



The Support Provider's Dilemma: Is this Person Coachable?

If you're an entrepreneur seeking to improve your chances of winning SBIR/STTR funding for your technology, ask yourself this: Are you coachable?

According to author and international consultant, [Timothy R. Clark](#), "Coachability is the willingness to be corrected and to act on that correction. When we are coachable, we are prepared to be wrong. We can withstand a high degree of candor. We are willing to let others evaluate — and perhaps even plumb the depths of our performance because we understand that the journey of personal development cannot be traveled alone."

At BBCetc, we coach hundreds of entrepreneurs each year. They are in the process of developing amazing technologies and are usually intensely passionate about what they're doing. They want to leap tall buildings in a single bound! Competing for SBIR/STTR money requires the discipline and patience to follow the steps that are required.

Our challenge at BBCetc is to harness that passion and help entrepreneurs keep an eye on the prize - funding to go to the next phase; one step closer to commercialization. We are their best friends, worst critics and most ardent editors. If they are willing to accept feedback, process it, and act on the new information while sticking to a timeline, we keep them on task and on deadline.

No entrepreneurial support provider expects a client to lie down and surrender. We thrive on the exchange of ideas and the challenge of giving your project every possible opportunity for success. But ask any support provider and they will be glad to share story after story of their coachable clients who learn and improve versus the uncoachable people whose projects never get off the ground or fail utterly.

In our estimation, uncoachable people tend to be:

- Defensive and negative toward critiques
- More likely to "talk over" the coaching and less likely to listen
- Unwilling to learn from their own mistakes
- Dismissive of others' expertise
- Inclined to hear only what they want to hear and disregard the rest
- Driven to be "right" rather than successful
- Easily discouraged

Coachable folks:

- Realize that being "too close to the problem" sometimes means you can't see the big picture
- View coaches as partners trying to improve your product, not adversaries

- Don't dismiss suggestions out-of-hand, but carefully consider constructive comments and act accordingly
- Don't take criticisms personally
- Learn from their own mistakes *and* the mistakes of others
- Start with the assumption that perfection is impossible, so better is always an option
- Take their losses in stride and try again (and again if necessary)

Coachability is a life skill that will serve you at school, in your relationships, at work and at play. A proverb says that only stupid men learn from experience. Wise men learn from other people's experience.

If you are coachable you will also be wise!