



sixth annual  
Executive Coaching  
2011  
Survey

This report is available as a free download at [www.sherpacoaching.com/survey.html](http://www.sherpacoaching.com/survey.html).

If you wish to share this report, send a link to as many interested parties as you like.

Please do not forward your copy or post this document for download elsewhere.

For a comprehensive look at the state of the art in leadership development,  
please visit [www.sherpa-leadership-institute.com](http://www.sherpa-leadership-institute.com)

# Sherpa Executive Coaching Survey 2011

## Power to the People

The Path to Personal Development



People are getting more attention. Training budgets are rising. It's been a long time since we've seen such aggressive spending plans.

What will be done with this flood of funds? It's not going back to the same old places. Behind the scenes, there's a revolution going on. Business as usual is not enough. People want more from their jobs, and they are going to get it.

Case in point: a Fortune 500 firm. The top fifteen executives are asked what they really want. They don't want more money. They are not concerned about work-life balance. What they want is more personal development.

Power to the people.

Case in point: Fortune 100. Highly paid technicians and engineers are 'topped out', without any real career path. Training executives bring in workshops on self-discovery and communication. Self-awareness is good for the soul, and it's good for business, too.

Power to the people.

Case in point: Fortune top 20. A new President comes to HR and says: "I've been here two weeks, and I already know we have a problem. All these people, and no new training for five years. Tell me what you want. I will find the money."

Power to the people.

---

With this backdrop, we present our annual report on executive coaching. The Sherpa Executive Coaching Survey offers insight into leadership development, based on information from coaches and those who hire them. Now in its sixth consecutive year, The Sherpa Executive Coaching Survey is co-sponsored by executive education departments at the University of Georgia, Texas Christian University and Miami University.

Personal development is intriguing, because it is more than training. Training means: "I get knowledge." Self-improvement means "I get better." Personal development means more. It's about relationships, communication and business behavior. Personal development carries with it a price, an obligation to help others develop, too.

One-on-one coaching is the most personal kind of personal development. Based on the longest running research in the field, this report will tell you where personal development has been . . . and where it is going.



# Sherpa Executive Coaching Survey 2011

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary .....	3
What is Executive Coaching? .....	5
The Value of Coaching .....	6
What Makes a Good Executive Coach?.....	7
How Is Coaching Used?.....	8
Impact on Business .....	9
Internal and External Coaching.....	10
Who Gets A Coach?.....	11
Demand for Coaching.....	12
Delivery Methods for Coaching.....	13
Rising Support for Standards of Practice.....	14
The Next Wave: Coaching Skills and Team Coaching.....	15
Executive Coaching Outside the USA.....	16
How Do Coaches Spend Their Time?.....	17
Earnings .....	17
Coach Training and Certification.....	18
Sources of Training for Coaches.....	19
Accreditation for Training .....	20
Assessments in Coaching.....	21
Cutting Through the Confusion .....	22
Profession & Regulation .....	23
What is the Sherpa Survey? .....	24
Survey Methodology.....	25
Who Responds To The Survey?.....	26
Survey Sponsors.....	27
Index .....	29

## Executive Summary



With thanks to our university sponsors, the Sherpa Executive Coaching Survey is a research project now in its sixth year. In this report, we will talk about executive coaching: the ultimate in personal development. You will discover how to make the most of coaching, as a service for your organization or as a career choice.

**Managers, executives, business and organizational leaders** will find the first half of the report of particular interest, all the way through the topics of coaching skills for managers and team coaching.

**Those in the business of executive coaching or coach training** will see that the second half of this report gives them what they need to know about their industry, from the inside out.

This year, we make extensive use of quotes and comments left by our respondents. That gives us a feeling for the current state of leadership development and allows some very articulate and passionate people to inform us all.

---

### Training or Development?

People call it T&D. The year 2011 brings a sea change, with massive moves in money. Where's all that money going? It's going to development. Think "small t, BIG D".

Small 't'. Training is about skills. People can have all the skills in the world, but . . . if they can't get along with each other, can't inspire each other, how far can their skills take them? Skills are just half the picture.



BIG D. Development is about the person behind the skills. Development is about behavior. That's the other half of the picture. When you understand one-on-one executive coaching, you'll know what personal development is all about.

Personal development means better business behavior. Better leaders. Better role models. There's a ripple effect in personal development. People pass it on. When personal development is done right, people feel an obligation to pass it on. Development with a capital 'D'. Get it right, and you'll have a better culture and a better organization.

That brings up some critical questions:

- ✂ What is executive coaching?
- ✂ What makes a good coach?
- ✂ Who gets a coach?

The Sherpa Executive Coaching Survey is designed to answer those questions. The longest-running research of its kind, this survey is uniquely positioned to identify trends that will affect the future of almost every organization. Results are reported each year at no charge, as a service to coaching and the business public at large.



## What Is Executive Coaching?



It's not clear to everyone what executive coaching really is. Maybe there are so many kinds of coaches, and so many people adopting the name, that it gets confusing. An executive coach in Denver, Colorado tells us: "The integrity of executive coaching is being compromised by individuals who call themselves coaches and are really business consultants or trainers."

Let's draw some lines. There are three broad areas of coaching: sport, personal and business-related coaching. At Sherpa Coaching, we are all business, but we used the term 'executive coaching' to distinguish this activity from "business coaching", which most commonly refers to consulting activities.



Here's a widely-accepted definition of executive coaching:

"Executive coaching means regular meetings between a business leader and a trained facilitator, designed to produce positive changes in business behavior in a limited time frame."

This definition clarifies:

- who coaches are: Trained facilitators.
- what coaches do: Produce positive changes in business behavior.
- when things happen: On a set schedule within a limited time frame.

### **Executive coaches, as a general rule,**

- § **do not share their own experience (as do mentors).**
- § **do not give advice (as do consultants).**
- § **do not impart specific knowledge (as trainers do).**
- § **avoid personal issues (the role of a counselor, therapist or life coach).**

\* definition from 'The Sherpa Guide: Process-Driven Executive Coaching' (Thomson 2005), used by

- § Action Coach.
- § Coaching News
- § European Foundation of Management Development
- § Executive Coaching Summit Australia
- § Leading Coaches Center
- § Organization Development Journal

## The Value of Coaching



When we ask about the value and credibility of coaching, the question is reserved for HR professionals and business leaders. They tell us that executive coaching continues to increase its perceived value and credibility. In 2006, almost 90% of HR professionals and coaching clients felt the value of coaching was either somewhat high or very high. 'High value' perceptions now exceed 94%.

