

Patrick Williams (MCC) and founder of Institute for Life Coach Training (formerly known as Therapist University) was featured in the May/June issue of *New Therapist*, a South African publication. The article entitled, *Hey, Therapist! Wanna Be a Coach?* had quotes from Pat and also Marcia Reynolds, President of the ICF. To get a copy, contact pat at info@LifeCoachTraining.com.

“Hey Therapist! Wanna be a coach?”

If you want to sleep easily at night, content with the way in which you’ve played the game, you’re probably a therapist. If you’d prefer to sleep comfortably in the knowledge that you’ve won the game, you may be better off as a coach. The coaching industry is growing by leaps and bounds. In this feature, we take a pulse on the coaching phenomenon and offer a guide to therapists who think coaching may be the way to make their practice more competitive.

By John Söderlund

“Work less and make more! Business owners, salespeople and entrepreneurs can increase profits, grow sales and be happy.”

Sound a little flippant or over the top for your more traditional psychotherapeutic inclinations? Its author, a coach advertising his services on the Internet, may well find your therapeutic stance a little stiff in its insistence on eschewing simple happiness and success as core ingredients in mental well-being.

Coaches, a new breed of motivational personal helpers and hand-holders, argue they have arrived, fortuitously, at a time when the world needs a more future-oriented, affirming approach to inspiring one’s clients.

“Personal coaching can make the difference between a life spent fulfilling the requirements of others and a life fulfilled,” trumpets another coach’s internet site.

But hang on. Isn’t that the difference therapists are supposed to be making, you retort?

It may be, depending on the style of work of the therapist concerned, says Marcia Reynolds, President of the International Coach Federation (ICF), a professional body aimed at representing their interests and keeping an eye on the training and accreditation of coaches. But that doesn’t mean that the work of the average therapist is the same as that of the typical coach.

What is a coach?

That’s a tough question, given that its practitioners range from business consultants to personal motivational pick-me-uppers. Typically, though, they offer their services as assistants and guides, operating over the telephone, the Internet and in person.

Reynolds prefers to talk about the differences between the clients who consult therapists and those who head for coaches than the differences in the methods they each use.

“Most clients that seek and are successful with coaching are those that are ready to take action, whether for their business or their lives. Coaching attracts professionals, executives, and entrepreneurs who are looking to make immediate progress,” she explains.

“And it attracts people who are eager to make decisions and take the steps to move their careers and lives to the next level. Whereas therapy may help a person understand why, coaching helps them determine what’s next,” she adds.

“Coaching is based on helping clients discover their own answers by asking powerful questions, providing perspective, stimulating creative thought, and exploring alternatives to problem-solving.”

Patrick Williams, President of Therapist University, a training institution aimed at therapists wanting to make the move into coaching, maintains that the easiest distinction is that traditional therapy is for healing a hurtful event or dysfunctional behavior which prevents the person from being able to live fully and completely. By contrast coaching is primarily “for persons who have a relatively healthy life but want more.”

Williams says therapy and coaching use similar techniques, like deep listening, creating a safe space, rapport, and conversation, but coaching is more action oriented and is designed as a “co-creative partnership”. Therapy is hierarchical, differentiating an expert and a patient, whereas coaching is more of an egalitarian partnership, in which “the coach is the guide, the motivator, the possibility thinker for the client”, Williams explains.

Where did coaching as a separate discipline originate?

Coaching has its roots in organizational psychology and the personal growth movement of the sixties, says Reynolds. The organizational psychology of the fifties was aimed at designing strategies for enhancing leadership and performance. The personal growth movement had much more to do with enhancing the lives of individuals in more than just their work lives. The two movements came together in the eighties, she says, when business people were looking to use behavioral wisdom to ensure their success in the cut and thrust of global capitalism. But this burned out in the nineties, leaving a focus on fulfillment through a balanced life.

“So now, whether a person performs ‘personal’ coaching or ‘professional’ coaching, the work generally combines how to be successful with maintaining a high quality of life,” she says.

The rise of coaching itself as a distinct profession came from the effective marketing of the coaching schools, primarily Coach University and Coaches Training Institute, Reynolds believes, and then from the publicity generated by the activities of the ICF.

“However, if there wasn’t a need for coaching, the growth would not be so phenomenal,” she adds.

So, how phenomenal is the growth of the industry?

