

Acknowledging Your Value

*Strategically Asking for the
Resources to Support Coaching*



*Framing Situation: Working in a
State of Overwhelm*

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Introduction

Hello! 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.

The introduction to all the publications is the same because regardless of why you are asking for coaching support, there are three key ideas to keep in mind:

1. **You have to know what coaching is and be able to communicate that information or you are not able to ask for it.** You can't assume that the person you are asking will know what coaching is.¹
2. **You have to know that you are worth it or you will not 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 are asking for financial support.
- **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,



¹If you have not already, please read the publication, “What is Coaching?” on my website. It is free and you may download and share with others in your organization.

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

the better. Once you have your answers, you can consider them through the perspective of the person you are 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 are 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 are accomplishing and notice what you can build on. This is worthwhile for you and will be helpful to the person you are 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 is time to weave in some of the realities of the places where you are struggling. Remember, you are 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 are making the request, you may only need to focus on one of these areas.
 - How would the result you are 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 will soon see that what you are 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.²

- 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.³ The ever-higher demands on faculty and administrators to PRODUCE (research, funding streams, innovations, graduates, outward-facing personas as public intellectuals, papers, etc.) make it



² 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.

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

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.



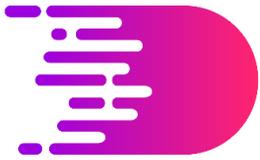
Framing situation: Overwhelm

Although most academics, non-profit executives, and leaders in government agencies are not used to thinking about what their time (and energy!) are worth, you are wise to begin doing so.⁴ Acknowledging your value is key as you determine how you will ask for an investment in coaching. Let's consider what happens when a professional is trying to operate in complete overwhelm, which is a common opening situation for someone seeking coaching.

To give you a baseline for thinking about the cost (and that's only one of the ways we're going to look at how much overwhelm is costing you and your organization), use the chart on the next page to begin doing some figuring.⁵

⁴ Surprisingly, even some people in the business world (particularly small businesses) rarely think about their time and energy. I remember reading years ago about a guideline that some businesses used when deciding whether to have a meeting. They used a program that determined each staff member's hourly rate (using a chart as you will see on the next page) and when they called a meeting, they could plug in the names of those who would attend and see how much it actually "cost" to hold the meeting. If they were not able to determine that the financial benefit of holding the meeting would be twice what the meeting cost, they didn't hold the meeting. I have never forgotten that!

⁵ These calculations were made using a 40-hour work week, 50 weeks a year.



When you are selecting the row to consider, be sure to use a row that shows the **sum** of your salary + your benefits. For many professionals, their benefits package (health insurance, wellness options, retirement contributions, travel allowance, and the like) adds 25 - 35%. This substantial amount should be accounted for when you are thinking about your per hour “worth” as far as what your organization is investing in you.

Yearly Salary (plus benefits)	Week	Hour	Minute	1 hour/day for a year is worth
\$50,000	\$1000	\$25	41.6¢	\$6250
\$75,000	\$1500	\$37.50	62.5¢	\$9375
\$100,000	\$2000	\$50	83.3¢	\$12,500
\$150,000	\$3000	\$75	125¢	\$18,750
\$200,000	\$4000	\$100	166¢	\$25,000

Let’s look at some real numbers for what it costs to have overwhelm as an ongoing part of your professional life⁶:

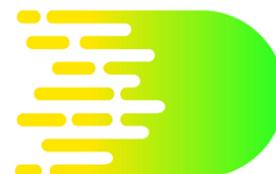
- Lost opportunities, e.g.,
 - Being able to submit solid grant applications;

⁶ Opportunity cost is a term used in economics, sometimes related to making financial investments. For our purposes, let us use the similar formula to figure opportunity cost. Opportunity cost = Return on the option not chosen - (minus) return on the option chosen. For example, let us say that overwhelm prevents you from making a strong application for a foundation grant of \$250,000 that funds projects exactly like what you work on. The situation includes the fact that this foundation emailed you about the funding cycle, so you’d be sure to know. When you subtract the option chosen (which involved you scurrying around, dealing with backlog, lying in bed because you had gotten sick from exhaustion, etc.) that involved \$0 coming in, then your opportunity cost in this instance is in the vicinity of \$250,000. Can your organization afford for you to continue operating in overwhelm?

- Missing award deadlines or submitting substandard applications;
- Not being able to accept additional clients who are eager for what you offer;
- Being unable to join an ongoing project when someone else leaves;
- Needing to turn down a co-editorship of a flagship journal;
- Declining a meeting with a key donor;
- Brushing off your teenager when he is finally ready to talk because you are so far behind on a key work project;
- What else have you lost out on when you were trying to function in a state of overwhelm?

