

**COACH**

**CONSULTANT**

**Leveraging the  
right asset**

**the right way.** 

A 15-minute read by Swebb,  
Thinking Coach & Strategy Consultant

# The Best Rep

I stepped into the gym at our office on a Wednesday afternoon to lift weights between meetings. Another pastor, a good friend, was in there on the bench so I just wandered over and assumed the spotter position. I'm standing behind the bench, looking down at him as he presses a few hundred pounds up and down, and then I did what trainers do: —————→

I added pressure.

He was an hour into a solo lifting session so when I got in there and started challenging him to add weight and reps, he was annoyed to say the least.

He had planned on doing 235 lbs for 15-20 reps. But I wasn't going to stand by and let him think *that* was strong though since I knew he could do over 300 lbs.

He laughed, sighed, and started making excuses but 20 minutes later, and after literally 75+ reps at increasing weight, he pressed a personal best of 335 lbs. ←

How? Why?

**Because a good coach unlocks strength that cannot be unlocked alone.**



The best rep is the one that stops halfway through with your arms shaking and makes you think you're going to drop it on your face. It's at that moment your coach screams belief and urges you to sell out to the lift.

Invariably the bar continues its upward movement.

Your muscles rip but after you recover your strength hits a new level.

**A coach makes sure you don't quit before the grit.**

The voice in the head says *"It's too heavy, that's too much pain, I'm not that strong."*

But a coach, leveraging belief, screaming at your potential, exposes all of those statements as lies. And you lift, and you grow, and you're better.

**Your best rep - your max potential - is waiting inside for you to let a coach bring to life.**

# You need help.

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You're not broken, wrong, or dumb if you ask for help. We all need it. But I'm finding more and more in the Church circles that "professional Christians" are among the last to ask for it, not to mention *plan* for it.

Many industries emphasize the importance of coaching. Some industries rely heavily on consultants to take their businesses to the next level.

But I see a reluctance for leaders in the Church to ask for help. We're far more likely to copy another preacher's style, rip off a sermon, or borrow a strategy **out of context** than invite a coach to help hone our own voice or craft a custom strategy.

**If you aspire to be your absolute best, keep reading.**

**Plan to add coaching into your budget and your calendar.**

It's essential and best used ongoing, not just in a pinch. An emergency room doctor is important when, well, it's an emergency. But consistent use of a personal trainer and/or nutrition coach will help you avoid the emergency room altogether. Same thing goes for just about any other major area of your life.

## **Who needs a coach or consultant? Everyone.**

The experienced pastor. The church planter. The campus pastor. The part-time kids director. The facilities manager. Not all can afford the same one or receive the same benefits but all can intentionally leverage another voice to elevate their craft.

**Not everything on this document will apply to *everyone*.  
But something on this document will apply to *anyone*.**

This 15-minute read will provide **practical insights and clarity** around coaching, consulting, and how you can leverage them to be better and go further.

I'm specifically speaking about the church leader context but I think you'll be able to pull some helpful insights and principles to apply in other areas of your life as well.

# What's the difference between a

## Coach

and a

## Consultant

A quick internet search will provide some obvious answers. These are good but allow me to add a little more **blunt reality** to the church context.

Both coaches and consultants are great and have benefits for you today and beyond. This document isn't to tell you which is good or bad, but rather speak into how you can use them to the defined, desired effect.

**A coach** - a tutor who guides and trains up close.

- They stay with you through a process to achieve a desired result.
- Ex. Personal Trainer

**A consultant** - assists with advice and stories from afar.

- They fly in, tell stories, drop knowledge, fly out.
- Ex. TED Talk presenter



# How To Leverage A Consultant

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A **consultant** is going to provide (theoretically) a key to a problem you're facing. But they have to know what door is locked. Additionally you also have to believe they have the key. Sadly though I find to be too common that people call a consultant simply for their assumed connections or where they have been employed before.

