**What is the Difference between a business coach and a business consultant?**

I’m often asked what the difference is between a business coach and a business consultant. I once heard Leanne Wong give an analogy that I think explains it best: Say you are learning how to ride a bike. A consultant would ride the bike for a while and then write you a “how to” manual. A coach would have you get on the bike and walk alongside you, guiding you in the process until you feel confident enough to ride on your own.

Reading this you can see how one approach might work better for you over another. What I have found, and one that I use often, is really a hybrid approach. There might be some areas where you just need to get clarity to get you moving forward and there might be some areas where you just need to be told what to do. In essence, coaching can help give you strategies while consulting gives you tools.

**Who can benefit from hiring a coach or consultant?**

The truth is that businesses of any size can benefit from bringing in outside help. From the small, solopreneur to the major corporation, determining your area of need is the first step. Then finding the right person to meet that need.

**How can a coach or consultant help?**

You might be surprised at how many ways any business can be helped. Let’s just look at a few:

Help you identify where the real problem is and how to fix it.

Discover new ways to do old things

See things with a fresh perspective

Help you implement systems and processes that will save time and money

Help you create a vision for your business

Find out who the best target market is for your business

Explain the process of starting a business to avoid common mistakes

Determine what you need to jumpstart your business

**Some choose to work with a coach or consultant in a specific area of their business.**

Getting through the process of starting their business

Marketing

Setting up their books

Growing their business

Even how to exit their business

For most small business owners, who I work with primarily, their biggest problem is that they wear so many hats. They are everything from maintenance to sales to bookkeeping to CEO. That leaves little spare time for working ON their business rather than IN their business. And we all know the adage that you cannot see the forest for the trees when you are in the middle of it all.

**How long should I expect to work with a coach or consultant?**

For some this will be a very goal-oriented time. You know what you need to accomplish, you just aren’t sure how. With that in mind you work with your coach or consultant to set the goal and then reverse-engineer to figure out what you have to do to get there.

In other cases, it might take a little longer and be more complex. Maybe there are multiple areas to work in and on. Maybe the vision or end-goal is not quite clear, and you must work on that first. This kind of work gives you a playbook for your business that you can use to guide you in your day-to-day operations as well as planning for future growth.

**What about a mentor?**

The last group are the entrepreneurs that move into the mentorship phase. This relationship could be on a regular basis where you check in and make sure you are staying on the right track. Others use their coach or consultant as needed to bounce ideas off of or get feedback on how to deal with a specific issue.

**What you need to know before hiring a coach or consultant**

Are you looking for someone to tell you what to do and how to do it or do you want them to help you discover that?

Can you clearly identify where you need the help or is that still a mystery?

Can you commit to the time it takes to do the work- whether it is you working to get to the answer or you applying what you are being told what needs to be done?

Are you open to new ideas and ways of doing things?

Do you see the value in the money spent on the results you can get?

Finally, are you willing to take responsibility for seeing it all the way through to completion?

**How to choose the right coach or consultant**

There are a couple of things to keep in mind. The best partnership between you and the person you are hiring, is to find the person that has the experience to help you. Often it is someone who is experienced in your industry specifically but that is not required. Many areas of business you might need help with span across lots, if not most, industries. Most can be adapted to your specific business.

Second, you want to have a brief conversation with them to see if it feels like there is a connection, that they understand you and what you are looking for. Do you feel comfortable with them? Do you feel like you can be open and honest with them without being judged?

Make sure that their availability works with yours to keep the rhythm and continuity going.

**Final thoughts**

When all these suggestions line up and you find the perfect match to work with you in your business you will be amazed at what can happen. You should see far greater results than going it alone and it should happen sooner because of it.

Perhaps most important is that you will find a sense of hope because someone is in your corner helping you where you need it most, when you need it most.

**Next steps:**

If you think a business coach or consultant could help you in your business and you would like to see if we might be a good fit for you we’d love to have a short conversation to find out. There is no obligation. Just shoot us an email at rhondaloweconsulting@gmail.com to set up a brief 15 min. phone call where we’ll find out if this is good for both of us.