

COACHING CORNER

Canadian Physician Coaches Network: what coaching could mean for you as a medical leader



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Many of you are familiar with the axiom that becoming a successful leader is a combination of gaining knowledge, acquiring on the job experience, and engaging in leadership coaching.

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The International Coaching Federation defines coaching as “partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential.”¹ Unlike mentoring, coaching assumes that the client has the capacity for self-reflection and discovery through a process of engagement with a coach who challenges them with deep, thought-provoking questions. The coach accepts that the client can define their own path forward. Coaching can be a powerful component of a leader’s toolbox.

The Canadian Physician Coaches Network (CPCN) is a not-for-profit organization formalized in early 2020 following an initial discussion over coffee between Dr. Mamta Gautam and Dr. Ted Bober around what might be possible. With close to 60 accredited coach

members, globally, it is the largest organization of independent coaches serving the needs of physician clients. Members have a passion for enhancing both the personal and professional success of Canadian physicians. All members have previous experience working with physicians and recognize the unique challenges that come with being a member of the medical profession. Although not all member coaches focus on leadership or executive coaching per se, each has an interest in serving the many and varied needs of our physician clients.

Engaging with a coach is an essential aspect of reaching full leadership potential. This is why CPCN has chosen to come together with CSPL to produce a quarterly Coaching Corner. We seek to educate physician leaders around the value of coaching for leadership development. In this first article, I address some basic questions you may have around a coaching engagement.

What does coaching look like?

Coaching is a confidential engagement between an accredited professional coach and a client (coachee) who is interested in further exploration and development around a personal or professional situation. The initial interaction or discovery session is meant to provide the coachee with information around what coaching is and is not, explore what the coachee hopes to achieve, provide information around the type of and length of coaching engagements the coach offers, and provide a space for reflection on both parts as to whether the two can work together, i.e., are a match. A coachee might opt to seek out two or three coaches to find the best fit.

Coaching can be time limited or long term. Sessions generally take place once or twice a month and should be held in a space and time free from outside distraction. Coaching generally consists of goal setting around a particular vision of what success might look like; an exploration of possibilities on how best to move toward the goal; deep reflection and personal observation of strengths, values, and limitations that bear on the journey; and attention to insights gained through the coaching process. The role of the coach is to ask open-ended and reflective questions, actively listen, challenge around growth

edges or blind spots, and encourage continuing self-discovery. The role of the coachee is to be willing to deeply reflect and hold themselves accountable to being able to define and actively move toward their preferred future state.

How do I know if I need a coach?

Coaching is a valuable tool in the path to leadership success. Any time a leader finds themselves asking How might I do this? How could this be better? or What is the next step?, they could benefit from engaging with a coach who will work with them to better define and understand the answers to these questions. Leadership is a continued path of self-development and reflection that requires education and coaching to enhance potential.

How do I find an appropriate coach?

Many physicians find a coach through recommendations from others or word of mouth. The CPCN website (www.coach4md.org) lists the biographies and areas of interest of our accredited coach members and is readily searchable by those interested in finding a coach. You may reach out to any number of coaches and explore whether there is a fit.

What's next for CPCN's coaching corner?

The format for upcoming submissions will focus on specific leadership issues a physician leader might explore with a coach. They will focus on what questions might be asked and insights clients might hope to gain in working with a leadership coach around a defined area.

References

1. All things coaching. Lexington, Kentucky: International Coaching Federation; 2024.
<https://coachingfederation.org/about>

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The Canadian Society of Physician Leaders
has developed a

"Coaching for Physician Leaders"

resource website

The site will provide you with contact
information for various
coaches and their areas of expertise.

Each coach is credentialed and has
healthcare experience.
Our coaches will cover a variety of topics,
including career planning,
wellbeing and leadership.

For more information contact:
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CSPL Canadian Society of
Physician Leaders

SCLM Société canadienne
des leaders médicaux