*"Hey, [that guy] worked [there] so he definitely knows how to fix [that]."*

A place of employment provides someone with good stories but it doesn't automatically produce insight. I actually find that to be nearly the opposite. Many people were hired into a successful organization too late to know first hand the essential building blocks and steps to success.

**Proximity to success doesn't mean they've had success,  
contributed to success, or can even define success.**

**1 Know exactly what problem you're facing.** Even if you can't articulate it as cleanly as you'd like, be able to point to it, share some anecdotes, and process a very obvious problem you know exists. Take inventory of what you have, what you do, who's on the team, and any combination of 101 other questions. Don't lie to yourself about this, make an honest assessment. Any posturing or pretending you do will limit the scope of help you can receive.

**Call a consultant who's built or fixed something directly related** to **1)** what you do, and **2)** what problems you're facing. As I mentioned above, do not call a consultant simply based on their previous employers. And definitely don't call them simply based on who they know and what celebrity pastor they have a selfie with. That means next to nothing.

- 2**
- You'll need to do some deep work to define *"What do we do?"* and *"What is the problem we're trying to solve?"*
    - For example, *"Church"* is not what you do. Mobilizing people is a better description of what you do (or hope to do).
  - Another example: the problem is not *"we can't grow."* The problem is more likely *"We're not clear what the win is for our team."* A consultant can help you work through identifying these but most get paid by the hour and operate on short clocks so be prepared to use their time wisely. **Do some dirty work on the front end so their time is best leveraged on solutions.**

**3 Have specific questions** to ask the consultant to get the conversation going. Prep at least five targeted, loaded and provocative questions. The consultant can pivot from there but small talk on the front end won't create results and will only waste valuable time.

# How To Leverage A Consultant (continued)

**4 Mine for insights.** Gold is typically not just casually picked up on a walk. **It's mined for with intention and aggression.** This is true when hoping for insights from the consultant in a 2-hour meeting. Make them talk and answer questions. Plan to have them do 60-80% of the talking. That's why you're paying them. If *you* want to do more of the talking and processing, always feeling the need to justify why you're in a jam to begin with, hire a counselor whose job is to listen.

Insights, like gold, are dug up with the hard, dirty work of intention and aggression.

**5 Remember, what's easy to you is hard to teach.** Same is true for the consultant. **A consultant can see what you can't and can say what you can't.** But even with that expertise, they'll gloss over some deep wisdom sometimes simply because it may be old news to them. Mine for insights. Dig deep for context. Scrounge for wisdom. When they say something important or curious, stop the flow and dive into that. The perception of value is on you to determine, not them.

**6 Set your expectations.** A consultant tells stories, gives some direction and then they leave. They are not coaches to walk with you over time. They're best used for a quick burst of insight, a paradigm shift, or a dose of inspiration. **If you want a longer relationship, you need a coach.**

By the way, a consultant **can** also serve as a coach. And a coach **can** be a consultant. But knowing how they are different will help set your expectations and limit frustrations on both sides.

**A consultant** works best when you have a clear understanding of the problem.

**A coach** is likely going to be a better resource when you don't even know what the problem is.



# How To Leverage A Coach

Go back and read all that “how to leverage a consultant” stuff *again*. Then ...

**1 Prepare to be stretched.** A consultant tells stories but **a coach will expect movement and pain from you**. It's what you're paying for. Think for a moment what it would be like for NFL coaches to tell a few fun stories of their previous success then walk out after 20 minutes of practice. Hard to imagine that scenario from some of the legends with multiple championship rings. But I see this happen all the time both within my coaching circles and among others who've leveraged coaches. People seem to have their **mindsets mixed up**. As a result their **mechanics get messed up**. And their **motivation can never catch up**. They've paid a coach to stretch them but they treated them as a consultant to inform them. But ...

You don't get stronger without a stretch.



