

In the Business of Success

Bruce Elkin

Wanted:** Motivated individuals to get in on the ground floor of the fast growing new profession. Must be willing to earn \$30,000 to \$200,000 per year, be their own boss, set their own hours and place of work and have more fun than they've ever had. Must also be willing to help individuals rise above problems and obstacles and focus on realizing their wildest dreams. **And do so themselves!

Sound too good to be true? For thousands of new “coaches” it’s an exciting reality. Life/Career coaches. Personal success coaches. Retirement coaches. Couples coaches. Business and executive coaches. There’s even coaches (like me) who help people downshift to simpler, more fulfilling lives.

I started coaching in the early eighties. In 1986, I helped Sharon Wood become the first North American woman to climb Mount Everest, then make the transition from climber to motivational speaker. In 1987 I began working with Robert Fritz, author of the best selling *Path of Least Resistance* books and *Corporate Tides* and founder of the field of Structural Consulting.

Fritz’s approach wasn’t teaching or therapy. It was a broadly applicable system for helping individuals “create anything.” Based on recognizing deep patterns that prevent long-term success, and skills for creating new patterns that produce “results that *truly* matter,” Fritz’s techniques helped me successfully coach clients as diverse as single mom’s on welfare to aspiring professionals, entrepreneurs and Fortune 500 Executives.

Coaching as a profession can be traced back to former financial planner, Thomas Leonard, who in 1982 began coaching clients in “creating their future.” In 1992 he founded Coach U which now trains thousands coaches a year. Later Leonard started Coachville, an amazing resource centre for aspiring and practicing coaches. Leonard says “everyone wants more of something and coaching helps them get it.” However, he stresses, “no parenting or therapy” is

allowed in the coaching relationship. “Rather than the coach trying to “help” the client...the client uses the coach to set goals, grow, get a great life, make changes and make more money.”

My own clients have created financial independence, great relationships, consulting companies, micro-breweries, craft businesses. One woman created a water front dream cottage for under \$50,000. A surprising number have become coaches themselves.

So, what is coaching? It’s an intensive 1-to-1 relationship with a trained professional who helps you clarify what *most* matters in life and work, then organize action steps that produce those results quickly and easily. It’s more about *momentum* than motivation. A coach helps you sustain action by learning from setbacks, turning problems into opportunities and producing results even when you don’t *feel* like it.

Why is coaching different than therapy or counseling? Therapy focuses on problems, usually from the past, then tries to fix them. Coaching focuses on the future, on results and helps you create them. Ironically, as psychologist Carl Jung predicted, when you focus on what *truly* matters, neuroses tend to disappear. And, while career counseling *fits* what you want to what you can do, coaching helps you *stretch*, to reach beyond your grasp for what you *most* want. Your coach helps you bridge the gap between aspiration and reality with creativity, optimism, and persistence.

Who hires coaches? Mostly professionals and entrepreneurs, but large numbers of CEO’s, executives, creative people, and individuals in transition hire coaches. Leonard says coaching is gaining acceptance so rapidly that soon people won’t ask “What’s a coach?” they’ll ask “Who’s *your* coach?”

What can working with a coach do for you? Abraham Maslow wrote, “We are generally afraid to be that which we glimpse in our most perfect moments.” Coaches help turn those glimpses into visions. A coach is someone you look to hold you accountable for your dreams. Athletes and performers could never produce outstanding results without coaching.

“A coaches job,” says Cheryl Richardson, past-president of the International Coaching Federation, “is to find what clients most care about then get it to the *top* of their list.”

Coaches also help you see reality clearly and live with imperfections as you integrate life and work, decrease stress and anxiety, and seize the opportunities in crisis. Mostly they keep you focused, always putting, as Stephen Covey would say, “first things first.”

How can you make a career out of coaching? Start part time with friends and colleagues, then grow your practice to the size that suits the life you long for. Keep your day job and work over the phone in the evenings. While a few coaches become high paid advisors to a handful of business leaders, most create small, but lucrative practices that allow them to practice the life/work integration they preach. Before you start, there are three things all experts agree on.

1. *Get professional coach training.* You don’t need to take a long, expensive course, especially if you’re experienced in teaching, counseling, or human resources. But, coaching *is* different and even a basic course can help adapt your skills to the coaching context.

2. *Choose a niche you feel confident in.* A key factor in all helping profession is faith in the helper. Working from your strengths will inspire trust and confidence in your clients.

3. *Get a coach yourself.* It’s critical to experience the client’s perspective. A coach’s coach can help you set up a practice, develop marketing plans and be there to support you through the doubts and difficulties that accompany any new venture.

Since becoming a coach I’ve found my “path with heart.” I’m doing the writing I’ve always wanted to do. I’m healthier, more energetic and more relaxed. And, every day, I revel in the results my clients produce. When someone like Sharon Wood, says, “I couldn’t have made it to the top of Everest *or* my new profession without Bruce’s support,” I know I’ve achieved something great, that I am truly in the business of success.