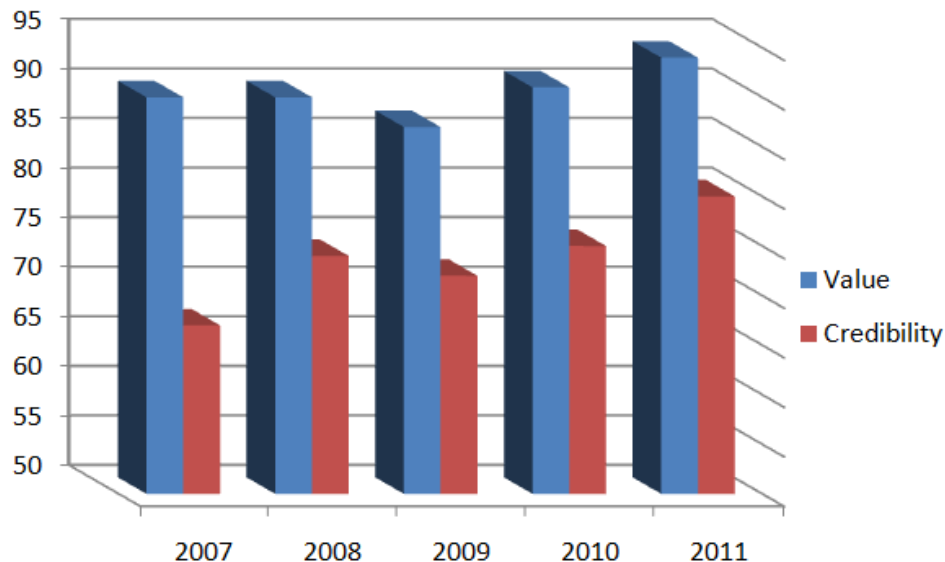
Credibility means integrity, reliability, authority and trustworthiness. The credibility of coaching is also on the rise. Five years back, one third of HR professionals labeled coaching's credibility as 'mediocre' or worse. After noticeable improvement, the number of negative responses has fallen to 20%.

**Coaching as a business tool continues to gain legitimacy.**

*Harvard Business Review. (2009)*

There's still a discrepancy. Why do some HR professionals see the value of coaching as high while its credibility is low? It's probably this: they hear about coaches who don't inspire confidence. Credibility goes down. They hire coaches who do inspire confidence. Perceived value goes up.

The value and credibility of coaching. 2011 Sherpa survey responses:



Coaching is not a united front. One Australian coach says coaching is: "Fragmented, with a wide range of dubious theories doing the round, such as law of attraction!" As it turns out, there is quite a bit of fragmentation in coaching, and quite a few fads making the rounds. Look it up, and you will, indeed, find a current 'flavor of the month' in a crew of coaches who preach the "law of attraction".

There are, at the same time, missionary coaches who put forth ideas that go beyond business behavior, such as "Healing the world and all her life forms". One executive coach in the American heartland describes the business as "Shamanistic spiritual healing. " These are sincerely held beliefs, but not likely to find favor in the business mainstream.

Coaching is a relatively new game, but clarity is emerging. There are good reasons why executive coaching is gaining in credibility. A veteran coach from the Netherlands says coaching is: "still an emerging profession with great initiatives underway to professionalize and clarify processes, procedures and standards. More mature markets demand valid credentials and high level coaches."

## What Makes a Good Executive Coach?

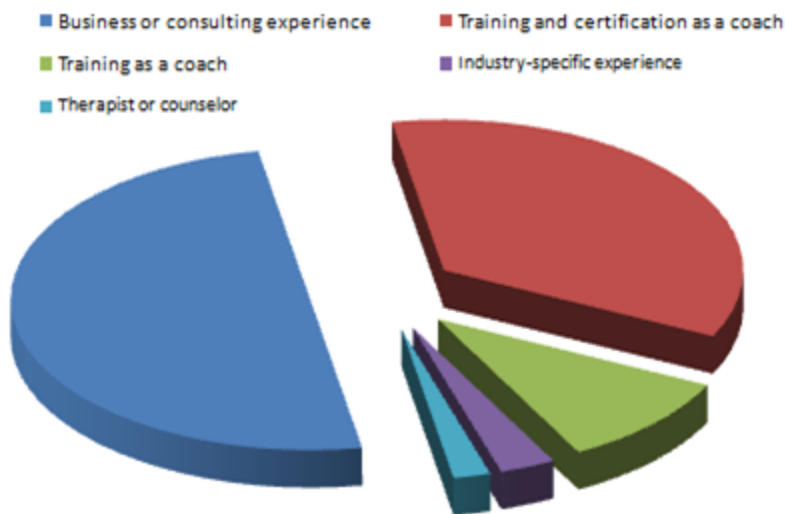


It takes two things to make a good coach: training and experience. Here's what people have told us over the years, when asked: "What is the most appropriate background for an executive coach?"

Therapy and counseling are a solid basis for personal and life coaching. Industry-specific experience is important for mentoring and consulting. An executive coach in Seattle, Washington, USA told us: "More and more, executives & managers use executive coaches for important areas of development that may not be industry-specific."

We asked people to choose only one background as "most important for an executive coach". When more than one answer might apply, it's a tough choice. Given everyone's best answers, the results are pretty evenly split between experience and training, as they have been for the past five years. Support for training that includes certification (verification that a body of knowledge has been mastered) has increased over the years, but business experience tops everything else this year as the best background for an executive coach.

The most appropriate background for a coach. 2011 Sherpa survey responses:



A coach in Phoenix, Arizona (USA) commented: "Executive Coaching involves organizational, political and leadership dynamics. Successful experience is key. My clients recognize this. Certification without the relevant experience cannot provide the depth necessary to best serve the client."

Experience in business is important. Training as a coach is important. Experience as a coach, on top of everything else, makes the difference between average coaches and the very best coaches. A coach from Ottawa, Ontario (Canada) made the point best: "It takes many years of practical experience to become a good coach. Even more important, it helps to have been in positions of leadership and have learned to lead oneself. Common sense and a perspective of being a guide/partner are very important in establishing a productive and effective coaching relationship."

## How Is Coaching Used?

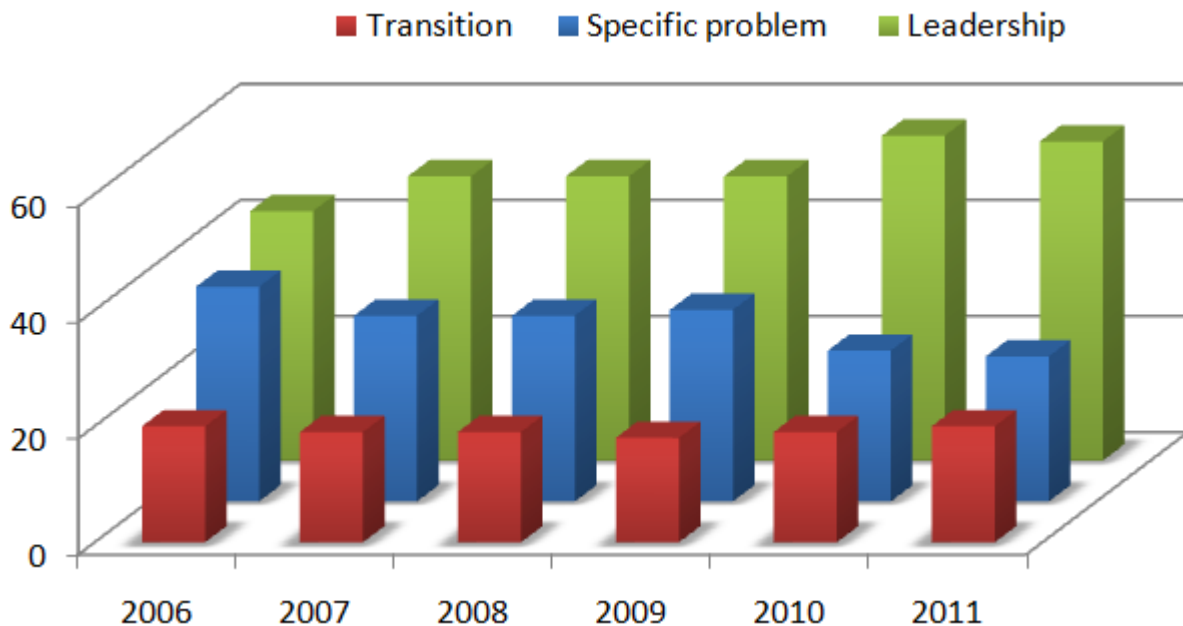


There is no doubt that coaching helps people. Almost every HR and business leader we surveyed sees real value in coaching. An Australian coach sees opportunity: “The turbulent and ambiguous nature of the world of work today creates a real opportunity for clients and coaches to work together to create more sustainable and fulfilling work places.”