These missed opportunities have a cost. Get out your calculator and run the numbers for yourself. Depending on someone's discipline, if they can't submit a grant, the opportunity cost could range from several thousand to several million. The indirect back to the university is significant (remember to highlight this when you are asking for the investment in your coaching). Give some real numbers about what it is costing and why you are seeking this person's support for your coaching.

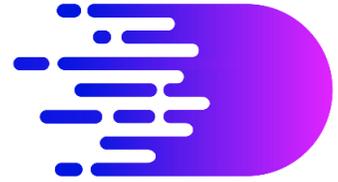
In case you are wondering about how else it might be costing you to have overwhelm as an ongoing part of your professional life, consider these:



- Damaged relationships and reputations, e.g.,
 - Internal (colleagues)
 - People counting on you to get something done.
 - Your supervisor who made a strong case for you to be hired and you are not delivering at the expected level.
 - Admin staff who are willing to step up and support you but have been treated dismissively in the past when you were overwhelmed.
 - New hires who remember your brusqueness or seeming inability to have any time for them when they were asking you questions during their interview.

- External

- Collaborators from other organizations.
- People across campus.
- People in the community.
- Agencies directly related to the work you are doing – or trying to do – and where the relationships with people are key (processing paperwork, notifying you about opportunities, keeping you abreast of developments, promotion of you and your work, and so on).
- Someone writing a letter to the editor (or posting in social media, which is the more likely venue, and since such posts are often written at the height of emotion, comments can be rather caustic at times).



Start thinking about the cost of damaged relationships with alumni and donors as well as with internal colleagues and other units on campus. If overwhelm is costing you (your university, your company, your non-profit, etc.) because you are not able to prepare adequately for a meeting with a wealthy donor or investor, is that something that has a dollar figure? You know it does – and so does the person you are approaching about investing in your coaching.

Although it may be difficult to share, if it is safe and you have an example of a recent time where overwhelm led to a relationship or reputation setback that either was costly or the damage was narrowly averted, run the numbers on it so you have a fresh, relevant example to talk about when you are strategically making the ask for an investment in your coaching.

- Inability to delegate, e.g.,

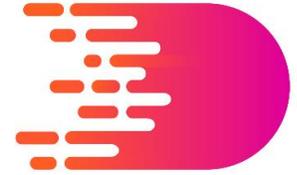
When you are overwhelmed, although it may seem counterintuitive, you are less able to delegate. Either you can't think through your projects and tasks clearly enough to enlist someone else's assistance or you are running down-to-the-wire such that it is too late for you to delegate (e.g., collating documents for a board meeting; requesting letters of support for a grant that is due; finishing up class materials at midnight for an 8:00 a.m. class the next morning that have to be photocopied [remember that!?!] at Kinko's...not that I know anything about this from my days as a professor).

Think about it...When an organization has someone with your education, expertise, and experience making his/her own photocopies, uploading materials to Canvas, tracking down lost files in the dean's office, making sure receipts are properly filed, verifying references in an article or a proposal, checking to make sure something has been received, following up on various and sundry administrative requests...then your institution should have invested in an admin assistant, not an MSW, MBA, or a PhD.⁷

- Collaborations that have run amok

Rather than putting a general dollar figure to this, consider these examples and determine the specifics for your situation.

- Collaborations on articles that go nowhere or otherwise hit snags result in unpublished articles. What's the cost there?
- Grant collaborations that get tangled up can result in a five-year grant being cut to a two-year grant. Ouch. What is that cost? In this case, money is what the person holding the purse strings will understand.



⁷ There are many ways to think about whether something is worth your time, energy, and attention. 1) Some people recommend that if you can pay someone to do something at a lower rate than your "hourly" wage, which you already figured out a few pages ago, then do so (e.g., running errands such as picking up groceries, dropping off items at the cleaners, exchanging an item at the office supply store). 2) Filter where you focus your time, attention, and energy on whether the activity is something that only you can do (e.g., reading to your child at night, working closely with graduate students to frame their research questions, writing a keynote speech you have been asked to give, learning a new coding software you will be applying to research you are doing). 3) Consider the ROI (Return on Investment) and the ROE (Return on Energy) and make a decision based on that "calculation" (e.g., hiring an editor - developmental or otherwise - to help you get your manuscript out the door; bringing on a project manager for your lab, your company, or your group to get you out of the PM role and back to your special work). 4) As you advance your skills, talents, expertise, and education, because you have not "lost" the skills, talents, expertise, and education you had before, it is easy to hold on to the activities you did previously (and for others to assume that you will do so). However, as the metaphor goes, you can't climb a ladder without letting go of a rung to take hold of the next one.

- Collaborations with school districts, health providers, businesses where students do internships – any of which can go downhill when the key personnel are trying to operate from a state of overwhelm, could result in inability to do research, place students, or otherwise advance the overall mission of an organization.

