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More executives turn to coaches to help them grow their businesses, deal with changes

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by [Joe Cogliano II](#)

DBJ Contributor

When he was having trouble getting marketing projects for his company off the ground, Robert Beck Jr. decided to seek some help.

The general manager of KSG Promotions and Engraving hired an executive coach, who he now works with on a weekly basis. As a result, for the first time in company history, K&S has done targeted direct marketing in Florida and Wisconsin.

According to Beck, having a coach allows him to get feedback -- from an outsider's perspective -- on what is going right or wrong, what should be the next step and how his goals have changed. Meeting regularly with his coach weekly forced him to stay prepared.

"It's almost like therapy," Beck said. "We've gotten some projects through that had been clogged in the pipeline. It's given me the focus to say, 'Let's get these done and put some processes in place to attack projects in the future.'"

Beck's story mirrors a trend that has been growing nationally in recent years. The International Coach Federation, which bills itself as the largest association of personal and business coaches in the world, now has more than 5,200 members in 32 countries. According to Executive Director Dan Martinage, membership has more than doubled over the past two years as more people seek to improve their businesses and careers.

As the overall coaching industry has grown, so has executive coaching, which came into its own about 10 years ago, as the dot-com boom produced new companies with young and inexperienced executives who never met a payroll or ran a company with more than a few employees. Human resource professionals and experienced executives seized the opportunity and started to do executive coaching.

Beck's coach, Colleen Mangeot, owns her own local coaching firm, La Vie Dansante Coaching International. She attributes some of the growth in her field to the disappearing stigma of executives looking weak when they seek out help.

"For some people it has become even more of a status symbol," she said.

And while consultants analyze a business and recommend changes, executive coaches take things a step further, meeting with their clients on a regular basis and helping them through the changes. Coaching costs can range from \$150 to \$250 an hour.

"I work with executives, business owners usually, to grow their business," Mangeot said. "And to do so in such a way where it's more fun and less stressful."

Dayton just starting to catch on

But while the concept of executive coaching has gained wide acceptance in California and major metropolitan areas, the Dayton area still is warming up to the idea.

Mangeot has been speaking to Rotary clubs since August to promote her business and the industry.

"When I ask who has heard of coaching, it's always less than half. Out of 50 or 100 people, it's usually just 10 or 15 who have heard of it. There's tremendous room for growth here in the area."

Linda Burrs, owner of Step up to Success!, said most of the growth in her business is happening with the addition of out-of-town clients.

"People here want to see what's happening in New York and D.C. first," she said. "Is this really working? What's the process? What's the payoff? How's this going to help my organization? How's this going to help me?"

Why do executives seek coaching?

According to **Burrs**, the coaching industry has grown as life for business people has gotten more fast-paced and complex. And while coaching is not just for executives, she thinks they are at the top of the list, looking for an objective point of view from outside the organization.

"As a CEO or high-level executive, how willing would you be to say that you have a flaw?" she said. "Some are a little hesitant about sharing frailties and weaknesses with those people they expect to look to them for guidance and leadership."

Jo McDermott, owner of Catalyst for Change Consulting, said the coaching industry also is growing because people are taking more responsibility for their own careers.

"Moving from company to company is not so unusual anymore," she said. "Your own bosses move around a lot so latching onto a mentor and keeping them for any amount of time is hard. People also seek coaching to improve or fix their career chances."

Who becomes a coach?

The typical executive coach has some corporate experience and has done training or teaching work. And most do training and coaching for a variety of people, in addition to their executive coaching work.

According to the International Coach Federation, about 15 percent of their members have passed accreditation while many are working toward ICF certification.

Cynthia Ronan, owner of local coaching firm TAP, fits the standard profile of an executive coach with her degree in psychology and master's in business and industrial management counseling. After working at Reynolds and Reynolds, she started out on her own about 18 months ago.

"I tend to work with people who have an entrepreneurial spirit," Ronan said. "Whether they're starting a business or have that kind of approach within a corporation."

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