

# **Summary of Responses to Coaching Survey**

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**Survey Conducted: 2003**

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## OVERVIEW

### *Purpose.*

The purpose of our survey of business and executive coaches was to get a snapshot of the “state of the practice.” We were especially interested in the ways in which the training or educational background of coaches might affect their practice. The survey you completed is part of a multi-year, multi-study research project. We have also been investigating the content of coach training in university and non-university settings. Our eventual goal is to describe a taxonomy of coaching practices (i.e., styles or approaches to coaching) that maps coaching practices onto coaches’ educational background. We are interested in whether theories or models of behavioral change endorsed by a coach’s discipline will affect the way that the coach approaches clients and the coaching process.

### *Participants.*

480 coaches (43% male and 57% female) participated in our study. Of these 83 (17.1%) received their highest degree in I/O psychology, 100 (20.6%) in business or management, 69 (14.2%) in clinical or counseling psychology, and the rest (48%) in other areas including law, communication, nursing, social work, and a variety of other specialties. Throughout this report we will refer to these four groups as I/O psychologists, Clinical/Counseling psychologists, Business, and Miscellaneous. In cases where no differences between the two types of psychologists are evident, we will combine these categories and refer to them as Psychologists.

Across groups, the average age of coaches was 49 years, and the mean number of years of experience as a coach was 9 years, with Psychologists having the most experience (12.5 years), as compared to 6.7 years and 7 years for Business and Miscellaneous, respectively. Most (78%) of the coaches in our study were White/Caucasian, and 0.8%, 2%, and 3% were Black, Hispanic, and Asian, respectively. One hundred and ninety five (41%) of the coaches in our study provided 100% of their coaching in the US, while the rest of the respondents worked either both in the US and other countries, or in other countries exclusively. For example, coaches reported providing coaching in Switzerland, New Zealand, Japan, and Germany, among other.

26% of coaches reported coaching more than 200 people over the course of their coaching careers, with 21% coaching 20 – 50 persons, 20% coaching 50 – 100 persons and 20 % coaching 100 – 200 persons. The remaining 14% of coaches had worked with fewer than 20 persons. Most coaches in our survey were independent consultants in private practice, in organizations with 1 – 5 employees. This was true for I/O psychologists as well. However, I/O psychologists were different from the other groups in that 23% of I/O psychologists worked in large organizations (over 1000 employees).

### *Organization of the report.*

In the following sections, we report the responses of coaches to our survey items. In some cases, we compare responses by group (i.e., I/O psychologists, Clinical/Counseling psychologists,

Business, and Miscellaneous). Coaches who responded to our survey were assigned to a group based on the discipline in which they earned their highest degree.

## RESULTS

**Coaches Sex:** Psychologists were equally split between male and female. Business and Miscellaneous were more likely to be female (56% for business and 64% for miscellaneous).

**Credentials:** There were notable differences between the groups in their credentials. In all groups, more than 90% of coaches had some management experience. 35% of I/O psychologists and 52% of Clinical/Counseling psychologists were licensed. However, very few psychologists were certified coaches (13%) as compared to Business and Miscellaneous (53%). The professional association to which most coaches belonged were the International Coach Federation (52%) and the Society of Industrial/Organizational Psychology (22%). This varied by group, as only 6% of I/O psychologists are members of ICF, compared to the 39% for Clinical/Counseling psychologists, 81% of Business and 87% of Miscellaneous. In terms of formal education, most coaches had either a PhD (33%) or a Masters (32%), with 19% gaining a Bachelors degree.

**Professional liability insurance:** Most Psychologist do (56%) and most other (Business and Miscellaneous) coaches do not (62%) carry professional liability insurance.

**Number of clients:** Over 60% of coaches were working with fewer than 10 clients at the time of the survey. As compared to the other groups, I/O psychologists tended to report having had fewer clients over the course of their careers (20 – 50 people) than do Clinical/Counseling Psychologists (over 200), Business (50 – 100) and Miscellaneous (more than 200).

**Average number of visits with person being coached.** In general, I/O psychologists reported the fewest number of sessions with the person being coached (6-10 visits on average). Although the average number of sessions for Clinical/Counseling psychologists, Business, and Miscellaneous coaches was 11 – 20 visits, data indicate that the Miscellaneous group reported the highest average number of sessions per client.

**Frequency of meetings with individual being coached:** Non-psychologists tended to see their clients more frequently than did Psychologists. The Miscellaneous group reported seeing clients weekly, as compared to every other week for Business and monthly for Psychologists.

**Length of each session.** All groups reported spending one hour, on average, in their face to face meetings with the person being coached. Psychologists also reported spending less time at each session with their phone clients than did all others (30 minutes for Psychologists and 1 hour for Business and Miscellaneous).