**2 Give them access.** A personal trainer can't be accountable for your weight loss if you only give them access at the gym. **They need access** to everything: what you're taking in and putting out, your sleep habits, your work life, your personal stressors, and any other rhythms so they have the best idea of who you are and what is necessary to change your health for the better. Additionally a coach needs more than an anecdote to work from. Open up and tell them where you're weak, where you feel strong, what you want to see, and how serious you are about elevating your game.

**3 Increase your budget.** A consultant, while they can be upwards of \$20,000 for a 24-hour visit (I know, it's weird to me too), **a coach is actually worth that** amount spread over time. **A coach is intended to be around for a long-term relationship**. They're with you for months at a time, whether in person or digitally. They're invested in your success. They're away from their family. They're missing other income opportunities to be with you. You should expect to pay them more. Because ...

**4 A coach is essentially a remote staff member at a fraction of the price.** For example, you can pay \$90-120k/year for an experienced Executive Pastor. But you can contract a coach to do 80% of that work remotely and for literally **half that price**.

# What do Coaches and Consultants Cost?

We're getting to that but first ...

What a consultant or coach charges is unique to them based on what they're offering and what they perceive their own value to be. It can be all over the place and part of the beauty of this free country, they can think and demand whatever they want. **They take into account many variables** like experience, geography, family dynamics, your budget, your problems, and even how difficult you might be to work with.

**Funny thing about me:** I have charged more to the clients who think they know it all or want to pay me while simultaneously trying to insult me. And I've worked pro bono for large churches with large budgets who are genuinely eager to learn be exercise gratitude.

Many charge higher rates simply because they have Elevation, Church Of The Highlands, Life.Church or some big name on their résumés. And to that point, they've seen things you likely haven't encountered. I have some of those names on my résumé too but that's not the sole source of wisdom and experience.

However, I'm personally opposed to paying someone simply because of who previously employed them. Many of those former staff were asked to leave after months or years of terrible performance. I know because I was in exit meetings for **some who charge thousands to teach you what they never did themselves**. They have a limited track record of results but they do appear to have a nice employment pedigree. **They have familiar names on their résumés and some inside stories about what they witnessed others do. It's important to distinguish between the doers and the observers.** Do more research, ask harder questions.

Distinguish between the doer and observer,  
the builder and the operator,  
the engineer and the end user.

It's a fact that most of the truly valuable coaches and linchpin thinkers have less followers on Instagram, less selfies with celebrities, and no coaching business to grow, only a business to **help others grow**. You'd generally employ this way of thinking for your investment banker, I'd suggest thinking this way with your leadership coach and consultant too.

Essential for you to discern:

***Are they building their thing or helping me build mine?***



# Coaches are experts in the art of context.

**Consultants are worth a smaller investment than coaches** simply because the time and effort they invest is substantially less. And their proximity to your nuance makes them less valuable. A coach has proximity to nuance which makes their feedback all the more effective.

Consultants contain wisdom and experience that **will** save you months or years from learning it on your own. But **that wisdom is incomplete without a roadmap for applying it.**

You're paying **consultants** for what they've  
**seen in the past or somewhere else,**  
*not* for what they're going to do with you in the present.

Coaches, similar to consultants, have experience and connections too. But they have a secret sauce. **They know how to leverage the cheat codes for practical application in your life and scenarios.**

Hearing stories from a 60-year-old at a 20,000 member church with a \$50,000,000 budget is fun. But nearly pointless in your context.

- What have they **built**?

- What expert knowledge and insight do they have from when they were paid \$40,000/year, had 500 people at church, practically no budget and grew into a juggernaut in their town?

***That's*** what you want and need.

I, myself, am a coach and a consultant. I'm not for or against either position. The roles have different deliverables and expectations, different costs to you and to me.

**As a businessman** I prefer the simplicity and fun of being a consultant. I can fly in, tell stories, stretch your faith and team, and go home. In a visit I can provide substantial insight and you're not on the hook for doing anything I say. You just have to write a good check for a quick visit.