A leading university educator in coaching says: “Coaching helps people in three ways: First, no-one gets listened to. A coach allows leaders to reflect about their decisions, and about themselves. Second, people usually avoid difficult truths. Coaching brings reality front and center. Third, people don’t know how to change. A coach can guide a client to find replacements for behavior that’s not working.”

Coaching is most often used to help emerging leaders get better at their role. Over six years’ time, the amount of coaching used to solve a specific problem has dropped by a third.

When is coaching most often used? 2011 Sherpa survey responses:



People who receive coaching are happy, as well. Companies who use anecdotal evidence to determine the value of coaching are just as likely to continue coaching programs as those who formally measure return on investment.

**Over six years’ time, the amount of coaching used to solve a specific problem has dropped by a third.**

## Impact on Business



Is coaching worth what people pay for it? HR professionals see the value of coaching as high, but they usually don't measure value in a formal way. We have asked about return on investment for a number of years, and keep getting the same answer. People don't know how to calculate it, or they simply don't care to do so.

The number of people who say 'we have no formal process' for measuring the value of coaching' is at an all time high.

Clients may not measure ROI, but coaches think it's important. An executive coach in the Midwest says: "Coaching is gaining a foothold in the HR literature and at major organizations. This increases its visibility and credibility. For it to continue its upward climb, coaching must demonstrate that it helps an organization achieve its strategic and operational goals. Metrics will take a bigger role in the future of coaching."

**Anecdotal evidence is frequently used to support coaching. The phrase 'impact on business' (IOB) seems to describe what most people expect from executive coaching.**

Last year, we found that economic conditions did force companies to scrutinize their leadership development efforts. The number of organizations measuring ROI jumped from 12% to 18%. That increase was not part of a trend. This year, the number fell straight back to 12%.

How is Return on Investment Measured for Coaching?



Rather than ROI, there is a trend to rely on coaching to create IOB (Impact on Business). Divide professional activity into two realms: Skills and behavior. Skills include professional and technical ability, experience and knowledge. Behavior includes communication, motivation and leadership.

Positive skills along with positive behavior produce a positive impact on business (IOB). Coaching produces positive changes in behavior, which can be measured. Positive changes in behavior always improve an individual's impact on business. That's why anecdotal evidence is the most widely used way to see what benefits coaching produces.

Further details, video about IOB at [www.sherpa-leadership-institute.com](http://www.sherpa-leadership-institute.com)

## Internal and External Coaching

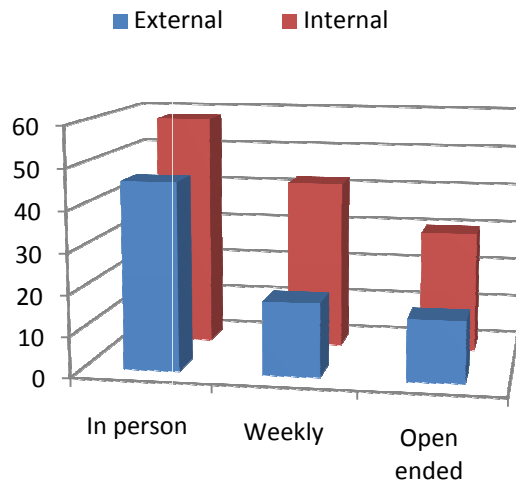


90% of the coaches responding to this survey are 'external coaches', those who provide services to clients and their organization as outside suppliers. The rest are 'internal coaches', employees of an organization who provide coaching to fellow employees.

How does coaching change when it is delivered from the inside? Here are the differences we found:

Internal coaches meet more often, are more likely to meet in person and favor 'open-ended' engagements.

How is coaching delivered and structured? 2011 Sherpa survey responses:



Internal coaches see training and certification as more important than experience. They favor university-based programs to private schools and they follow a published process more often than external coaches, by wide margins.

Why are internal coaches university-certified at a higher rate? External coaches are more likely to be veterans (10 years' or more experience) by a margin of 40% to 20%. Internal coaches are more likely to have entered the field more recently, since university training became widely available.

## Who Gets A Coach?

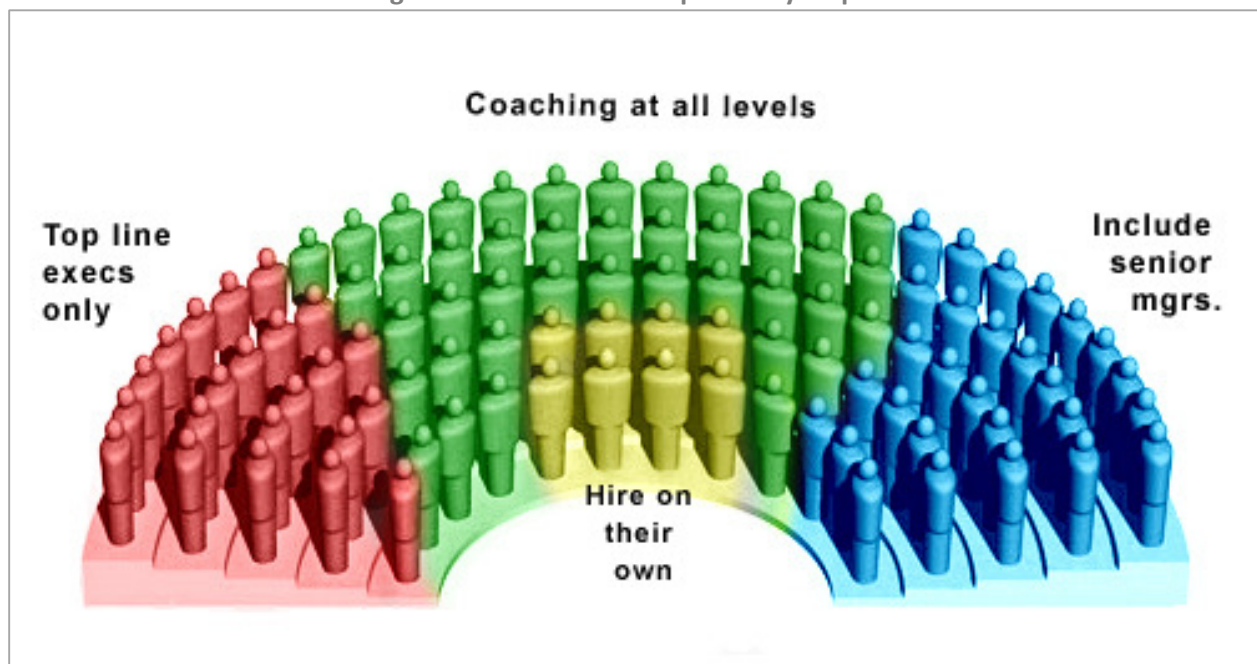


Two years ago, our 2009 report noticed: “. . . a slight trend toward coaching for senior executives only, and a trend away from coaching for leaders at all levels. If this is a function of tight budgets and a lean economy, we’ll see further changes in our 2010 study.”

