

# masterful **C**oaching for minorities



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## ***Table of Contents***

<b>Introduction</b> .....	4
<b>Chapter One: Minority Challenges &amp; Motivation</b> .....	5
<b>Chapter Two: What is Coaching?</b> .....	7
<b>Chapter Three: Will Coaching Help You?</b> .....	10
<b>Chapter Four: Strategic Coaching</b> .....	12
<b>Chapter Five: What to Look for in a Coach</b> .....	14
<b>Chapter Six: How to Hire Your Ideal Coach</b> .....	15
<b>About the Author</b> .....	17
<b>Resources</b> .....	19



## Introduction

**C**oaching. Everyone's talking about it, but not everyone is clear on exactly what it is or if they need it. Since 85% of senior level executives are white men, however, most minorities assume that coaching is a white man's experience.

And you know what happens when you assume. Because of the distinctive hurdles they must face in both their personal and professional lives, it is actually minority professionals who need the solid guidance, encouragement and support that a professional coach offers the most, to help them navigate the often-murky waters of success.

As an African-American in high-level sports and business positions throughout my career, I relied on the morals I was taught as a child and the tenacity I cultivated as an adult. I responded well to the demands of and support from my athletic coaches in my early years, and often wished I had had a similar coach in the business arena and on the field of life.

And, not just *a* coach, but a coach who specialized in working with minority professionals. Unlike our male Caucasian counterparts, the challenges we face are unique to our skin tone, our gender, perhaps the way we speak...or any other number of stereotypes and prejudices.

Personal and professional success is difficult enough to attain without the added pressure and frustration inherent to the minority struggle. To overcome unnecessary obstacles, you need specialized guidance, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

*A unique life experience demands a unique coaching experience.* Throughout this book, we will explore what coaching is, how it can help you as an minority individual achieve more of what you want in a shorter amount of time, and what to look for in a coach who claims to understand your personal and professional struggles, as both a minority and *a human being*, on the path to success.



# Chapter One

## ***Minority Challenges & Motivation***

Before minority individuals can begin a successful coaching journey, they need to have a comprehensive understanding of how their personal and professional lives are shaped in response to the seemingly endless lineup of hurdles, including:

- Cultural Differences

Right or wrong, we are all shaped by who and where we come from. People are different and grow up in different cultures, each with its own menu, faith, and traditions.

Never was this more apparent to me than when I was living, working and competing abroad. That experience taught me that we are not only different culturally, in what we eat and how we talk, but more specifically, in how we view life.

- Stereotypes & Prejudice

Minorities have a unique perspective on life and business, primarily because of the pre-conceived notions that others hold about them.

Women are “emotional and needy.” African Americans are “lazy and poor.” Asians are “good at math and hate women.” Indians are “educated but cheap.” The stereotypes and prejudice that minorities face are endless, and take a daily emotional, and often financial, toll on even the toughest spirit.

Slowly, but surely, we chip away at senseless prejudice everyday with our talent, compassion, and achievement. With our tenacious efforts, we prove Thomas Dewar right: “Minds are like parachutes. They only function when open.”

- The Cost of Self-Preservation

After forming certain opinions in the face of this negativism, and implementing self-preservation tactics in an attempt to protect themselves (and their self-esteem), minority individuals are then, unbelievably, often frowned upon because of how they see the world.

This disturbing irony makes them cautious, and, in many cases, rightly so.

- Pride

Minorities must also contend with the stigma of facing business challenges *alone*. They tend to adopt the “it’s me against the world” approach to work and life. They are indeed extraordinarily proud, to the point of being negligent.

I believe there are actually three kinds of people: people who need help and don’t know it; people who need help and know it, but can’t afford to get it; and people who know they need help, can afford to get it, but won’t get help because of their drive to do it themselves.

The cost of this prideful approach is that it blinds minority individuals to the fact that they need help, which, of course, stalls their progression in business and in life.

- Isolation

The aforementioned pride also leads to being alone, and working alone. In this state, minorities need to understand that *working alone* and *being alone* are two completely different things.

*Working alone* often begets clear focus, time to think things through, and uninterrupted work flow. *Being alone*, on the other hand, creates separation... something that you cannot afford in your life or in business!

So, what motivates minorities, in the face of the frustration these challenges cause? Simply put, it is their drive to right the wrongs of past generations; to improve on the lives that their parents tried to give them; and to give no credit to those who have suppressed and denied their very human and inalienable rights.

We all have a permanent need to have a place at the table, where all of the world eats and works. And minorities demand to earn their seat fairly, not have it “donated” to them by others.