

CHANGE @ WORK, Coaching 2.0 , The business that was popularized in the '90s grows up

[ALL EDITIONS]

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About two years after successful treatment for breast cancer, Sue Rubin was feeling a need for a new life plan. Lasting side effects from the treatment made her unable to continue her career in technical sales. And her inability to work at all carried with it a drop in self-esteem.

Others in such situations may turn to therapists, mentors, friends. Rubin, 53, from Huntington, hired a life coach to help her "recreate a life without work."

She says that in the past year her coach helped her develop improved habits around exercise, nutrition and willingness to venture out into the world, and as a result Rubin has shifted from anxiety to confidence. "I don't know if I could have done that without her encouragement," she says.

While therapists may delve into emotional and historical issues and consultants and mentors give advice, life coaches take a different approach: They are trained in questioning clients with the intent of helping clarify what they really want in life and/or work, to set goals and get around roadblocks such as procrastination and life's distractions.

For clients, it's all about moving forward, taking actions, having someone who may kick a little butt - in the nicest of ways, of course. Think of coaching as "having a guide on the side," says Mary Wayne Bush, a coach in Tucson, Ariz.

Coaching was popularized in the mid-1990s when Thomas Leonard, who with others had synthesized processes that had been in use, set up a virtual telephone-class training program for would-be coaches. The graduates in turn coached their clients in weekly phone sessions.

Coaching is now an estimated \$1.5-billion industry with a conservative estimate of 30,000 coaches worldwide, according to new research by PricewaterhouseCoopers done for the International Coach Federation, a professional association. That's based on 5,415 responses from coaches in 73 countries.

The field "has exploded in the last 10 years," and the findings are "a real indication of how rapidly it's spreading around the world," says Kay Cannon, a coach in Lexington, Ky., and president of the International Coach Federation. That group, she says, has been adding from 200 to 400 members a month.

Today's coaches are branching out beyond general issues related to career, work/life balance and running a business to specialize in more niche areas. Looking to adopt a baby? There are coaches to help with the process - as there are for those looking to retire, write a book, or even create an online career presence.

And, as the Internet has evolved into Web 2.0 with such interactive applications as social networking, blogging and wikis, so too is the profession evolving into Coaching 2.0:

Companies - even the federal government - are hiring staff coaches to work with employees. And some employers are trying to entice prospective new hires by touting the executive coaching they can receive.

Years back, having an employer set someone up with such a coach was seen as a step closer to the door for a problem employee.

More colleges and universities are getting into the act by offering classes, certificates or even degrees in coaching. Among them: Columbia Business School, Georgetown University, New York University and Case Western Reserve University.

A new nonprofit organization, The Foundation of Coaching, allows scholars and authors to post their coaching-related findings on its Web site. Plus, it expects to dole out up to \$100,000 a year in grant money, says Bush, the group's research director, to fund research, and it will even mentor coaches or other interested parties in how to conduct it.

That group, too, is planning a user-written and edited Web site, Coachpedia, in which coaches, clients or anyone with a desire will be able to define coaching and its facets, describe its history, outline the trends. It's being modeled on the user-generated Wikipedia .com.

Still, challenges in the industry persist.

As the occupation started to take off, potential coaches got the impression that all they had to do was get some training and some business cards and they would soon find themselves coaching from home - in their jammies - and pulling in \$500,000 a year, Cannon says. "The truth of the matter is, that is not going to happen."

Yes, life coaches can charge from \$300 to \$550 a month - more if they're executive coaches - for three or four phone calls or face-to-face coaching sessions a month ranging from 30 minutes to 60 minutes, along with brief phone or e-mail check-ins during the week. But look at what PricewaterhouseCooper's research found: 43 percent of respondents have five or fewer clients, which in some cases may be of their choosing. And part-time coaches bring in, on average, just more than \$26,000 a year, even as the average for full-time coaches is close to \$82,700.

Some coaches "may be very good at delivering services but may not be the best at marketing themselves," says Vikki Brock, a coach in Seattle and director of history and archives for the Foundation of Coaching. Hence, she says, their "success and failure rate is just like any other small business."

Also, even as coaching has become more common, coaches still have to educate some potential clients about what coaching is and isn't. Clients accustomed to working with therapists may think it's suitable to lapse into that story about how their woes can be traced back to the party on their fifth birthday. But a coach will snap them right back to the present and ask what they're going to do today to meet their goals - or ask if they might be better served by working with a therapist, if that seems merited.

Some people may expect the coach to design a plan of action for them. No dice, says Jeannine Ayres, the coach in Huntington who worked with Rubin. Ayres tells of one other former client who was disappointed because she had not done hands-on marketing of his business. "I'll help you question assumptions," she says. "I'll partner with you, I'll hold you accountable." But the answers - and work - have to come from the client.

Those looking to develop coaching skills may also have misperceptions. Siobhan M. Murphy, an executive coach in Babylon, tells of role-play sessions she puts on for chief executives through San Diego-based Vistage International, a membership organization. The aim is to help executives learn coaching techniques so they can elicit solutions from their staff. In the role play, executives are limited to asking questions, says Murphy - something that's hard for those who want to "jump in with their own solutions." But the value of the questioning process is that it allows for an "emotional buy-in" in which an employee identifies the problem and

helps create the solution, she says.

