

7 Ways to Identify a Winning Pageant Coach

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Hey Pageant Friends!

I must admit this is one of the **most** difficult articles I have ever written. The simple fact that pageants are a subjective competition makes the task of identifying a winning pageant coach a tall order, as their opinions on coaching may not align with what the judges are seeking. I don't claim to know everything about this topic, rather I draw on my experience working closely with contestants, coaches, and directors in one of the most competitive pageant environments. My hope is that you'll take a few tidbits of information to help you on your search to identify a winning pageant coach.

-Will the Pageant Guy

DISCLAIMER: YOU DON'T ALWAYS NEED A PAGEANT COACH

- 1) If your main focus for competing in a pageant is for fun, meeting new people, or for a new experience, investing in a pageant coach may not be necessary.
- 2) However, if your **SOLE** focus in competing is to take home the crown **AND** assume the year-long responsibility of a titleholder, then a pageant coach can be instrumental to improving your performance -- assuming the coach is best suited to **YOUR** needs.

This article is tailored toward the 2nd type of contestant who is results-orientated and is looking for a pageant coach that can enhance their current skill set to gain a competitive edge (such as an athlete utilizing trainers or business professionals seeking their mentor's advice).

Whether you are a first time contestant or seasoned pageant veteran, selecting the **RIGHT** pageant coach is a decision that could greatly impact your pageant performance. Trust me there are a **TON** of pageant coaches out there so selecting a coach that is the best fit for you can be rather confusing.

The following is **YOUR** guide to **Identify a Winning Pageant Coach**.



1) Background Checks (simply check their background and experience)

A) If the coach is a former contestant, determine what type of experience they had as a contestant by asking:

i) What successes and titles do they have and in what systems?

Don't be misled by extravagant title names. Sometimes titles are awarded without the contestants even competing in a pageant. Some of the most competitive pageants are part of a system that leads to another round of competition, ultimately resulting in one national or international winner.

ii) What was the competitiveness and reputation of the pageant?

Local, state, and national pageants can also be misleading in terms of determining competition level. I've seen both local and state pageants that have hundreds of contestants, whereas some national pageants have just a handful of contestants. While the number of contestants may not necessarily determine the QUALITY of competition, it is one measurable factor to help aid you in determining competitiveness. Additionally, researching the reputation of a pageant system, including longevity, stability and public opinion may also reveal its legitimacy and competitiveness.

If the potential coach is a former contestant, your purpose with these questions is to determine whether or not your coach may possess the WINNING intangibles, characteristics, and experience -- developed from competing at the highest level. These are the some of the winning keys that they can pass along to YOU as their client.

B) If the coach is NOT a former contestant, determine what type of professional work experience they have by asking:

i) What relevant work/professional experience do they have?

If he/she is an interview coach then a background in communications, journalism, or a professional speaker may be a good fit. If the coach specializes in talent then experience in entertainment, singing, dancing, etc. may work. If they are a presentation/walking coach then modeling and fashion are key indicators.

ii) What is their history, longevity, success, etc. in their particular field?

Try to identify those who are leaders in their particular field and profession preferably with a history of success. If you were looking for a voice coach, you may not have as much success training with a vocalist that is breaking into the industry as opposed to a vocalist with years of knowledge, experience, and training.

C) How to qualify a coach based on their background?

i) Someone who is successful at the highest level of competition does NOT always qualify them as a successful coach.

ii) Qualifications of a successful pageant coach does NOT always require them to have experience competing or winning at the highest level.

This is evident in every competitive environment, frequently in professional sports. Some of the best head coaches in the NFL have never played professional football and some of the best players in the history of the game have not been great coaches.

Good coaching involves keen observation, problem solving, effective communication, enthusiasm, tons of patience, and the list goes on.

I've come across some great coaches that were former contestants and great ones that were non-contestants. Don't place emphasis on whether they competed or not, rather uncover their background, reputation, and experience to determine how their knowledge and expertise will BENEFIT you and your pageant.



**2) Request and Research
(ask for client references and research them)**

Section 2 is very similar to Section 1, however you are uncovering information on their clients rather than the Coach's background.

A) Pageant Client References: Determine the success of the coach's pageant clients by asking:

i) What successes and titles did their past or current clients attain and in what systems?

Refer to Section 1.A.i for detailed explanation

ii) What was the competitiveness of the pageant their clients competed in?

Refer to Section 1.A.i for detailed explanation

B) If the coach has more Non-Pageant Clients than Pageant Clients, (voice coach, fitness coach, etc.) then determine the success of the coach's non-pageant clients by asking:

i) What was their clients' work or professional experience and how did they improve by working with the coach?

If the coach's non-pageant client is a professional dancer, determine if working with this coach improved the client's dancing ability.

ii) Can the same training techniques that resulted in improvement achieved by their clients, also be applied to improve your performance in a pageant setting?

All pageants have certain guidelines or restrictions on interview, talent, or any onstage performance. You must determine whether or not your coach will be able to train you to perform at your best within these certain guidelines.

