

## Do You Know Who...Is Coachable?

By [LawVision](#) on September 13, 2022

*"Don't waste time coaching and training the uncoachables; spend your time on truly motivated lawyers in transition from associate to partner and rainmakers."*

Have you heard this wisdom before? In some cases, it might be true (and, in fact, we've said this to clients). But as with many things in life, exceptions can also become the rule.

The argument of only spending your time on those who seem outwardly motivated is based on something we call 'coachability,' aka the ability to change and improve performance if given new information, skills, mentoring and motivation—usually by a professional coach.

But...whether someone is coachable is an independent value judgment, which necessarily makes it subjective. And...we tend to make our own subjective assumptions about who was truly coachable.

After coaching hundreds of lawyers, our team can tell you that just because certain candidates don't fit the subjective profile of someone who is ripe for training, law firms often neglect those who would respond fantastically to a business development coaching and training program.

So, we're reminding everyone—ourselves included—that relying on a gut feeling about who is coachable based on casual observations can be a poor measuring stick.

Way back in 2011, August Turak—award-winning author, speaker, consultant and former contributor for Forbes and the BBC—laid out [a great list of traits shared by the coachable](#) that has stood the test of time.

Would you be surprised to learn that first on the list is humility? Or that one of the traits is the ability to surrender control? Still think you know who is most coachable at your firm? Some of those wallflowers wandering around your halls and sitting quietly in meetings are hidden gems who can be great 'wins' for your coaching program.

As Turak offered, below are five ways to ensure you tap the right people for coaching and don't neglect any hidden gems.

1. **Get more than one viewpoint.** We are often surprised when we get input from more than one source at a firm about who should—or should not—be included in a coaching program. Sometimes we get wildly different lists from a managing partner, a chief marketing officer and a practice group leader. Give everyone views a person's 'coachability' through their own lens, it's important to get input from as many 'lenses' as possible. Taking on the task of subjectively deciding who will be a success may be too much for one person. Spread out that responsibility and take advantage of the viewpoints of others.
2. **Get more objective information.** We have used the [Lawyer Behavior Profile](#) for years to help determine coachability. It assesses business development strengths for lawyers and turns subjective conclusions we make about our lawyers' coachability into something more concrete.
3. **Get clear on your selection criteria.** Make sure you are evaluating people using a standardized list of what you are looking for in a candidate. "She is warm and engaging with people" may not be enough. Turak suggests the

following criteria:

- Humility
- Action bias
- Purity of purpose
- Willingness to surrender control
- Faith

The content of your own list may not be nearly as important as simply having one.

Plus...there is something else that goes beyond coaching success to raise the return on investment (ROI) of your coaching program...thereby adding to the firm's bottom line: Finding lawyers who know darn well they are not on anyone's list as a potential rainmaker and helping them build a profitable and thriving practice.

Helping people move forward ... there's nothing like it.