How are any of these good? How are they not costly? How fiscally responsible is it not to provide support for people who are overwhelmed?

- **Illness**

Read the research. Count the cost. It is real. It is not pretend. Why do institutions invest in wellness programs and other wellness opportunities for the people who work there? Not because they care (I am being a little bit cynical, but...) They do so because it is much less costly to help someone get or stay healthy than it is to pay for what happens when their people are sick.

Many people (and you may be one of them) drive themselves well beyond a breaking point before they stop. A coach can help someone recognize what is happening and figure out alternatives to ending up in the hospital or worse. If the person you are asking for financial support for coaching understands the medical/wellness model, use that. Remind him/her/them that helping someone get and stay healthy is more financially sound than waiting until the person needs open-heart surgery when that could have been prevented if certain supports were provided sooner.

- **Being distracted, disengaged, burned out**

If the person who is distracted, disengaged, or burned out is a professor, then students are not served, staff are potentially disrespected, and the broader community of the university is not receiving the value they expect.

If the person who is distracted, disengaged, or burned out is the executive director of a non-profit, key staff members may also lose heart in the mission of the organization. Donors and board members will sense the shift and may turn their attention to other worthy causes. The work that needs to be done is likely to lose momentum. Regaining lost momentum is much more costly than maintaining momentum (remember your physics classes?)



- Modeling insanity to younger scholars

Faculty and/or doctoral students who leave the academy for likely higher-paying positions with less stress. You could run the numbers on every single faculty member who leaves and all the costs of what is left in their absence and the enormous costs to replace them. And doctoral students...it is not just the cost of the individual students who leave; it is the cost of them not being in the academy in the future or not going into industry with a PhD instead of a master's degree.

On the next page, you can read a sample script that may give you some ideas for how to script out your conversation with the person who would wisely invest in coaching for you.

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Sample Script

“Thank you so much for setting aside some time for us to meet today. I wanted to talk with you about having the department invest in professional academic productivity coaching for me.

As you know, I am now a tenured associate professor, with a strong teaching and mentorship reputation, a solid publication record, and have recently obtained a \$1.3 million NSF grant that starts early next year. The reason I’ve sought out a professional coach is because I’m poised to move forward with even more significant work in the upcoming years. I have various mentors and colleagues that I can talk with about many aspects of my work, but since they are all overwhelmed, too, I’m not sure they can help me address overwhelm.

*I brought you a copy of the e-publication, **What is Coaching?** that is written by the woman I have interviewed to be my coach. She’s been writing for, teaching, and coaching professors for many years to help them be “just whelmed” instead of overwhelmed. I also brought you a page where I’ve figured out some of what it is costing me and the university if I don’t solve for the overwhelm I’m experiencing.*

Last year, there were three grants I couldn’t put in for because I was so backed up with other work. Although it is unlikely I would have been awarded all three, it is very possible I would have gotten one of them, with a total of between \$100,000 and \$200,000 indirect.

Our whole college is suffering from some reputation and relationship damage due to our slowness in responding to various external groups. We have a small state and people talk. I've heard conversations and even had people say something to me directly about their assumptions about what professors are doing and that we must think we're too good to respond to the people in our state, even though we're a land-grant institution. And I know I am one of the slower-than-I'd-like-to-be responders. This is something I know I can improve upon by working with a specialized coach.

With my new grant, I have funds for some graduate students and a part-time project manager. I'm excited about that, but I know I've had times where I had someone who could assist me on a project but because I was so overwhelmed, I couldn't think through the tasks or pieces of the project that could be delegated – or at least not get them delegated in a timely manner. This further slows down the momentum of completing the work and could have a negative impact on future funding if it appears I'm unable to follow through on what the stated aims are of my grant proposals.

I know you are aware of how hard I work and the ways I've been willing to step up in the department ever since I arrived here. I've helped attract many students and want to continue to be able to devote time to this. With the added workload and expectations for associate professors, I need to have some help working through limiting beliefs, less-than-productive habits, and integrating strategic practices into all aspects of my professional life as a productive scholar. This is a tall order and it will not happen overnight but I'm committed to working strategically with a coach to make progress in these areas.

Although I have not given you the exact \$\$ cost to this overwhelm, I hope you can see that the small amount I'm asking for will have a significant return on investment.

What else do you think you would need from me for this or can we go ahead and either submit an invoice or use our department purchasing card?"

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Being overwhelmed is not “just the way it is” as if it is the law of gravity or something. Gravity **is** just the way it is. Overwhelm – is not a law. It has become an accepted state, however. And it is a very costly state.

Examine the costs of overwhelm to your productivity, your well-being, your relationships, your contributions through your work, your presence, and so much more. Then either make the investment yourself or ask your employer to make the investment so that your coach can support you in moving from the state of being overwhelmed to the state of being “just whelmed.”



What do you need to do next?