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Business coaching starting to catch on

Locals pool resources to raise awareness in Dayton

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by [Joe Cogliano II](#)

DBJ Contributor

If you ask people to describe the image they have of a coach, many of the responses will be along the lines of a man with a clipboard in his hand and a whistle on a string around his neck screaming instructions to a group of athletes.

While that old stereotype still may be true in some instances, a different type of coach -- one wearing business attire -- is starting to permeate the ranks of the corporate world.

Worldwide, the professional coaching industry has exploded. The International Coach Federation, which bills itself as the largest association of personal and business coaches in the world, now has more than 7,400 members in 32 countries. According to federation officials, that number has almost tripled since 2000.

However, that enthusiasm hasn't caught on locally. Experts said while the demand for services has increased in Dayton, the area still lags the rest of the country. So to boost interest, a group of local coaches is pooling its resources to promote the industry and explain the role of coaching in business.

Dayton Coaches, a collection of professional coaches with their own independent practices, came together earlier this year to promote the industry. The group, which has five members, recently launched a Web site, daytoncoaches.org, and scheduled a series of mini workshops on Sept. 22.

Business coaches work with everyone in business from groups of salespeople who want to increase revenue to individual executives trying to be better leaders and all points in between.

"Coaching is very popular and well-known in the major cities and on the coasts, and it's not as well-known in the Midwest," said Bill Gaffney, a partner with Amaxa Group and one of the founding members of Dayton Coaches. "There are companies and people that certainly use coaches, but in general if you go to a Rotary or Kiwanis meeting -- both of which I have spoken at -- people think 'What's a coach? Does this have something to do with athletics?'"

"So we came together and put our heads together to see what we could do to raise the awareness of professional coaching in this area."

Gaffney said the Web site provides information about the coaching field as well as the coaches themselves. Besides promoting the industry, organizers hope those already familiar with coaching will use it as a resource.

"We want to keep them in the area," Gaffney said. "We prefer them not go to Columbus or New York or wherever."

Linda Burrs, president and principal consultant of Step up To Success!, also is a member of Dayton Coaches.

She said people and companies in Dayton are typically more conservative when it comes to trying new things in business, so they want proof something works before jumping on the bandwagon. And coaching hasn't been any different.

Besides making people aware that coaches are available locally, Burrs said Dayton Coaches was formed to explain the role of coaching in business.

"We are not counselors or consultants, we empower people to grow and change and to meet their goals, regardless of the industry," she said. "What I have seen is that coaching has started to catch on at the larger organizations, but small- and medium-size firms appear less likely to fully recognize coaching as a viable alternative to their other developmental programs, if they have any at all.

"I also think there is a misconception that coaching isn't needed as much in some of the industries that are more prominent in the Dayton area such as the manufacturing and service industries," she said.

According to **Burrs**, the industry is ripe for tremendous growth, especially as coaching becomes more accepted. And with greater workloads and fewer opportunities to climb the corporate ladder, those in the workforce are more in need of a skills tune-up.

"Not only do employees need to be more flexible, they need to be life learners," she said. "And leaders need to be more flexible and competent, not just intellectually, but emotionally. That means being more self-aware and managing themselves better."

Individual coaching sessions in the Dayton area typically run from about \$150 to more than \$350 an hour. Rate structures vary widely for coaching in groups.

A sign of good things to come?

In the past, many of Cynthia Ronan's executive clients have reached into their own pockets to pay for coaching sessions. But that has begun to change in the past two years as the field has become more accepted.

"People are definitely becoming more aware of coaching and more knowledgeable about the concept," said Ronan, the owner of TAP, a local coaching and organizational development firm. "(With) quite a few of my clients, recently, their companies have paid for it using their education or training funds."

Executives and business owners find coaching especially useful, she said, because they typically don't have peers that they can communicate with. Having an objective opinion from outside the organization -- and from someone with professional training -- can make all the difference in the world.

"They're expected to be strong enough not to have to reach out for help. The higher you get the more taboo it is to reach out to someone for support, and that's when you need it the most," Ronan said.

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