

# The Pathways and Pitfalls of Personal Coaching

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## **1. What are we talking about?**

What is Personal Coaching? What is Life Coaching? Are they the same or different? And how are they different to say Executive or Business coaching? Perhaps a straightforward way to express to the purchaser how their service differs from a corporate coaching offer is to call their service Private Coaching, denoting a client is paying for the coaching services from their own pocket, as opposed to the company's coffers. However, it may cover many of the same areas.

## **2. Evolving Pathways**

In the next 5 years there will be a shake out of the personal coaching sector. It will no longer be sufficient for coaches to offer a general coaching service as the market becomes more crowded and buyers will become more sophisticated in their expectations of what a coaching programme involves. The projected figure for trained coaches by 2010 will be in the region of 20,000 (Goddard), the implication? For a while the supply of coaches may outweigh demand. However, as awareness of coaching spreads and prices become more affordable, demand will filter through to the mass-market sector. Market segmentation of high, middle and low end coaching with different pricing models and stratification will become apparent.

In an effort to differentiate themselves, coaches will benefit from developing niche areas which address different client needs, upon which they can develop a clearly delineated brand in a potentially 'me-too' market. Additionally, predicts Goddard, there will be a move towards groups of coaches joining together to market under one brand as a company. Meanwhile buyers will select coaches based on their particular area of expertise and experience together with an intuitive sense of whether they 'gel'.

## **3. Emerging niche coaching areas:**

- Managing Money
  - Wealth/Financial Intelligence coaching
  - Wealth/FI coaching with a spiritual twist
- Personal Development
  - Spiritual coaching
  - Stress busting
  - Work-life balance
  - Diet coaching
- Career coaching
- Marketing – for leaving the corporate world to start a businesses
  - Self-employed / entrepreneurial, small business coaching
  - Networking skills
- Creativity coaching
- Writing skills & getting published coaching
- Relationship coaching
  - 'Flirt' coaching and finding a partner
  - General relationship and communication skills
- Parents and teenagers /family coaching
- Retirement Coaching

- Technology / IT skills coaching
- Coaching tailored to women/men
- Public sector/non-commercial personal development coaching
- PR Coaching

The hottest propositions for personal coaching seem to be among cash-rich and time-poor professionals, and among the retired and parents of teenagers.

Our population is ageing. In 2001, 39% of men were aged over 45. This is forecast to grow to 44% in 2026. A similar trend is predicted for females; in 2001 41% of women were aged over 45 with an estimated growth to 47% by 2026. In addition, retirement is no longer associated with a 'slippers and pipe' lifestyle. For those with good health and healthy finances, retirement can spur radical bursts of activity including setting up in business, emigration and travel. Print magazines such as Saga and on-line portals such as Laterlife.com cater to an active and well-heeled 50+ market. Changing relationships with family members and retirement planning for financial security and health matters also offer scope.

The parent and teenage sector can be split into the market for coaching young people – although probably purchased by the parents, and that of the 'Parent as Coach' market; imparting coaching skills to parents to add to their toolbox of parenting skills.

Another sector of note in the coaching market is that alongside the growth in the numbers of coaches is a growing need for coaching trainers, mentors, supervisors, business development, marketing and technology experts. At the early stages of the formal emergence of this industry it is often the easiest and most lucrative money earner. Coaches need to invest their money wisely and only give their hard earned £££s to those who demonstrate they are building infrastructures for the future of the coaching industry, and require continual professional development if taking one of their coaching courses.