**As a Church builder** I prefer coaching. I like to watch the growth of a leader, team, or church and be able to look back years later and say "I know where that came from" or "I remember when they thought they couldn't do [x]." Coaching is a legacy-minded endeavor but costs quite a bit in energy, patience, and other, more lucrative opportunities. But it's what I'm called to.

**So I do both.** You won't feel the difference from conversation to conversation. I don't hold back as long as I'm with you. If you can listen fast and digest what I offer, I can unload a month's worth of insights in a 2-day consultation. Most of the difference between what you get - a coach or consultant - is in your perception of value over time. Some prefer a short visit to "prove what you know" and some prefer a relationship with a builder. And some go back and forth during the connection. That's ok too. All of this is to provide you what I always promise to give everyone: **another way to think about it.**

# Coach

**\$3,000-\$15,000/month plus expenses.\***

**For example**, you need someone to walk with you 3-4 months as you transition to multisite. This person could be worth something to the tune of \$8,000/mo. If that sounds high, remember your next campus will cost you a relative fortune but will also pay dividends (*if* you do it correctly) for years to come.

**You can have 3 or 4 campuses bringing in \$1M annually for 20 years. Suddenly \$8,000/mo for a season is the investment deal of the century.**

You're also paying coaches for their connections to dozens of specialists - engineers, designers, musicians - who have made it work in more specialized departments. A coach can be a one-stop-shop to nearly countless other professionals you'll never be able to meet or leverage.

## What to expect

- A **good attitude** and a willingness to serve you and your specific needs.
- Plenty of good and thorough **stories from their experiences**.
- **Application** directly related to *your* context.
- **For you to do a lot of the work**.
- **To be paid more than some or all of your staff** (but for a short-term basis).
- To provide **context, insights, and connections** that you don't even know to ask.
- To celebrate your progress and be frustrated with your deficiencies, because they're **invested in you and your success**.

# Consultant

**\$500-\$2,000/day plus expenses.\***

**For example**, they fly in on Monday, drop knowledge at dinner and more at a Tuesday breakfast, then fly out. That's worth up to \$4,000 plus the airfare and comfortable accommodations. Maybe \$5,000 if they connect you with other influential and insightful people.

**BTW - A consultant or coach who doesn't share their network with you doesn't do you much good.** You deserve second opinions, and that bigger network will provide validation to their grand tales as well and could potentially become new friends in ministry.

A consultant or coach who is hesitant to connect you with someone else freely and regularly might be afraid that opens the door to competition. You should wonder and ask why.

## What to expect

- A **good attitude** and a willingness to serve you and your specific needs.
- Plenty of good **stories**.
- **Limited application** and examples specific to your context. They may offer them but I wouldn't hang on that expectation.
- Availability in **short bursts**, like 1-hour meetings or a one-time 2-hour seminar setting.
- To meet with **senior leaders only**.
- **To be paid a lot for doing what you may perceive to be very little**. But you're not paying them by the hour, you're paying them for the last 20 years of what they learned.

**Consultants get paid for what THEY'VE done.**

**Coaches get paid for what they can help YOU do.**

# The Hammer Is Cheap

## storytime

A Graybeard engineer retired and a few weeks later the Big Machine broke down, which was essential to the company's revenue. The Manager couldn't get the machine to work again so the company called in Graybeard as an independent consultant.

Graybeard agrees. He walks into the factory, takes a look at the Big Machine, grabs a sledge hammer, and whacks the machine once whereupon the machine starts right up. Graybeard leaves and the company is making money again.

The next day Manager receives a bill from Graybeard for \$5,000. Manager is furious at the price and refuses to pay. Graybeard assures him that it's a fair price. Manager retorts that if it's a fair price Graybeard won't mind itemizing the bill.

Graybeard agrees that this is a fair request and complies.

### The new, itemized bill reads....

- **Hammer: \$5**
- **Knowing *WHERE* to hit the machine with hammer: \$4995**



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