

# Acknowledging Your Value

Strategically Asking for the  
Resources to Support Coaching



*Framing Situation: Not-for-Profit Executive Directors  
with Limiting Beliefs Around Fund-raising*

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*Meggin McIntosh*

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## Introduction

Welcome! You have accessed one of the short, practical publications in this special series that focuses on how to strategically “make the ask” of your manager, department chair, board, or some other person or entity to support you through coaching. Each individual publication in the series pinpoints one type of situation that either may prompt someone to seek coaching or is related to an area that someone already working with a coach wants to focus on next in their coaching.

Three key ideas to keep in mind regardless of why you are asking for coaching support:

1. **You have to know what coaching is and be able to communicate that information or you aren’t able to ask for it.** You can’t assume that the person you’re asking will know what coaching is.<sup>1</sup>
2. **You have to know that you’re worth it or you won’t make a compelling case** to your manager, dean, provost, board, program head, or spouse. Note: It is not uncommon for people who are making the investment in coaching from their personal funds to seek ways to talk to their spouse about it.



To help you clarify your worth, write out answers to the following questions:

- **What is motivating you to pursue coaching?** You need to be able to articulate your reasoning clearly rather than making a vague request.
- **What are you hoping will change or be different as a result of coaching?** Think through what the complete answers are for you AND think through how to frame your request in a way that will be meaningful to the person you’re asking for financial support.

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<sup>1</sup>If you haven’t already, please read the publication, “What is Coaching?” on my website. It’s free and you may download and share with others in your organization.

<https://meggin.com/what-is-coaching/>

- **What is of key importance in your role?** You wear many hats and may need to give some careful thought to how to answer this question. The clearer you can be, the better. Once you have your answers, you can consider them through the perspective of the person you're going to be talking with about funding your coaching.
- **In your current role(s), what is working well for you?** Since you may be asking your manager, department chair, or board for support, use this as an opportunity to highlight some of the areas where you are growing and succeeding in your work.
- **What goals or aspirations are you currently meeting or exceeding?** You may rarely think about this because you're on to the next project or area of focus. For this preparatory exercise, however, pause (actually, come to a full stop!) to consider what you're accomplishing and notice what you can build on. This is worthwhile for you and will be helpful to the person you're talking with as they consider ways to help you accomplish even more.
- **Which goals or aspirations are difficult to meet or are places where you feel stuck or stagnant?** Now it's time to weave in some of the realities of the places where you're struggling. Remember, you're building on areas of strength and accomplishment. Going forward, by working with your coach, you want to work through some obstacles that are thwarting your efforts.
- **If you can solve the challenges that are thwarting your efforts:**
  - What would it mean in terms of time, effort, productivity, effectiveness, efficiency, revenue, retention, innovation, and the like? Depending on what the situation is and what "language" will most resonate with the person of whom you're making the request, you may only need to focus on one of these areas.
  - How would the result you're expecting have an impact on others, e.g., your team, your function, your organization? You will notice as you work through the processes presented throughout this publication series, that once you begin tallying the financial impact on others, you quickly get to rather large numbers. You will then use these numbers to make your request. You'll soon



see that what you're asking for in financial support is comparatively miniscule. Being able to make the case using dollars makes the ROI (Return on Investment) tangible for people. Watch for help in doing this throughout this publication series.<sup>2</sup>

3. When you make your ask, you may want to express it in the spirit of, 'Of course, you are going to support coaching for me, but in case you need to explain it to someone else...' I have worked with coaching clients whose immediate boss supported the idea but needed my client to give them some language they could use for *their* boss if they needed to explain the expenditure.

To summarize this section, determine what matters to the decision-maker(s). You will want to frame your request so that they hear it in language they know and understand. What's in it for them? As you may have heard, everyone's favorite radio station (maybe that should now be reframed as their favorite podcast) is WII-FM (What's In It For Me?)

Top organizations have known for years that their best people need to have a coach. Businesses planning to remain in business (which is sort of the point) only invest in coaching if they expect to see a return on their investment. Many top-level executives come into an organization having already identified their executive coach and include that as part of their package when they are hired.

Not-for-profits, increasingly aware of their bottom line, are investing in coaching for at least their executive director at the smallest non-profits and for other key team members in larger non-profits. The complexity of an executive director's varied roles and responsibilities means it is essential to have a specialized coach who is a neutral party to provide the space for thinking things through.