For example, you are working with an interview coach to help develop your public speaking ability. This coach is local club president of the well-respected public speaking organization, Toastmasters International. Her specialty is coaching clients to deliver prepared speeches over 5 minutes long, while the interview portion of your pageant is only 5 minutes long.

Will her strength in preparing long speeches for her clients help you to excel in your pageant Interview? Maybe. Maybe not. However, will one of her Toastmaster colleagues who specialize in Table Topics (a speaking exercise which the speaker responds to an unknown topic within a timeframe of 1-2 minutes) be a better fit for you? Quite possibly! By the way, I highly recommend Toastmasters for anyone seeking to improve overall communication and public speaking skills!

NOTE: As you begin your research it is crucial to identify a coach that will coach to YOUR specific need of improvement instead of a “one size fits all” blanket approach. Each contestant will have different strengths and weaknesses and a great coach will be able to identify what areas need improvement and what areas can be showcased. Never should a coach compare or contrast your abilities and characteristics to other competitors in the pageant. A great coach will have the ability to coach several contestants in the same system while ensuring that your sole focus is directed on the yourself and pageant -- NOT on any of the other contestants. As one of my pageant mentors will say to her clients, “The pageant competition is between YOU and YOU.”



3) Play Matchmaker (match your pageant system with theirs)

Does their success and experience competing and coaching match the same pageant system you are competing in?

Every pageant system has a different set of rules and guidelines (glitz pageant vs. natural pageant or pageants requiring talent vs. non required talent), and often times will undergo change each year to strengthen the quality of the production.

There are some aspects of pageants that seem to stay consistent (clothing and jewelry requirements, hair and makeup rules, where the judges are seated, etc.) that you must also be aware of.

Be sure that your coach knows EVERYTHING about the system that you are competing in AND has some documented success as a former contestant or coach.



4) “Like” and “Tweet”
(check their website and or social networks)

You will find many qualified coaches that work full time and part time, and some will have websites and some won't.

If they have a website or blog, look for testimonials, or documented successes. If they do not have a website, check their Facebook or Twitter. Look for testimonial comments or praise from clients.

In order to maintain their competitive advantage, be aware that some contestants that continue to compete may not want to divulge which coaches they are working with. However, if a client (current or former) is bold enough to PUBLICLY recommend a coach in a forum that is completely open and transparent like Facebook or Twitter, that is a good indicator that your potential coach is legit.

Whether they have an official website is not the point -- in fact, I've come across great coaches that don't have websites! Your job here is to see what their clients have said about them, or have NOT said about them.



5) Be a Social Butterfly
(ask pageant friends or strangers for recommendations)

This is probably one of the most easiest and powerful tips EVER!

Whether you are a first time competitor and SHY, or a seasoned veteran and full of PRIDE, step out of your comfort zone and ask a pageant friend, acquaintance, or stranger to recommend a coach. More often than not, you will always get an honest recommendation and a personal review of that Coach's particular strengths.

Good coaches are the ones that you hear about frequently in pageant circles, but a GREAT coach is one that is thought of highly by those he or she has trained, and will be the ONLY coach recommended each time you ask them.

As potential coaches are recommended to you, be sure to ask those within your pageant circle and in other pageant circles about the particular pageant coach you are seeking.

Most pageant people I've met are willing to help out a fellow pageant friend or even a stranger, so don't be afraid to ask – someone might ask for YOUR help someday.



6) Bring Your Stopwatch (determine their response time)

Do they take 2 weeks to get back to you or do they respond to you within 24 hours?

The essence of pageants are the details, and if a potential coach is not organized enough to respond back to you in a timely fashion, the likelihood they will overlook the fine details of your preparation is very high.

Also, preparing for a pageant is time sensitive, and if they are a highly recommended coach sometimes their schedule may be booked in advance and you may not be able to work with them. Take notice of this and prepare ahead of time to secure coaching sessions.



7) Don't Skip Chem Lab 101 (find a personality match with some chemistry)

In my opinion, coach and contestant chemistry is an extremely important factor that is usually looked over. We all know that pageants can be stressful, but on the other hand pageants can be a defining experience of personal growth and improvement.

During this experience, you want to work with someone whose company you enjoy on a regular basis, someone you get along with, and a person that you can TRUST.

It's encouraging to have a person that will lift you up when you are down, motivate you when you are struggling, laugh and joke to help you relax, and of course -- be your biggest cheerleader when you win the crown!

After you IDENTIFY your winning coach

If you follow these 7 Ways to Identify a Winning Pageant Coach, you will greatly increase your odds of finding a coach that will be a great fit for you and your pageant. However, your improvement is a continuous process. From Day 1 you must evaluate your coach to make sure that he or she is getting the very best from you as well as being honest with yourself that you are putting forth your very best effort each and every day.

As I said in the very beginning, pageants are a subjective competition and regardless of how great your coach is, YOU still need to execute and perform at your best and at the mercy of the judges' collective opinion. Focus on the things that you have direct control, take accountability of the things you are responsible, and remember your only competition is the space between your ears. So with the guidance of your coach/coaches and your hard work and passion, step out on stage and show the judges the very best version of YOU!