That’s exactly what happened. Last year, coaching was provided ‘at all levels’ far less. In fact, we saw a 20% reduction in the broad use of coaching in just twelve months’ time.

In this 2011 report, we see a complete reversal of the last two years. Coaching for leaders at all levels is back to where it was three years ago, providing more resources for, and more ‘power to the people’. Executive coaches report that they provide services across the chain of command almost half of the time. Both new entrants and veteran coaches report the same experience.

Who gets a coach? 2011 Sherpa survey responses:



**Coaching for ‘leaders at all levels’ is back to where it was several years ago, but still has room to grow.**

Coaching at all levels is still down slightly from the peak we saw in our 2006 report. The economy is a factor. An executive coach in Seattle, Washington (USA) voiced this concern: “The desire for a trusted collaborator/coach is growing. However, the current challenge is navigating within the constraints and fears of this economic climate.”

## Demand for Coaching

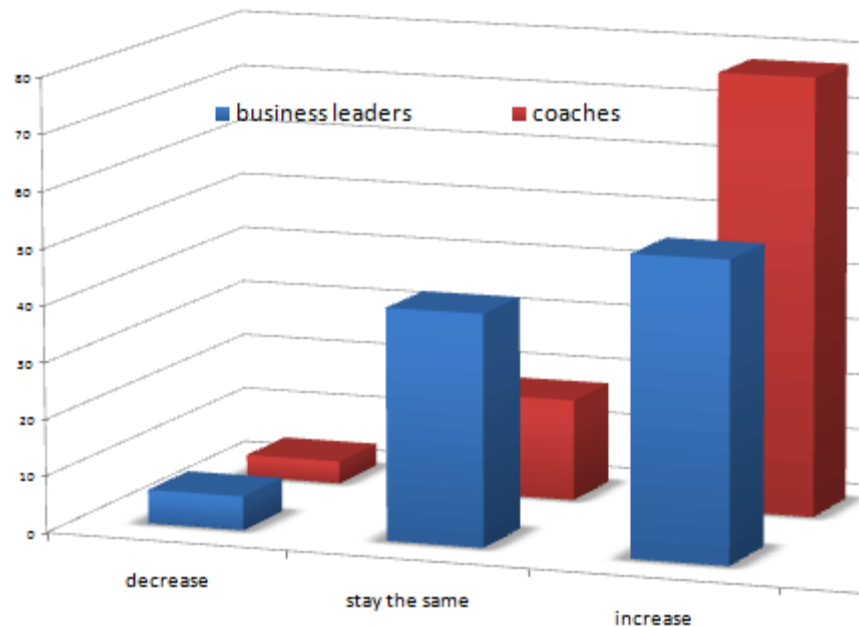


It's nearly impossible to know how much coaching is going on, or how much revenue it generates. There are estimates floating around that seem to get increasingly higher. This year, for the first time, we asked both coaches and business professionals to predict the demand for coaching in the coming year. Our respondents gave us their answers, along with quite a few detailed comments. They tell us that the economy has affected the amount of coaching taking place, where coaching is directed and how much coaches earn.

In addition to those changes caused by the economy, there will be changes in the demand for coaching due to purchasers' awareness of coaching and their experiences, both positive and negative. An executive coach in New Orleans, Louisiana (USA) offers: "Coaching is growing. As more people recognize the need for inspiration and guidance, the more they will see coaching as a method of gaining self-confidence and moving towards a higher aspiration. "

What will demand for coaching look like in the coming year? Executive coaches are, on the whole, much more optimistic than their customers. Almost eight out of ten executive coaches are forecasting an increase. Only half of other business leaders see an increase in the coming year.

Will demand for coaching change this year? 2011 Sherpa survey responses:



This is the first time we have asked about demand for coaching. It's a question we will ask in upcoming surveys, so we can track the accuracy of our responses.

## Delivery Methods for Coaching



Over the years, coaching has been delivered in person more frequently, but the change is gradual. Over the last six years, in-person coaching has climbed from 44 to 47%, while phone coaching has dropped from 37 to 34%. Webcam coaching is up to around 5% of service delivery.

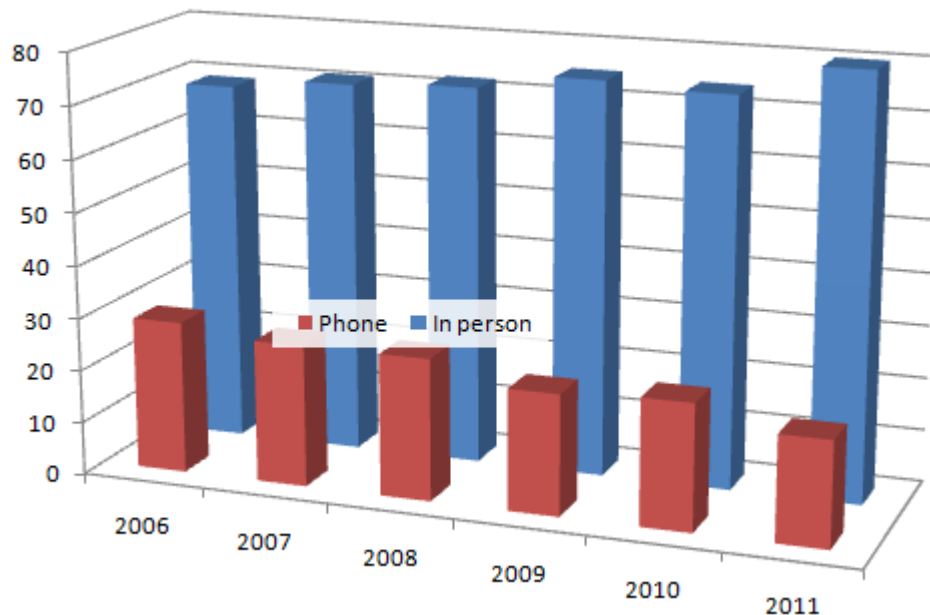
81% now say that in-person coaching is the most effective method, up from 71%, in our first survey. Phone coaching is seen as the most effective delivery method by just 19%, down from 26% five years back.

In-person meetings constitute 10% more of total service delivery at larger companies (100 employees+) than at smaller firms.

Coaches in business five years or less do a majority of their coaching in person, while those who have been in the field more than five years do about 45% of their work in person.

In almost every part of the USA and across Canada, the majority of executive coaches work in person. Only in the Northwestern US does phone coaching account for a majority of business.

The most effective delivery method for coaching? 2011 Sherpa survey responses:



Other research has shown a gap between the delivery methods people want and what people get. Coaches do see advantages to phone delivery. It reduces travel time and costs. It allows more clients to be served in a day. Consequently, some coaches urge phone delivery for clients who would prefer to work in person. A consumer awareness study conducted by the International Coach Federation (2010) found that 11% of coaching clients who preferred to be coached in person ended up being coached by phone. As more coaches are trained and certified, and a larger pool of veteran coaches is available, we may see those mismatches being reduced.

