



With the right strategy your goal will soon be achieved

# THE 5-RED-FLAG AUDIT CHECKLIST

## For Hiring a Career Coach (Without Getting Burned)

### Why this exists:

You're here because you want help, not hype. A good career coach changes your trajectory. A bad one wastes your time, money, and confidence. This checklist is your flashlight. Use it before you book a single call.

### How to use this checklist

- Print this page or keep it open on your second monitor.
- Before you pay anyone, run them through these 5 red flags.
- One red flag = pause. Two or more = walk away.

### Red Flag #1

**They cannot name a specific industry or role they've recently placed someone in**

#### Why it matters:

Vague answers like "I've helped hundreds of professionals" mean nothing. A real coach has recent, specific examples.

#### Ask this verbatim:

*"Can you tell me about the last three people you coached – their job titles, industries, and what changed for them?"*

### **What a green flag sounds like:**

*“Last month, a Senior Product Manager in fintech moved to a Head of Product role at a Series B startup. Before that, a marketing coordinator in SaaS got promoted to manager internally.”*

### **Your check:**

- They gave specific job titles
- They named actual industries
- They mentioned outcomes (promotion, job offer, salary increase)

## **Red Flag #2**

### **They charge for the discovery call**

#### **Why it matters:**

Legitimate career coaches use the discovery call to see if you're a fit. They don't monetize it. Charging for the first call is a sign of desperation or a high-pressure sales model.

#### **Ask this verbatim:**

*“Is the initial consultation free, and how long is it?”*

### **What a green flag sounds like:**

*“Yes, 20–30 minutes. No pressure. We'll see if we're a match.”*

### **Your check:**

- The discovery call is free
- They didn't try to sell you during the scheduling process
- They asked you questions, not just pitched packages

## **Red Flag #3**

### **They have no verifiable client testimonials with real names or LinkedIn profiles**

#### **Why it matters:**

Anonymous testimonials (“— Satisfied Client, NY”) are often fake or old. A transparent coach will have past clients willing to speak briefly.

#### **Ask this verbatim:**

*“Could I speak to one or two past clients for 5 minutes? Or see a LinkedIn recommendation from someone in my industry?”*

### **What a green flag sounds like:**

*“Yes, I can share two people who agreed to be references. Or here are three LinkedIn recommendations you can verify.”*

### **Your check:**

- They offered references without hesitation
- You can see real names + LinkedIn profiles
- The testimonials mention specific results, not generic praise

## **Red Flag #4**

### **Their certification is from a “pay-to-play” organization**

#### **Why it matters:**

Some certifications (e.g., “Life Coach Institute of X”) require nothing but a credit card. Respected bodies have exams, mentoring hours, and ethics requirements.

#### **Ask this verbatim:**

*“Which organization certified you, and what did you have to do to earn it?”*

#### **Respected certifications (green flags):**

- [ICF \(International Coaching Federation\)](#) – ACC, PCC, or MCC level
- EMCC (European Mentoring & Coaching Council)
- CDI (Career Development Institute – UK)
- NCDA (National Career Development Association – US)

### **Your check:**

- Their certification is from one of the bodies above
- They described exams, mentoring, or observed coaching hours
- They did not get defensive when asked

## **Red Flag #5**

### **They guarantee a promotion or a job offer**

#### **Why it matters:**

No ethical coach can control a hiring manager, market conditions, or your interview performance. A guarantee of a specific outcome is a sales lie. It preys on desperation.

#### **Ask this verbatim:**

*“What do you guarantee? And what happens if I follow your advice and don’t see results?”*

#### **What a green flag sounds like:**

*“I guarantee my effort, my framework, and my availability. I do not guarantee a promotion – because I can’t. Anyone who does is lying to you.”*

### **Your check:**

- They never used the words “guarantee,” “promotion,” or “offer letter”
- They were honest about what is in their control vs. yours
- They offered a clear refund or pause policy (optional but good)

## Your final check before hiring

If a coach passes all 5 checks, you’ve found someone trustworthy. Book the paid session.

If they fail 1–2 checks, ask follow-up questions. Sometimes good coaches have bad marketing.

If they fail 3+ checks, walk away. There are hundreds of coaches. You can afford to be picky.

### One last thing:

This checklist was created by [CareerCoachDirectory.com](https://www.careercoachdirectory.com) – where every coach listed has been manually reviewed against these exact standards. We don’t take everyone. We take the honest ones.

*Downloaded by a smart human who doesn’t trust easily. Good.*