The short answer is that it's good, but it's coming off a low base. The ICF has some 2,200 members in 30 countries, with the biggest groupings centered in the U.S.A., Australia, Japan, the U.K. and Northern Europe. But not all coaches are registered with the ICF, notes Williams. He estimates there are between 2,000 and 4,000 coaches working in the U.S.A. and some 10,000 total around the world.

If the methods of coaching are close to those of therapy and the growth of coaching so impressive, what's to stop therapists from coaching?

Nothing. Regulation of the coaching industry is in its infancy and almost anyone could set up shop as a coach, concedes Reynolds.

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"That's why we established a credentialing program for coaches, and a school accreditation program for coach training schools...To date, we are tracking any talk of state regulation, and have formed alliances with state legislators, but not much has materialized in these areas," Reynolds explains.

Is coaching not just a watered down form of therapy?

Reynolds responds with equanimity. The watchword for a coach should be appropriate referral, she insists.

"We work in partnership, not at odds. This being the case, coaching does work at the surface level, only going below to help increase self-awareness of thoughts and behaviors in the present moment. I have been trained as a counselor, and I worked in a mental hospital for five years. Although there are similarities to many therapeutic modalities, coaching is a distinct technology that is being refined every year as more and more trained professionals enter the field."

Why do coaches coach?

While coaching may be a little recognized discipline in the bigger scheme of things, the benefits it offers to its practitioners are hard to ignore. Williams lists them as:

- Offering a market many times the size of the psychotherapy market;

- Higher fees;
- High-functioning and motivated long-term clients;
- Clients who pay in full and up-front;
- Lower overheads and complete portability;
- Freedom to proceed as you and your client choose;
- No more ethical dilemmas over diagnosis and confidentiality;
- Decreased liability concerns.

Coaches can expect to earn between \$100 and \$200 per hour, usually paid in monthly, up-front payments if clients buy the idea of an ongoing relationship with their coach, says Williams.

Liability concerns are lower because the nature of the client base is less biased towards “fragile” clients if onward referrals to psychotherapists are made appropriately. Furthermore, because there is no regulatory body overseeing the behavior of coaches and because diagnosis is not a feature of coaching, the chances of any legal suits are negligible, he notes. Many training schools recommend that 12-20 clients at one time is an optimum client load, says Williams. But several coaches carry case-loads of 30 clients, with most mixing some individual coaching with group coaching and live training or consultation as an additional service.

How do therapists become accredited coaches?

Training from an accredited trainer is the only way to receive certification. Training in coaching, like the methods of its practice, is offered in abundance on the Internet. Owing to its technologically slick methods of dissemination, it’s relatively easily accessible but not cheap.

There are 18 identified Coach Training Programs. Courses designed specifically for therapists wanting to make the switch from pure therapy to coaching are probably the best bet if you have a basic counseling or therapeutic history. The ICF lists accredited trainers on its web site for comparative purposes (see www.coachfederation.org).

Much of the coaching training is conducted over the internet, the telephone or by mail, making training accessible to almost anyone with a telecommunications link. But you would be well advised, in these early stages of the coaching industry, to get a qualification from a body which is likely to be around when coaching is more established.

How do therapists become non-accredited coaches?

While legislation exists in many countries preventing one from calling oneself a psychotherapist or even therapist, the use of the title “coach” is not regulated. So, setting up shop as a coach without any credentials is as easy as saying “coach.”

However, moves to ensure accreditation of coaches by the ICF could mean you will be less likely to receive referrals if the consumers of coaching wise up to accreditation. However, as it stands, you may even register as a member of the ICF and be listed on its referral database (for a fee) without having undergone any training as a coach. The reputation you earn may, at this point, be as powerful a rubber stamp of coaches as

accreditation. The ICF suggests people seeking coaches interview a few and check out references before hiring one.

Who represents coaches worldwide?

The International Coach Federation (ICF) is the only international body representing all coaching industry groups around the world, says Reynolds. The Professional Coaches and Mentors Association (PCMA) is a large state organization operating in California.

Specialized coaching organizations exist for coaches in specific areas, such as associations for business or personal coaches.

Japan and Australia have created their own coach associations as part of the federation of the ICF.

Who polices coaches?

Nobody, although the ICF publishes an ethical code and is in talks with state legislators about the future regulation of coaches. Coaches are essentially their own guardians, with the ICF offering advice for public consumption about consulting a coach.

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