And what about universities and colleges? Higher ed today is not the higher ed of 10, 20, or 30 years ago.<sup>3</sup> The ever-higher



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<sup>2</sup> This is one reason to consider reading the other segments of this series because you will learn ways to assess the tangible benefits (including financial) of what may otherwise seem intangible, e.g., overwhelm.

<sup>3</sup> Hmmm...at this point, we can say higher ed is not the same as it was one year ago.

demands on faculty and administrators to PRODUCE (research, funding streams, innovations, graduates, outward-facing personas as public intellectuals, papers, etc.) make it clear that high-potential professors, along with administrators, are expecting to have a specialized coach along their journey.

The rest of this publication (and each of the others in the series) focus on a single reason or prompt for accessing coaching at this time in your professional career. Plan to write your ideas as you read and keep a calculator handy.



### **Framing Situation: Not-for-Profit Executive Directors with Limiting Beliefs Around Fund-raising**

Executive Directors (EDs) of non-profits need coaching. Specifically, because EDs are either directly fundraising or are influencing relationships with donors, it is essential for an ED to be able to fundraise effectively. And while they may have attended all kinds of training about strategies and tactics for fundraising, they often unwittingly limit their own fundraising potential. Being coached around those limiting beliefs can have a striking influence on the bottom line.

Non-profits must fundraise in one way or another as well as be careful stewards of their money. Money does not magically appear in anyone's coffers as far as I can tell.

Common **limiting beliefs** that are often held (and voiced) by non-profit folks include:

- "Raising money is hard."
- "Asking people for money always feels like begging."
- "Non-profits don't/can't pay well."
- "Year after year I have to ask people for money and it's exhausting."
- "Anytime a donor or potential donor wants something, I need to be ready to drop what I'm doing."

- “I feel like people dread seeing me coming with my hand out.”
- “I have to hire people who are super young and willing to work for beans because older, more experienced professionals will expect to get paid more and we can’t do that.”
- “I’m good with paying some people who work here more than I make because I don’t want anyone to think that I think I’m all that.”
- “I can’t let my board know that I’m struggling or they might not support me” (this is a version of the “I must be perfect” limiting belief, which is a common one).

Even if you are in a role other than a not-for-profit executive, you may already be identifying your own limiting beliefs. By definition, limiting beliefs limit you. If it were possible to wave a magic wand and make them go away, you probably would have. Or if simply having someone say to you (when you voice one of your limiting beliefs), “Oh, that’s ridiculous. You know that’s not true,” magically eliminated the belief with their words, you wouldn’t have the limiting belief anymore (because you know there are people who have said a version of this to you). But you do still have the limiting belief because someone else’s words telling us we are being ridiculous doesn’t vanquish the thought we’re having.



Coaches often work with their clients around limiting beliefs. For the Executive Directors we’re channeling here, if they were no longer burdened by their limiting beliefs around money and fundraising, here’s what would improve:

1. **Amount raised.** There could be significant dollars here in the Return on Investment (ROI) for coaching.
2. **Amount of time needed to fundraise.** Coaches can help the ED identify ways to avoid procrastination, as well as think through more effective strategies for fundraising. This translates into more time for fundraising. The ED can also invest time more efficiently for fundraising and then put the other time toward other key parts of the job.
3. **Reduced opportunity costs,** e.g., what if a new national company, which is known for its commitment to investing in a community’s non-profits, moves to a non-profit’s community? The Executive Director could be one of the first to make a meaningful

and memorable impression on a key leader at this new-to-town company – or the ED could miss that opportunity because they are fighting fires around the office since they have the limiting belief that fire-fighting is “just the way it is.” Do you see how the limiting beliefs that affect fundraising are not exclusively about money?

4. **Stress around fundraising.** Burnout among EDs is massive. Anything that can be done to reduce an ED’s stress is worth investing in.
5. **Energy passed along to others related to money and budgets and bringing in money to the organization.** Depending on the size of the organization, the ED’s energy has consequences for the other people who work there.



I could go on with more improvements but do you see how we quickly get to significant dollars measured by an ROI (Return on Investment) formula? Conservatively, let’s imagine the coaching investment is \$10,000 for the ED of a small- to medium-sized non-profit. If the person is willing to do the inner work prompted by the coaching, at least a ten-fold return on investment is probable. And that’s in the first year.

If your board has not already approved funding for your coaching, use the information in this article to help them see the return on investment they can expect. Work with your coach to craft ways to measure the difference so that you can track the changes and improvements.