

# Career Coaching

## Olivia Lalou

Last Summer I did a short retreat in Switzerland, and while I was there met Olivia. I was fascinated when she explained she was a business coach. I contacted her this week for her insights into getting results.

DB. Hi Olivia when we spoke last year I found the idea of coaching fascinating, but I know you felt it was important to point out what coaching was.

OL. When I tell people I am a business coach it usually raises eyebrows and triggers lots of questions. People ask me what it is I do exactly. Do I tell people what to do with their career? Or advise them on the best path? Actually it's quite the opposite, coaching is not about giving advice; what might work for me might not work for others. It's about helping people to set some goals and then drawing a roadmap to achieve them. Most of us don't take the time to set objectives but just follow the paths we're in, sometimes we're happy, sometimes we're unhappy and unwilling to change. I think the reason for not changing things like our lives, or the direction our careers have taken is because change can be scary. It's about getting out of our comfort zone and that is where I can help.

DB. What is it about coaching that drew you to it?

OL. I think it is the fact I can make an instant impact on my client's lives. In my old jobs I might have worked on projects with a 3 year timeframe with no guarantee of implementation due to budget or resource cuts. In coaching the change happens in much shorter timeframes (a few weeks) and I can see my clients experiencing light bulb moments which is incredibly rewarding!

DB. I am interested in this, so if I come to you what happens?

OL. The first thing we do is have a short chat over the phone, where I get an idea of what you're after and we talk about the kind of coaching I am offering. My main area of expertise is around career coaching, so we just check if I can help.

The next step is then to have an informal meeting in person which takes about 45 minutes: we check there is a good fit and that I am the right coach for you. This is an essential part of coaching, you have to get on with your coach if you don't, things won't work. We also establish the client's goals. I explain what coaching is and isn't, how I work and that coaching is usually in blocks of 8 sessions of 90 minutes over a period of 3-4 months. If that's ok, we then sign a coaching contract and we arrange the first proper coaching session.



Olivia graduated from ESCP-Europe, a leading Business School in France. She started her career in 2000 as a Strategy Consultant at Roland Berger in Paris and moved to London in 2002.

She then joined Virgin Atlantic where she held Project Manager roles in Sales & Distribution and Airport Operations. After 6 years she joined another travel related company, Travelport till the end of 2010.

In both these roles, Olivia developed a strong sense of managing multiple stakeholders at a global scale, building a vision together with motivating people to achieve a common goal.

She holds a Personal Performance Coaching Diploma and is also an ANLP accredited Neuro-Linguistic Programming Practitioner.

Olivia is also the mother of 3 girls and is very familiar with the "balancing act" between her time as a mum and her time as an entrepreneur.

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# Finding your path this year

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DB. What kind of results can I expect from coaching?

OL. As your coach I am committed to you achieving your goal, whatever it is that you set yourself, within 3-4 months or whatever your timeline is. I have been doing this since March 2011 and every single client has achieved their goals.

DB. Wow!

OL. I have so many people with really diverse goals and objectives, and it doesn't really feel as if I have done anything. I coach them and they go and achieve some extraordinary things on their own. Somehow I manage to "dig deeper" by asking the right questions, and something ignites and the answer comes from inside them, which is why I feel coaching is so powerful. It's not my resources, it doesn't take any knowledge transfer, it's really the client taking ownership of their life, their career and being responsible for their results.

DB. Now what happens if you have clients at two extremes: say one that has too many things going on; and another who perhaps has no idea of what they want. What do you do then?

OL. I am hesitant to answer this question Denzil. Each and every client comes with a unique set of circumstances for me and I tune into that client. If you have too many things going on I might use tools that help you prioritize the important things in your life.

With the other situation of a client who can't decide on the next step, I have created a home-made method which is a combination of coaching, skills assessment and brainstorming. It's not pure coaching but I have had some great success with it, in particular with a client who'd taken a career break and wanted to return to the workplace but had no clue what she could be doing: she needed confidence and more guidance than normal. Once we had gone through this method, she then managed to set some clear directions for her life.

DB. Thank you very much for your time. If you want to know more, visit Olivia's website or contact her directly. I found the short amount of time I spent with her highly motivational and she 'clicks' into you quickly, these newsletters were originally sparked off by a conversation I had with her.

The workplace is going to get a lot harder, Olivia's coaching could give you a much needed edge personally and professionally. That's worth thinking about. As the workforce shrinks being correctly positioned could leverage your skills and expertise up the ladder, don't wait until that time comes, act now and be ahead of the game.



If you really don't know what you want as your next career step, we can use a method where you look at what you might like to do by exploring:

- Who you are
- What you can do
- What you enjoy doing

This leads to identifying a few professional targets you could follow, and then it acts like a filter, till one or two professional goals emerge. Then with a little research you will find your path.

At that point I may get back to formal coaching to help you achieve your now set goal.

