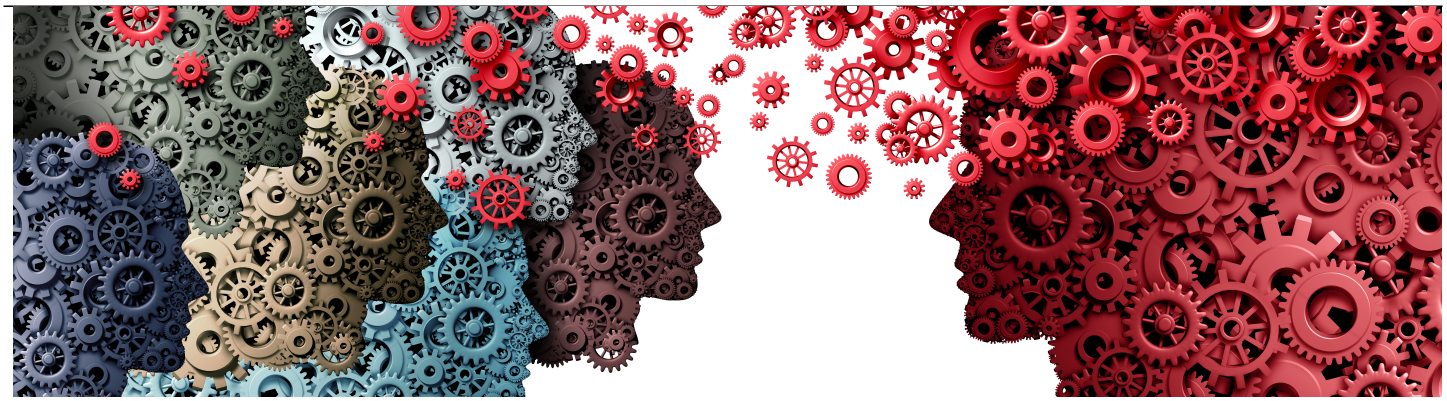


ACC Career Coaching: The Benefits of Executive Coaching

Career Development



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ACC provides a variety of professional development offerings to in-house counsel, including specifically tailored career coaching services. In addition to hosting an online Career Coaching Directory showcasing more than 50 diverse, professional career coaches located in the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Europe, Asia, and Africa, ACC has also partnered with Coaching Advocates. Through this partnership, ACC members gain access to a suite of professional coaching and development services, an expanded network of advocates, online programing, and events.

Learn more at ACC.Com/Careers.

In this series, we'll explore the dynamic coaching relationships between a few ACC members and their career coaches, while introducing (or reintroducing) you to an exclusive benefits of ACC's career development offerings. First up is a pair who connected at the 2023 ACC Annual Meeting.

Yes, you can schedule a session at the Annual Meeting! Keep checking ACC.Com/AnnualMeeting for upcoming information on 2024 sessions.

A serendipitous Annual Meeting



Jennifer Jaskolka, head of legal and corporate secretary at Modivcare (at the time of the interview), was scheduled to speak at the 2023 ACC Annual Meeting in San Antonio, TX. While preparing for her session — set to begin in 90 minutes — she received a call from her general counsel announcing his departure from the company. “Let’s just say that wasn’t my best presentation,” explained Jennifer, admitting that the call created some anxiety. “But it just so happens that I had scheduled a 30-minute coaching session with Stewart for 5 p.m. that evening.”



Stewart Hirsch, managing director of Strategic Relationships, LLC, is a former firm and in-house attorney who has been supporting lawyers like Jennifer and other professional leaders as an executive/leadership and business development coach and facilitator for almost 30 years. He joined other executive coaches attending the annual conference specifically to connect with ACC members

who signed up for one-on-one coaching sessions.

Asking the right questions

As would likely be the case with any professional in her position, that call from her GC led Jennifer to contemplate her future with the organization. Thoughts around job security and the potential for a promotion began to form, and Stewart was able to coach her through this initial phase by asking one very pivotal question — followed by a few others.

His transformative question? “Why not you for the GC position?” According to the soon-to-be chief legal officer, this inquiry grounded Jennifer, making her ask herself the same question. She was also asked to consider:

- What do I want out of my career;
- What do I want to accomplish over the next 5-10 years; and
- What skillsets do I bring to the table?

Jennifer began to formulate answers during their initial meeting, which lasted about 45 minutes, and the pair continued the conversion — connecting the following day as well as again at the end of the conference. Within those beginning conversations, Stewart helped Jennifer set strategic goals for herself and clarify her long-term career objectives by breaking them down into actionable steps. “I really walked away with a game plan on how to pursue the general counsel position in my current company,” said Jennifer.

Ask the coach: Why coaching?

Once upon a time, Stewart had ambitions to become a therapist, but took the LSAT and ended up as a lawyer. Saying that he’s been a coach his whole life, Stewart worked as an attorney in large and small law firms, before going in-house. “I loved the in-house life, and things were good for a period of time,” he said. However, after a layoff he began doing work as a contract lawyer for around 15 in-house legal departments, including Fortune 500 companies like Staples and TJX (TJ Maxx and Marshalls), and others like Welch’s and Boston University.

“My friends were asking me how I was getting all that business, and I started giving away my secrets,” he said. The “complicated” secrets — be nice, treat people with respect, and care about them — proved effective as he soon figured out that he enjoyed the “helping people” and “getting the business” parts a lot more than doing the work. Stewart soon met Charles H. Green, co-author of *The Trusted Advisor*, became his executive coach, and for the last 15 years he’s coached GCs and their direct reports on leadership challenges and career advancement.

Speaking of helping people, when Jennifer was in fact promoted to corporate secretary, a position that she’d had little previous interaction with, her coach brought “great resources to the table,” as well as “individuals that I could talk to about what would make a stellar corporate secretary.”

And that was just the beginning: Within eight months of their initial meeting, and after a few follow-up discussions, Jennifer accepted a CLO role with a national company. She credits her successful

search and interviewing, in part, to the renewed confidence she found through working with Stewart.

The networking connection

“You have to network to get business and build relationships,” said Stewart, who leaned into the power of networking and building trust when launching his business development coaching practice for firm lawyers, and executive coaching practice for in-house lawyers. “The ability and desire to meet people where they are is really what brought me into coaching and keeps me there.”



Networking is the key to meeting new people and building connections that may be beneficial to your career in the long run. metamorworks / *Shutterstock.com*

This understanding and vast network proved significant in assisting Jennifer along her career journey, almost immediately. “Stewart helped guide me on how to expand my professional network. In fact, he put me in contact with two individuals from his network who provided me with meaningful insight in determining how to move my career forward given the news that I received that morning.”

Considering a career coach, and what makes a good one?

When asked to define what makes a good coach, Jennifer noted the ability to listen well, ask intuitive questions, and encourage self-awareness. According to Jennifer, while Stewart helped her to identify her strengths and areas for improvement early on, he also soon caught on to her tendency to “move too fast.”

“While that trait is important in certain scenarios, Stewart taught me that it’s OK to take a step back and take some time to figure out how to contribute, or to recommend a strategic move. He also taught me how to improve my influence and gave me advice on how to communicate more effectively, especially as I joined the executive leadership team as the legal department lead and

corporate secretary.”

Jennifer went on to advise those currently thinking about working with an executive coach to do so, emphasizing that one should feel connected to and empowered by their coach. “Make sure that the coach you’re looking to engage with is a great communicator who can help you become a great communicator. Someone who also has a high level of emotional intelligence to help lead you through the changes and towards your strategic direction.”

Check out ACC?s Resource Library.

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