**Client status:** For all groups, the most common client was a mid-level manager, vice president, or director. I/O psychologists tended to have entrepreneurs for clients less frequently than did all other groups. Psychologists were also more likely to work with CEOs; the average level in the organizational hierarchy of the person being coached was higher for Psychologists.

***Income from coaching:*** Coaching tended to represent a smaller proportion of total income for I/O psychologists than for other groups with 85% of I/O psychologist reporting that less than \_ of the income from coaching. This is in contrast to Business and Miscellaneous coaches where over 50% of coaches derived more than half of their income from coaching. To illustrate this point, only 4% of I/O psychologists reported getting 100% of their income from coaching, as contrasted to 25%, 27% and 34% of Counseling/Clinical psychologists, Business, and Miscellaneous.

***Fees:*** Typical hourly fees for coaching averaged \$200/hour in US dollars; \$230 in Australian dollars (approximately \$165 US), \$250 in Canadian dollars (approximately \$190 US), and \$190 Euros (approximately \$225 US).

***First contact:*** Compared to the other groups, I/O psychologists were more likely to be contacted by the human resources department. All other groups reported being more likely than I/O psychologist to first learn about clients' (the person being coached) needs from the client him or herself.

***Presenting issues:*** Psychologists (I/O and Clinical/Consulting psychologists) reported that Interpersonal Skills, Leadership, and Management Style were the most common issues for which individuals sought coaching. For non-psychologist coaches, the issues addressed most frequently were Communication, Leadership and Interpersonal Skills.

***Assessment tools:*** Not surprisingly, the most common assessment tool used by coaches from all disciplines was an interview with the person being coached. Psychologists were likely to also interview the supervisor and use a 360 assessment. Business and Miscellaneous coaches also reported interviewing the supervisor, but were less likely (than Psychologists) to use a 360 instrument and were more likely to report using a personality assessment. Based on responses to an open-ended question, the two most popular assessment tools used by our respondents were the Myer Briggs Type Indicator and different Behavior Style Assessment tools.

***Approach to coaching.*** Across groups, the two most common approaches to coaching were (1) goal setting and (2) facilitation or process oriented coaching. I/O psychologists were slightly more likely to use cognitive behavioral approaches than were the other groups. Non-psychologists were more likely to use neurolinguistic programming.

***Outcomes:*** All groups reported improved self-understanding or insight as the most common achievement of the person being coached. Other important outcomes were improved interpersonal skills. Business and Miscellaneous coaches were more likely than Psychologists to report improved communication skills for their clients.

***Satisfaction with coaching:*** Participant satisfaction with coaching outcomes and bosses' reports of behavior change was commonly evaluated by all groups. However, Psychologists were more likely than the other groups to assess clients' perceptions of goal attainment. Very few coaches, in any of the groups reported obtaining objective outcomes of coaching. Promotion (of the person being coached), objective business outcomes, and reduced customer or employee

complaints were the most commonly used objective assessment of coaching. Responses to open ended questions indicated that that a 360 appraisal at the end of the coaching contract was common as well.

***Respondents opinions:*** We provided our survey respondents the opportunity to comment on four open-ended questions at the end of our survey. The following are the top three or top four most popular themes that emerged in the responses to these questions:

***Q:*** What type of training or credentials do you think are most important for business or executive coaches?

- Certification through a coaching school program (such as ICF)
- Business experience
- Management experience

***Q:*** In your view, what is the biggest problem presently facing executive coaches?

- Unqualified people who falsely use the title of “coach”
- Unrecognized value of coaching/coach
- Misunderstanding what coaching is
- Lack of credibility

***Q:*** What sort of changes do you expect to see in the future with respect to executive coaching?

- Credentialing/liability will be more important
- Better understanding/awareness of coaching by clients
- Increase of internal coaching in organizations
- Increased use of coaching

***Q:*** Which 3 competencies are most essential to be an effective coach?

- Listening
- Business skills
- Communication skills
- Questioning skills

## **SUMMARY/CONCLUSIONS**

Results of our survey indicate some similarities and some differences in coaching practices based on the coach’s area of training. With respect to training, credentialing, and licensure, there are clear differences between psychologists and non-psychologists coaches. Furthermore, these differences in training appear to have at least some impact on the content of the coaching interventions (what issues are being addressed), the way coaching is conducted (time, number of sessions), and who the clients are (Psychologists coach more CEOs and non-Psychologists coach more entrepreneurs). What we cannot determine in any great detail, given the overview nature of our survey, is whether the theories and model of change adopted by coaches vary by discipline, or whether these differences – if they exist – affect coaches fundamental assumptions about the goals or nature of the coaching process. These are important topics for future research.

As for our own research program, we are continuing to identify the key knowledge, skills, and abilities that are the focus of university and non-university coach education. Further, we are interested in conducting in-depth interviews with 100 coaches, differing in background and training, about their experiences. We are particularly interested in whether what happens “behind closed doors” varies by discipline and training of the coach. We welcome inquiries from coaches who would be interested in such an interview.