About six years ago, Linda McCabe-Oristano was looking for support in running her new business, American Patriot Glass in Islip, in an industry she says is non-traditional for women. She had never heard of coaching when she met Murphy at a networking event, but she plunged right in, working on a plan for moving the business forward.

"She keeps me accountable," says McCabe-Oristano, 49, who has "homework assignments" during the week to keep the process rolling. Early on, for instance, she spoke of the importance of becoming certified with the federal government as a woman-owned business. But it's a process that entails considerable research and paperwork - the kind of project that, with all the regular day-to-day pressures, could easily have been shunted aside. As McCabe-Oristano saw her scheduled coaching session looming, though, she would say to herself, "Oh, oh - I better do this fast."

It was through this process, too, that she came to set up the Long Island Women's Business Council, a resource for women business owners.

Coaching, she says, has helped her change some of her old beliefs about what she could accomplish and "see that my passion can become reality." It's less costly than therapy, she says, and it "helps you transform your whole life."

Rubin, the breast cancer survivor, would agree. A sufferer of attention deficit disorder as well, she points to a series of seemingly small things her coach has suggested that have helped her address treatment-related loss of memory and what she calls loss of "executive functioning" ability. They include use of a super-sized calendar and organizing with the help of color coding.

"Crazy little things," says Rubin. But "they've changed my life."

FINDING THE RIGHT COACH FOR YOUR NEED

You may find there's an abundance of coaches, but identifying one who is effective, experienced and who meets your specific needs may entail a bit of homework.

Anyone can say he or she is a coach. It's a sexy title these days, says Kay Cannon, president of the International Coach Federation, a group that has initiated a code of ethics and a voluntary certification

procedure.

In fact, there are no formal licensing procedures. A variety of training programs exist, ranging from virtual classes conducted via telephone to formal university certificate programs.

You can find coaches through personal referral, just as you would any service provider. You can also check the Coach Federation site at coachfederation.org. Or you could do a Google search of "coach" and whatever specialty you're interested in.

Some coaches have developed expertise in certain professions and clientele. For instance, Nicolas Serres-Cousine, a coach in Manhattan, specializes in working with gay men on relationship issues.

Once you've narrowed the field, you'll want to interview two, preferably three, coaches who seem to fit the bill.

Be careful of being "bowled over by charisma" when there are no credentials to back it up, says Bonnie

Mincu, who does executive coaching in Manhattan and also works with clients with attention deficit disorder.

Ask about their career history, coach training, how long they've been a coach. (Many coaches see themselves as having been coaches forever, because their friends have always gone to them for advice.

But that's different from working as a trained coach.)

Ask to speak with a client or former client. Many coaches will give you a free, abbreviated coaching session just to give you a sense of how they work. That's a good chance for you to "sense if they're

asking you the right questions," says Mincu.

-PATRICIA KITCHEN

Specialists for every need

Coaching has typically been associated with efforts to latch on to a more rewarding career, manage a small business or put more fun in your life. But as the field expands, coaches now specialize in helping you with areas such as:

Adopting a child

Dealing with attention deficit disorder

Managing stress

Helping your kids transition to college life

Becoming single

Being a stay-at-home mom or dad

Writing a book

Getting chemotherapy

Retirement

Relationships

Relationships for gay men

Wellness

Getting into/prospering in specific professions, such as real estate or financial planning

Managing your online career image

Coaches - and their clients

30,000 Low-ball estimate for number of coaches worldwide

39.2% Full-time coaches

68.7% Coaches who are women

38.8% Coaches in the 46-55 age range

7.3% Coaches younger than 35

2.4% Coaches older than 65

56.5% Clients who are women

SOURCE: PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPERS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COACH FEDERATION

NOWONLINE

Do you work in an office that is canine- or feline-friendly? Do problems arise? Have you found other pet care solutions? Tell Patricia Kitchen about them at pkitchen@newsday.com.

Even dogs have

resumes these days.

At www.newsday.com

/workplace, board members of the Long Island animal support group Pet Peeves have translated their animals' most endearing behaviors into workplace skills.

[Illustration]

Caption: 1) Newsday photo / David L. Pokress - Siobhan Murphy, left, a career coach in Babylon, has supported Linda McCabe-Oristano in her glass business. "She keeps me accountable," says the client. 2) Newsday photo / Ken Spencer - Cancer survivor Susan Rubin, left, talks with Jeannine Ayres, her life coach, in a walk at Heckscher Park. Charts - 1) Coaches-and their clients 2) Specialists for every need (SEE END OF TEXT); LIFE COACHING. Making strides. A '90s phenomenon matures into an industry. Nnewsday photo / Ken Spencer - Susan Rubin, left, strolls at Heckscher Park in Huntington with life coach Jeannine Ayres, who helped her client regain confidence after recovery from cancer.

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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