

Help Me Out, Coach

Emerging Field Gives Clients A Nudge Toward Meeting Goals

By Laura Raines

Just when your career was going gangbusters, you suddenly hit a bump in the road.

You might have just been passed over for a promotion. Perhaps you have a new and difficult boss. Maybe you find that the job you used to love, you don't love anymore . . . or you want to change your leadership style but don't know how.

Thirty years ago, when you needed to learn new business strategies, you might have turned to a company mentor; someone who had faced those challenges before. Now, executives may not stay with companies long enough to have or to become mentors; baby boomers are retiring, and young executives need to learn leadership skills quickly. Coaching is a way to fill that void.

"Executives are dealing with a faster rate of change than ever before," said Jodie Charlop of Potential Matters, an Atlanta coaching firm. "Higher demands are placed on them, and there are fewer resources to help them grow and develop. People are looking for ways to navigate and survive amidst the change. Taking charge of their own advancement, they are using coaching to achieve higher levels of success professionally and personally."

In 2006, PricewaterhouseCoopers found professional coaching to be a \$1.5 billion industry globally. While the field is still too new for much statistical data, the anecdotal evidence shared among companies says that it works and is a good return on investment.

Purpose of coaching



Originally, corporations hired executive coaches to help top executives develop leadership skills, address performance issues or move from one job or department to another, said Brenda Corbett, executive coach and vice president of Sherpa Coaching, a consulting firm that partners with

universities to train and certify executive coaches.

Now, companies are finding coaching useful for midlevel executives, high-potential employees and strategic teams. More executives also are hiring coaches on their own.

"People don't know how to change, so we give them a toolkit. In mountain-climbing, a sherpa is the guide who gives you everything you need to get to the top,

but you choose what to use, and you do the climbing," Corbett said. "A coach doesn't have to know your business; she just has to know how to get you to the next level."

The Sherpa Coaching model is a process-driven method that guides clients in taking stock of what they want to change, assessing strengths and support, charting a course, and reaching the summit of sustained change.

"The process establishes guardrails, so that we stay focused on professional goals and not go off on tangents or get into personal therapy," Corbett said. "What we help people do is find their own personal 'aha!' moments."

She said one high-level corporate executive, who could solve any problem on his own, wasn't getting the results he wanted from his employees. Through coaching, he learned to ask them really effective questions and saw them blossom into terrific problem-solvers. Productivity and morale went up.

Another company, TriHealth, a hospital system in Cincinnati, documented a \$1.1 million improvement to its bottom line after a six-month coaching engagement.

Choosing a coach

Coaches have various backgrounds and training, which can be confusing for consumers. Credentials are important. Look for a coach with a credential, such as the Sherpa Executive Coaching Certification. Coaches also can hold advanced

degrees in psychology, professional counseling or adult education. With coaching costing \$150, \$250 or more an hour, the bottom line should be: Are you getting the insight and results you want?

Think you want to be a coach?

Whether you want to start your own coaching practice, work for a company as an internal coach, or add coaching to your consulting, human resources or assessment business, you need training.

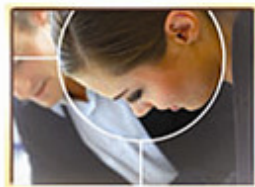
Sherpa Coaching has partnered with the University of Georgia Center for Continuing Education to offer the Sherpa Executive Coaching Certification program in Georgia this fall. Executive coaches and coach educators Brenda Corbett and Judith Coleman, who wrote "The Sherpa Guide: Process-Driven Executive Coaching," will teach the course.

The intensive, 60-hour course will be taught in two separate weeks (In November '07 and January '08) allowing participants to return home and practice their skills with clients between training sessions.

For more information, call 1-800-325-2090 or visit www.georgiacenter.uga.edu/is/coach.

"We train coaches to fundamentally change business behavior in a fixed time frame," Corbett said, "but it's not just about performance. It's about changing clients' lives. Coaching is the most rewarding job I've ever had. You're not just changing one person; you're affecting everyone who works with him."

The cost, \$9,250, includes classes, materials, meals and housing at the conference center.



The University of Georgia Center for Continuing Education Certificate Programs

Sherpa Executive Coaching Certification Program

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