## Rising Support for Standards of Practice

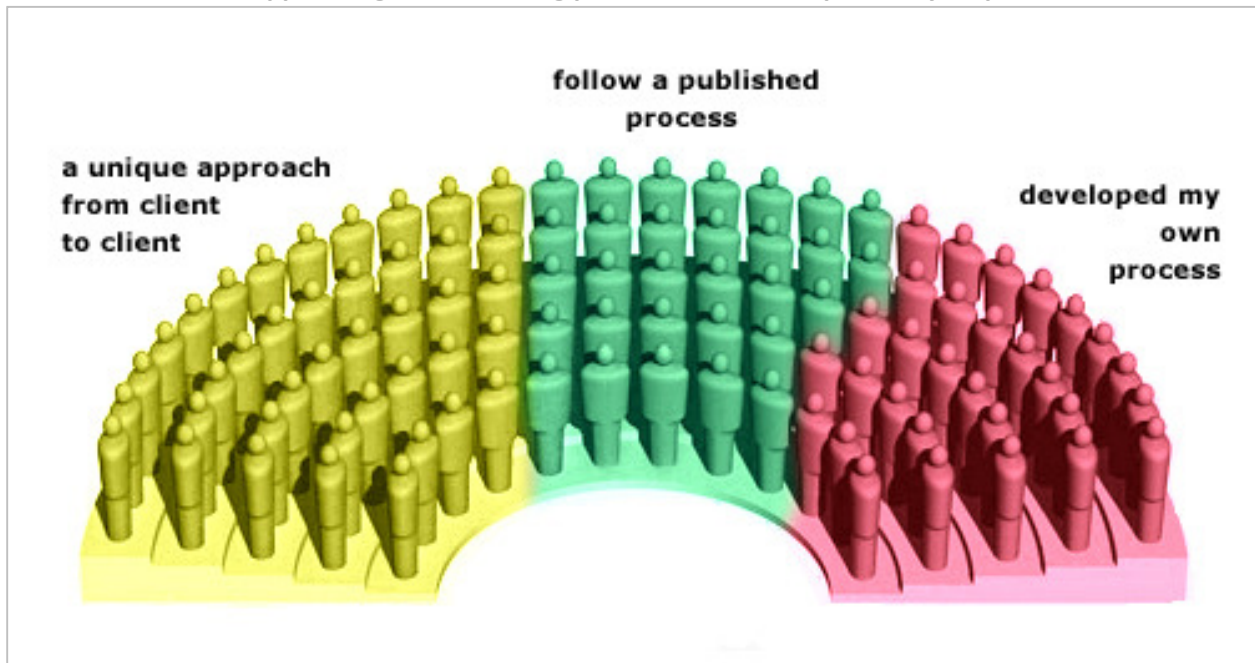
Over the years, support has remained steady for “a recognized and standard for coaching, similar to the accounting financial planning professions”. Forty percent of our respondents say that’s ‘very important’, while 20% say it’s ‘absolutely essential’. Support for standards runs highest among HR professionals, coaching clients and purchasing decision-makers.

For the first time last year, we asked whether coaches follow a published process. Seven in ten do not. Over 40% reported that they ‘develop a unique approach from client to client’. That’s true again this year. However, there was a major shift in our results. The number of coaches who follow a published process jumped from 21% to 28%. The number of coaches who developed their own process for coaching dropped meaningfully, from 36% to 31%.



What’s going on? Even veteran coaches, practitioners who seem least likely to change, are actually adopting standard processes and dropping self-styled approaches. This trend toward widespread use of published processes will probably continue. Coaches newer to the business use a published process far more often. If this trend holds, we believe they will fill out the ranks of veteran coaches.

What approach guides coaching practices? 2011 Sherpa survey responses:



There are differences between male and female coaches. 26% of men and 33% of women follow a specific published process for coaching.

What processes are they following? Quite a few, actually. Again this year, the Sherpa process and the Coactive process are the most widely reported, each at 20% or more of the market. Several other processes hovered between three and five percent. 35 other coaching processes also received mention, most often by just one respondent.

## The Next Wave: Coaching Skills and Team Coaching

This year, we heard about two new trends in leadership development: team coaching and coaching skills training for managers. Based on extensive input from executive coaches who sent their comments on the state of the industry, we will start following these two topics in our 2012 report. Here's what we know right now:

Full-time executive coaches are not the only people who are coaching. Increasingly, managers, executives and supervisors in the USA are being taught how to create coaching moments with peers and subordinates. This conclusion is backed by a recent study in the UK, which came to the same conclusion



An executive coach in the UK had this to say: "I'm seeing the training of managers in coaching skills as the next big thing in coaching."

Managers will always teach and monitor the 'skills side' of a job. Now, they are increasingly expected to coach through behavioral issues.

A coach in Tampa, Florida (USA) says: "More advanced coaching skills - targeted at business and executive development - need to be created."

Coaching skills teaches managers how to improve relationships in and around their business to increase profits, morale and teamwork.

---

Coaching isn't exclusively one-on-one. Teams can be coached, too. In fact, we can define team coaching with a few minor revisions to our definition of executive coaching: "regular meetings between a leadership team and a trained facilitator, designed to produce enhanced performance and/or positive changes in business behavior in a limited time frame."

The intent of coaching for a team is the same as it is with an individual: to guide the team to realizations about their behavior or performance, to enable them to make their own improvements and to make those changes sustainable over time.

Research is underway in the UK to identify the key skills required of a team coach. Here's what we can tell you now: This is clearly not training and it is different from consulting. The facilitator in team coaching must truly be a coach. They must deal with the situations that are brought up in the group. It is a much more intense, responsible role than that of a trainer. Team coaching is a learned skill for the facilitator.



A coach in the UK says: "When organisations realize that they can survive all economic situations with appropriately developed employees, those organisations will then engage in coaching programmes for individuals and teams. There is a great need for team coaching."

As team coaching becomes more common, we are bound to have the same issues we do with individual coaching. Will coaches use a published process? Will standards of practice emerge, or will team coaching be a 'hit or miss' proposition for many organizations? More at [www.sherpa-leadership-institute.com](http://www.sherpa-leadership-institute.com).

---

## Executive Coaching Outside the USA



People who participated in our survey were invited to leave open-ended comments about the state of coaching as an industry. Some of our most interesting comments came from coaches outside of North America.

In Norway, a coach tells us: “Coaching is rapidly gaining acceptance as a business tool.”

An executive coach in Mexico told us this: “Coaching has grown very much as a profession. Poorly qualified coaches without the right background have also increased in number. This is confusing to the market.”



A South American coach commented “The Peruvian economy is growing and we have a lot of foreign companies with more interest in leadership and coaching. I think coaching focus is evolving and it will become more widely used.”

Executive coaches from the UK left these remarks:

- § “At widely varying levels of development and sophistication”
- § “Too many unqualified or ‘hobby coaches’”
- § “Clients increasingly want business savvy coaches.”
- § “Too many coaches are focused on coaching models and theories.”

From Australia: “My sense is that coaching is becoming more and more constrained as many people seek to create a profession. Although I think it is important to ensure quality coaches in the industry, my view is that those who don't measure up don't survive.”

