to change for the better.

Cincinnati-based Daniel Murphy, President of coaching franchise The Growth Coach, believes that many business owners intuitively know they could be doing much better on the financial front. “There is always a performance gap between where their business is now and where they want it to be,” Murphy says. “Owners know there is untapped revenue and potential. In their gut, they know that they can take the business to a whole new level, but [they] simply need some objectivity and on-going accountability to make that happen.” Murphy gives his clients help so they stop being the Chief *Everything* Officer and start thinking and acting like a Chief *Executive* Officer.



Wes Mayer, business coach from FocalPoint International.

BLOCKING AND TACKLING

Doing that is where the process comes into play. Larry Hayes has developed the “E⁴ Path,” a process guided by four commanding verbs of *Explore*, *Expand*, *Evaluate* and *Execute*. It begins with clearly defining the goals and resources available to achieve them, almost like a self-SWOT analysis. By the time his clients have moved through his system and are ready to pull the trigger on a well-defined initiative, they are better positioned for success because the planning originated from within. “When people give you advice, you listen and think that’s nice,” Hayes says. “You have a very different level of acceptance when you figure that same answer out for yourself.”

Many other coaches have processes, too. Mayer prefers to utilize five modules: *Gaining Power through Clarity*, *Increasing Effectiveness*, *Growing your Business*, *Becoming a Superstar Salesperson* and *Leadership*. While Hayes’ clients go through each step sequentially, Mayer’s clients may mix and match depending on their needs.

DEVELOPING A GAME THAT WINS TODAY

In a time of downsizing and budget cuts, people are still investing in business coaches because winning is more important than ever before. In addition to creating victorious teams who consistently deliver grade-A performances, there are other reasons for this surge in hiring business coaches — factors that didn't seem to come into play even three years ago.

Balzac says that sadly, he has seen an increasing tendency to use coaching to remedy weaknesses instead of building strengths. "With money tight, the mindset appears to be that the business should improve returns by concentrating on the low end and letting the best people fend for themselves. This is the opposite of what actually works," he notes. "In sports, you have to work extremely hard before a top coach will help you become a star. Businesses need to take the same approach: coach the best so that they become even better."

Cynthia Burnham, Executive Coach at San Diego-based Ideas Take Flight!, makes another interesting point about today's environment. She sees a blurring of relationships in the workplace. "Technology is changing workloads, while management hierarchies are flattening," she says. "In the past, there was someone who was directly charged with the care of employees on a daily basis and usually [worked] in the same office. Now, bosses are distant, absent or simply too busy." For Burnham, this translates into clients asking her more basic management questions than ever before. She is being asked to help think through current issues because people are unclear whom to ask in their own companies.

COUNTING THE WINS

Regardless of your specific goals, if you're working with a coach, you want to win. Corliss McGinty, of Soft Solutions Consulting based in Greensboro, North Carolina, says that a successful engagement has the potential to invert all the negatives: morale picks up, performances improve and destructive conflict turns into healthy debate. More people are willing to contribute ideas so an organization can innovate. "You can turn a business into a place that people look forward to [coming in to on] Monday mornings. They do what it takes and are recognized for it. Egos are put aside for the good of the business," says McGinty.

When you and your team fire on all cylinders, better performance is a natural byproduct. If you focus that improvement toward well-articulated, realistic goals, you will start attaining more consistent wins. In his "What It Takes to be Number One" speech, Vince Lombardi sums it up: "Winning is not a sometime thing, it's an all-the-time thing. You don't win once in a while, you don't do things right once in a while, you do them right all of the time. Winning is a habit." Don't hire a business coach unless you want to get into the habit of winning. **CMH**

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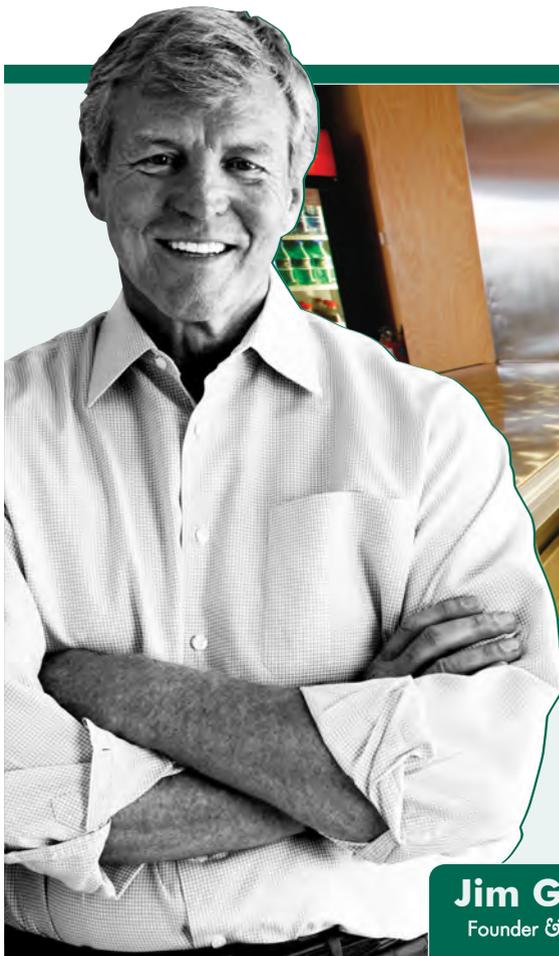
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