#### **4. Pitfalls**

- Confusion around what coaching means:
  - Is it all about goals & performance / bottom-line results?
  - Is it all about 'values' and emotions and spiritual growth?
  - Is spiritual / emotional growth also a 'result'?
- Everyone wants to become a coach instead of hire one!!!
- Failing to make coaching a concrete and well-defined service offering, whereby clients understand the benefits will lead to a limited market opportunity.
- Failure to articulate clearly how coaching differs from consulting and therapy and also where it may sometimes appear to overlap.
  - Especially important for those coaching the under 25s. A survey in Young Voice reports that 20% of young people have mental health problems. Among 12-25 year olds, 18% feel depressed 'often' and 11% have attempted suicide. (Goddard).
  - Coaches working in this sector need to be adept at handling highly charged levels of stress, behavioural problems, confidence and self-esteem, relationship and communication issues as well as academic matters.
- Unscrupulous 'fast-buck' coaches who give coaching a bad name.
- Disillusionment arising from high profile coaching 'failures'
- Demand for Private coaching sees more growth in lower income sectors than high income bands
  - Coaching loses its 'sexy' edge among cash-rich professionals and becomes less lucrative
- The next 'big thing' comes along and takes over ...

## **5. Future of Coaching**

Coaching at a holistic level is becoming a more appreciated proposition. Organisations such as Holistic Connections are already beginning to emerge. We interpret holistic coaching as helping clients to discover what is important to them in all areas of their lives and to build a balance that fits their vision. It is less likely to focus purely on results/performance/bottom line implications (although these will remain integral parts of the whole picture) and more likely to include emotional and spiritual factors; potentially an in-depth look at identity, base and place. In other words, who the client 'is' and what constitutes authentic self-expression, how they can create a supportive sense of 'home' and find their best-fit 'place' in the world - communities to contribute to and be nourished by. This trend creates potential for bridging the gap between the spiritual and the material – a recognition that they don't have to be mutually exclusive- you can be 'spiritual' and still want great shoes etc.!!

Whilst it is arguably easier to position an overtly holistic approach in the personal/private sector, even in the corporate sector, what begins as performance/results based coaching often develops into a more holistic look at the coachee's life after a few sessions, as life impacts on work and work impacts on life... so there is always a bottom line consideration, but possibly different ideas for now about how it can be achieved. 'Enlightened' employers have already recognised the benefit of employees gaining psychological congruence and fulfilment, and how that can help the individuals and teams perform better.

In general, research indicates the coaching industry is becoming more widely recognised and accepted, as it is increasingly promoted and trusted. The industry is also supported through the growing number of blue chip corporates who are now implementing large scale coaching programmes.

***The coaching phenomenon momentum is higher (45%), although a proportion (23%) believe it to be lower, while 23% regard it to be about the same.***<sup>1</sup> Recent research conducted by the Association for Coaching into the state of the Executive coaching corroborating these findings. Independent coaches, in particular, expect an increase in their income from coaching in the forthcoming year.

## **6. Checklist for success:**

- Personal/private coaches will need to develop multiple revenue streams with a palette of offerings, e.g. group as well as one-to-one coaching, plus workshops and trainings, media columns, print books and e-books, tapes and CDs.
- Many will move into corporate coaching to build and maintain the viability of their practice. Yet they will have to prove themselves credible providers.
- Successful coaches will have defined, and can clearly articulate their niche service offering(s). They will have high quality and well-presented marketing materials that reach their target markets.
- Unless they have outside income, coaches need to realise they are running a business, and need a professional infrastructure.
- This also means rigorous investment by the coaching industry into quality control processes such as supervision, certification and continuous professional development.
- Coaches will need support from like minded individuals to maintain the impetus for seeking new sources of high-disposable income / low currently fulfilled clients.
- A belief exists that there is no such thing as 'competition' in the coaching world. However, as more coaches enter the business, competition will increase. Groups of associate coaches will

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<sup>1</sup> **Coach to Coach Network (2003)**

form, both to pitch for work and to create more competitive buyer power for marketing and other needs.

- This means that instead of many individual coaching brands, a few superbrands may emerge – Goddard predicts there may be 5-10 strong coaching brands that dominate the coaching market in the next 5 years.
- Coaches who highly value their autonomy and who resist such developments will need other sources of income or an already well established brand to survive.
- Coaches will have to become evermore creative in order to address the challenges of a busier and more competitive emerging industry.

End