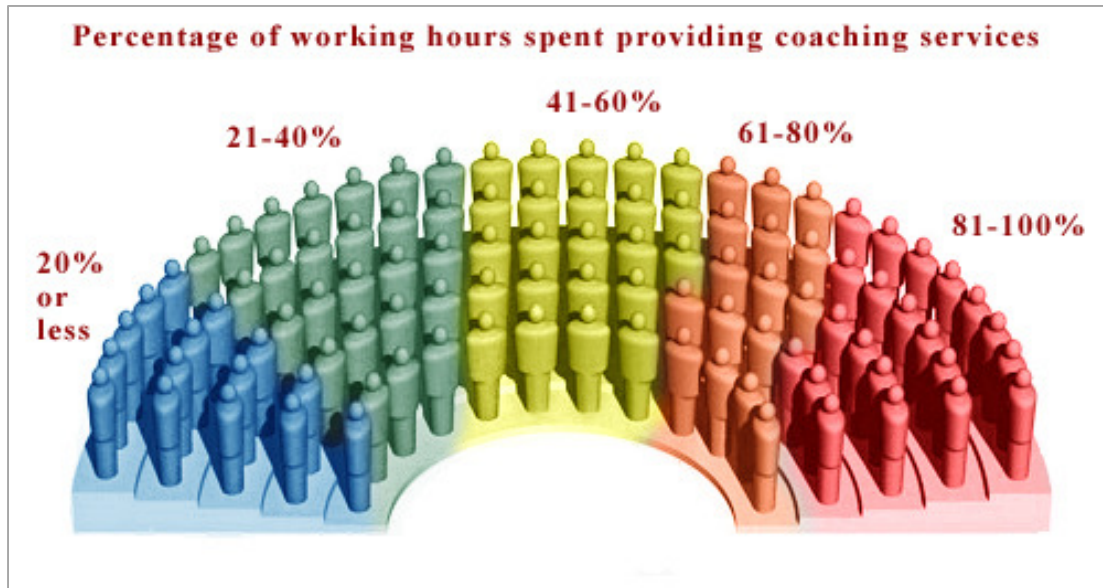
---

## How Do Coaches Spend Their Time?



Executive coaches tell us that they do not spend all their time providing coaching services. They often teach, train or consult. Coaches in larger companies spend less of their time coaching, because they often handle training, human resources and administrative functions, as well.

How much time is actually spent coaching? 2011 Sherpa survey responses:



In our 2011 survey, we do find that coaches spent more of their time in coaching than the previous year.

## Earnings



Since 2006, executive coaches' annual earnings have dropped, primarily because the number of clients served has dropped each year for both veteran coaches and new entrants to the field. It's part of a trend. Most significantly, the drop has been for coaches in the business 3-10 years. Both veteran and entry level coaches make about the same as they did five years ago.

Some executive coaches point to "more and more coaches following the same number of clients." A separate report with earnings for both executive and life coaches is available for download, on or after February 25, 2011, at [sherpacoaching.com/survey.html](http://sherpacoaching.com/survey.html).



Has the state of the economy had an effect on coaches' earnings? An executive coach in Australia reports: "There is a significant clean out of less effective coaching businesses as the lag effects of the economy hinder growth in Australian businesses. Coaches who have just started businesses or consultancies in the last year or two have found it very difficult to maintain a sustainable business. "

## Coach Training and Certification



A coach from North Carolina (USA) says: “Too many people consider themselves coaches without any formal training or certification. This hurts us all. If one is serious about coaching, get a certification!”

At this point, most coaches have been classroom trained and certified. Overall, 70% of coaches cite classroom training and certification, up from 64% three years ago. Veteran coaches, those in business for ten years or more, don’t claim classroom training as often. A veteran coach offered this: “I think that training and certification is critically important for professionals just entering the coaching profession. I did, however, list it as "somewhat important" because exceptions should be made for coaches like me who have been doing this for over 20 years.”

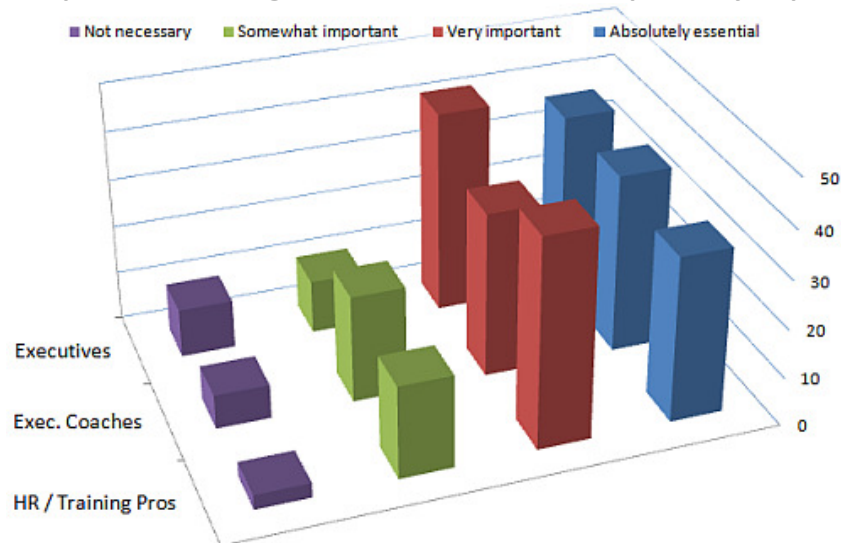
Compared to veterans in the trade, coaches in business 3 to 10 years are certified at much higher rates, and their numbers are up from years past. This shows a definite trend toward training and certification among successful coaches.

**84% of respondents who had been in a coaching relationship consider certification ‘important’ or ‘very important.’ Consumer demand for credentialed coaches is growing.**

ICF Consumer Awareness Study, 2010


A coach in Washington DC says: “The field is reaching maturation. Clients recognize and require that a coach must have certified training. Less qualified coaches are getting less work or opting for other careers.”

How important is training and certification? 2011 Sherpa survey responses:

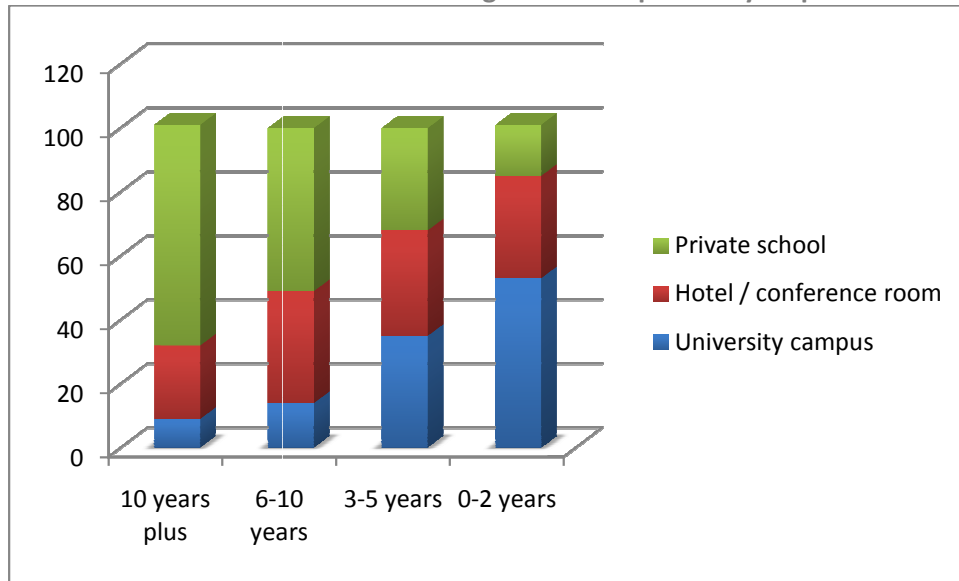


So, coaches are going to class. How important is that? Across the board, every category of response says training and certification is ‘absolutely essential’ or ‘very important’ by a three to one margin. Business executives and coaches themselves place the most weight on certification. Training professionals and purchasers of coaching both say it’s important. Only coaching clients themselves feel certification is ‘not necessary’ in any significant numbers.

## Sources of Training for Coaches

 In recent years, there's been a rise in executive coach training available in a university setting. One in six of today's executive coaches was trained at a university. That number includes veteran coaches who started out in an era when only private schools were available. More than half of newer coaches, in business 2 years or less, were trained at a university.

Where do Coaches Go for training? 2011 Sherpa Survey responses:



Private schools seem to be changing the way they deliver training in recent years. Fewer private schools are holding training on their own campus, instead choosing hotels or conference rooms. Take a look at the veteran coaches, in the first column. A significant number of coaches in the business for ten years had their training at private schools (green and red). As we move left to right, into the ranks of newer coaches, private campus training (green) dwindles, while private offsite programs keep market share. This tells us that private schools are extending their reach to more cities with off-site programs.

As university programs have become a stable part of the educational menu, the majority of new coaches seek their training there.

An Australian coach, commenting on the state of the industry, said: "Coaches that don't measure up do not survive." What does it take to measure up? Over the next few years, we'll find out whether training programs make a difference to graduates' financial success. As private schools and universities compete, whose graduates will stay in business and reach the ten year mark?



## Accreditation for Training



Training for coaches is unregulated. Over the years, researchers have identified as many as 400 coach training schools and sixteen trade associations that accredit them. Private schools have been around for fifteen years or more. Over the last five years, universities have joined the game.

For many years, privately-owned schools were the only option for executive coaches who wished to be trained and certified. In many cases, there are close relationships between coach training programs and the organizations who certify them.

Even among universities, there is no standard method for evaluating and offering coach training.



An executive coach in the UK notes: “There are a number of awarding bodies - ICF, IIC, ICI, Association of Coaching etc. Key members should get together to create recognition between accreditations and to share openly the practices and resources which are available. It is time we moved away from competition and into collaboration.”

Is any particular certification going to dominate? There is a shift underway. Among executive coaches, the ICF is by far the favorite among veterans, those with five or more years of service. University programs have caught up with the ICF’s popularity among newer coaches. However, one third of our surveyed coaches offer “no opinion” as to who is most qualified to accredit a training program.

The general market hasn’t come to a verdict at all. Asked who is most qualified to certify a coach training program, our HR and business leaders, clients and purchasers of coaching, come up with a resounding “I don’t know.” Almost 80 % have no opinion. Universities and the ICF are tied at 6%, and it goes downhill from there.

## Assessments in Coaching



Over 95% of coaches get a running start with their clients by using assessments. These assessments can measure colleagues' and subordinates' opinions, clients' personality and communication styles or leadership strengths and weaknesses.

Some are called 'type models', which classify tendencies and preferences, with no good or bad types, per se. DISC and Meyers Briggs fall in this classification. Other assessments are diagnostic, designed to point out problems and weaknesses. '360' assessments fall under the 'diagnostic' label.

We found more diversity this year than last, as several assessments gained market share. '360' assessments still lead the pack, but are used by just 24% of our coaches, down from 29% last year.



Next in popularity, there's a group of assessments who each have 15% market share: DISC, Meyers-Briggs, Emotional Intelligence, and Strengths Finder.

Enneagrams have been under fire, with several coaches questioning why the Enneagram was offered as a choice in an "otherwise credible survey". Originally, we learned about Enneagrams from a Fortune 500 company which made extensive use of them. In previous surveys, Enneagrams were a popular 'fill in the blank' option, so they became one of our multiple choices. This year, Enneagrams lost market share, going from 5% to just 2% of coaching engagements. Next year, we'll keep an eye on the Hogan and Birkman assessments, which came at around 3%, new highs for both.

## Cutting Through the Confusion



Some people say executive coaching is a maturing industry. While it has been around for years, there's still a lot of confusion about what coaching is. Anyone can call themselves a coach, or define coaching in a way that fits their interests.

An Australian coach offered this: “There are still many people in consultancy businesses that claim to offer coaching but really don't deliver effective coaching. The coaching industry is still suffering from the issues of a fast growth, 'flavor of the month' approach.”

If you call yourself a coach, does that make you a coach? The name is not necessarily the game, and the real coaches haven't yet ‘captured the robes’. A coach from the UK feels that “Coaching is a highly effective service that needs to appreciate distinctions between psychology/therapy and other counseling/mentoring skills. Coaching needs to up its professional game. People with consulting, therapeutic or teaching backgrounds have re-badged themselves as 'coaches' without proper training.”



Perhaps coaching companies try to be too many things to too many people. In our research, we ran across one coaching firm that claims expertise in “organizational development, Gestalt, group dynamics, psychology, neuroscience, emotional and social intelligence, sociology, leadership development, and change management. “ Can anyone be at the top of that many games?

Anyone can call themselves a coach. There are no licensing or legal requirements in the coaching business yet. A coach in the Southwestern USA said the business is still rife with confusion, calling the business: “The usual free-for-all . . . with no entry barriers.”

There are clear signs that executive coaching is getting closer to a real identity. A coach in Reno, Nevada (USA) has watched the industry over many years, and describes the business for us: “The industry is maturing, with more qualified coaches available.”

The word ‘coach’ has been applied to many endeavors, some of them far removed from what executive coaches do. Only over time will the phrase ‘executive coach’ be clearly understood by most business people in the same way.

A university educator addressed the current state of affairs: “People know to call a doctor when they're sick. People know to call a mechanic when their car breaks down. But when a team or an organization is being crushed under the weight of bad business behavior, people don't yet know that they are supposed to call an executive coach. In time, that will come.”

## Profession & Regulation



Coaching is not licensed. It's not unionized. There are no universal standards for practice, nor specific requirements that qualify one to use the term "executive coach".

A business leader in the Southwestern US says: "Coaching has enjoyed an excellent reputation for years, but as more people claim to be coaches, who have little or no background or ability in it, horror stories are starting to mount. I think we are headed toward voluntary or enforced regulation."

To be declared a profession, a line of work needs certain characteristics. Is coaching a profession? By the most basic definition, perhaps. According to BusinessDictionary.com, a profession is "an occupation, practice, or vocation requiring mastery of a complex set of knowledge and skills through formal education and/or practical experience."

Coaching can be called a profession, but it is not an organized profession. There is no single governing professional body, no union nor any licensing requirements. According to a Wikipedia entry, "Professions usually have professional bodies organized by their members, which are intended to enhance the status of their members and have carefully controlled entrance requirements." No such universal group exists for executive coaching.



Will coaching become an organized profession? There are precedents. Certified Financial Planners once had very poor public recognition. In a couple of decades, they built national standards and licensing processes. Paramedics have gone through the same transformation in the last three decades. Time will tell us whether executive coaching finds unity as an organized profession.

## What is the Sherpa Survey?



The Sherpa Executive Coaching Survey is a research project now in its sixth year. This survey is conducted by Sherpa Coaching, a team of authors and educators headquartered in Cincinnati, Ohio, USA, and sponsored by several university executive education departments. Technical support and hosting is provided by IQS Research in Louisville, Kentucky, who validated the collection of data.

As educators in the field of executive coaching, we want to know what business leaders, HR and training professionals think about coaching. We want to know how executive coaches are being used, and how they go about building a budding industry. On a broader scale, we want to help build the credibility of executive coaching and ensure the industry's future.

In 2005, no one was doing large-scale research on a regular basis. That creates two problems: First, small studies with as few as twenty participants were being used to draw large conclusions. Secondly, one-time research becomes obsolete pretty quickly.



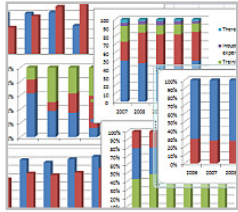
There have been other surveys conducted since we started in 2005, most notably by the Harvard Business Review and International Coach Federation. Some of these studies don't separate life coaching from executive coaching. Some are small scale. Others poll a small, invited audience. Each survey has been a one-time event. In some cases, results have been kept from the general public or offered at a price.

So, we made a commitment to run an annual survey open to anyone who wishes to participate, and release the results to the public at no charge. That's what we have done every year, and will continue to do.



A European equivalent to the Sherpa survey, Bresser Consulting (Germany) periodically conducts worldwide research on executive coaching. Their research reports are released, in their entirety, to the general public at no charge. Frank Bresser tells us that he plans continuing studies which will allow him to identify trends. Bresser's work adds to the knowledge base on the global coaching scene, and it is done in a spirit of service to the industry.

## Survey Methodology



Each year, we review the way our survey is designed. For six years, we have solicited help in survey design from the executive education programs at five major universities. In addition, we rely on Shawn Herbig, President of IQS Research in Louisville, Kentucky. Mr. Herbig and his research team offer solid advice any time we consider additions or changes to the survey.

A leading authority on coaching and mentoring, Rey Carr of Peer Resources (Victoria, BC, Canada), has described the Sherpa Executive Coaching Survey as “the most method-sound in the industry.”

An American executive coach from the Southeast asked: “I would like to know the population you targeted for the survey, so I will know how to understand the results. Is it your clients, your trainees, or a broad base of coaches and individuals? “

Here’s your answer: Invitations were sent by email to a variety of lists. The Sherpa Coaching list includes executive coaches, human resource professionals and others interested in the broad field of coaching. This mailing list has been a work in progress since 1999. Email invitations were also sent to mailing lists held by several university executive education programs and to university alumni lists.



Participants in all earlier surveys are always invited to take part in current research. Anyone who receives an invitation to participate can forward the survey link, allowing for people to ‘opt in’ to current and future research. In effect, anyone who knows about the survey can participate, and invite others to do so. Thus, we believe any latent inequities have been shaken out of the invitation list over the last five years.

## Who Responds To The Survey?



Executive coaches made up two-thirds of our respondents. Human resources and training professionals provide about 10% of our responses, as do life coaches and other professionals. Coaching clients and those who purchase coaching services round out the poll. This year, 40% of our respondents were not on Sherpa's original list of invitees.



Nearly 700 people responded to this survey, providing a margin of error of less than 4%. The accuracy of the survey is also confirmed by comparison with responses from five previous years' research, allowing the confirmation of trends over time. Based on an ever-increasing body of knowledge, the 2011 survey accurately identifies changes and trends in industry practices.

---

### Participating companies included:

- § Bank of America
- § Campbell's Soup
- § Duke Energy
- § H. J. Heinz
- § L'Oreal
- § Miller Coors
- § Oracle
- § Pfizer
- § Target
- § Toyota

### Participating universities included:

- § Columbia University
- § Duke University
- § Indiana State University
- § North Carolina State University
- § Penn State University
- § University of Kentucky
- § University of Louisiana
- § University of Pennsylvania
- § University of Pittsburgh
- § University of St. Thomas

---

The Sherpa Executive Coaching Survey, 2011:

<b>Technical contact:</b>	<b>Media contact:</b>
Shawn Herbig, President, IQS Research	Karl A. Corbett, Managing Partner, Sherpa Coaching
308 North Evergreen Road, #140	P O Box 417240
Louisville, KY USA 40243	Cincinnati, Ohio USA 45241
(502) 244-6600	(513) 232-0002,
sherbig@iqsresearch.com	kc@sherpacoaching.com

## Sherpa Executive Coaching Survey Sponsors



Sherpa Coaching is based in Cincinnati, Ohio, USA.

- § For managers and executives, Sherpa offers one-on-one coaching.
- § For leaderships groups and teams, Sherpa conducts workshops based on their university texts.
- § For coaches, Sherpa offers training and certification on campus at several major universities.

Custom programs are available on site. More information is available at [www.sherpacoaching.com](http://www.sherpacoaching.com)



**The University of Georgia**  
*Center for Continuing Education*

The University of Georgia Center for Continuing Education in Athens, Georgia, USA, provides programs and services which connect the University with lifelong learners throughout the world.

The Center designs, develops and delivers a variety of educational programs to meet the learning needs of a diverse population. With a luxury hotel, restaurants, meeting rooms and banquet facilities, The Center offers a dynamic learning environment for classes, conferences or special events. More information at [georgiacenter.uga.edu/is/coach](http://georgiacenter.uga.edu/is/coach).



Miami's Corporate & Community Institute, in West Chester, Ohio, USA, provides customized programs taught by a core group of instructors and consultants who are highly skilled educators, researchers and experts in their fields.

They leverage their business expertise and field-based research to expose participants to multiple perspectives and challenge their thinking on many levels. The result provides learners with knowledge, tools and techniques that can be applied back on-the-job to enhance productivity. Visit [regionals.muohio.edu/cc/](http://regionals.muohio.edu/cc/) for more.



Tandy Center for Executive Leadership at Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, Texas, USA, provides executives with training and development opportunities to help them advance their professional and leadership effectiveness.

The Center provides high-level training customized to client needs; consulting services that produce relevant results, and executive coaching to help achieve tactical goals.

---



Headquartered in Louisville, Kentucky, IQS Research delivers research on markets, customers, and employees, with studies designed to identify issues and opportunities, and map a path to success.

IQS Research collects and analyzes data to provide the information needed for reliable, fact-based decisions that lead to profitable outcomes. For customer satisfaction, employee feedback and market studies, visit [iqsresearch.com/services.htm](http://iqsresearch.com/services.htm). For the Center for Healthcare Reimbursement, go to [www.center.iqsresearch.com/](http://www.center.iqsresearch.com/)

---

# Index

---

---

- Accreditation for Training, 20
- Assessments in Coaching, 21
- Coach Training
  - Accreditation, 20
  - Certification, 18
  - Private Schools, 19
  - Universities, 19
- Coaching Skills Training, 15
- Credibility of Coaching, 6
- Definition of Executive Coaching, 5
- Demand for Coaching, 12
- Earnings, 17
- Executive Coaching
  - Assessments, 21
  - Benefits Of, 8
  - Certification, 18
  - Credibility, 6
  - Customer Satisfaction, 8
  - Definition, 5
  - Earnings, 17
  - Schools and Training, 20
  - Service Delivery, 13
  - Time Spent Coaching, 17
  - Value of, 6
- Executive Summary, 3
- How Does Coaching Help?, 8
- Impact on Business, 9
- Internal vs. External Coaching, 10
- Life Coaching, 4
- Participating companies, 26
- Participating universities, 26
- Processes for Coaching, 14
- Profession & Regulation, 23
- Return on Investment, 9
- Selecting a Coach, 11
- Service Delivery
  - Live versus Phone Coaching, 13
- Standards of Practice, 14
- Survey Methodology, 25
  - Media contact, 26
  - Technical contact, 26
  - Who Responds To The Survey?, 26
- Survey Sponsors
  - IQS Research, 28
  - Miami University, 27
  - Sherpa Coaching, 27
  - Texas Christian University, 28
  - University of Georgia, 27
- The Value of Coaching, 6
- Training
  - Coaching Skills, 15
  - For Executive Coaches, 18
  - Team Coaching, 15
- Value of Coaching, 6
- What Is Executive Coaching?, 5
- What Makes a Good Coach?, 7
- Who Gets A Coach, 11