



Wednesday, August 06, 2008

Business

Print Page

Personal coaches help clients soar

Learn how to be a coach at free Aug. 14 event

By Dawn Strawnne
Special to the Advance

Wednesday, August 6, 2008 2:08 PM PDT

A nonprofit executive board in Novato suffered from burnout. A Bel Marin Keys tech company was so busy putting out their clients' "fires," they couldn't build their business. A manager of a small retail store on Grant Avenue was losing her self-confidence because her job description didn't match with what the owner told her to do. A brilliant local doctor wanted to become a national expert but wasn't sure how to go about marketing herself.

These are just a few examples of the challenges that four business coaches from Novato addressed in the past year.

Now that businesses face daunting challenges due to the economy, Karen Kimsey-House, CEO and Co-Founder of the Coaches Training Institute (CTI) in San Rafael expects CTI's Novato-based graduates to be more in demand than ever.

"There's never a better time to have an executive coach than when times are tough," said Kimsey-House. "It's important to become proactive, nimble and resourceful in business. Coaching can help you figure out exactly what you and your staff are capable of doing and see what's possible, instead of giving in to scarcity and fear." With that in mind, CTI will hold a free seminar on coaching skills for managers on Aug. 14.

One of CTI's graduates, Mary Reynolds Thompson, coaches people on writing projects from her home office in Novato and at "Write the Damn Book" workshops. She says that good coaching focuses on what's working.

"It's an incredibly positive and life-affirming process, as opposed to one that's about fixing what's wrong."

Thompson's clients have hired her to help them with everything from case studies and marketing plans to memoirs and novels.

"When the business people who I've coached write about their work, they find that they understand it at a whole new level and sometimes, even understand themselves in a whole new way."

Coaching increases confidence according to KSG Transform Incorporated's Jennifer Kelley, who lives and works in Novato.

"Not only does it help identify and remove obstacles to success and performance, but it also helps people clarify their goals and outcomes. Also, coaching enhances communication with others. As issues come up, coaching can help people approach them in different ways and work through them to positive results."

Akasha Halsey, who specializes in coaching women in transition says business is not just about the bottom line anymore.

"In order to have your business be successful, everybody needs to be onboard."

In Halsey's business, Life Force Coaching, she often coaches business women to explore and get clear about the vision for their business, career and life.

"Be sure everybody knows what your vision is. Also find out about the visions of the people in your business. Then look at how to harness that."

Among common business issues, coaches can also help with clarifying goals and action plans, time management, asking for a raise, procrastination, being organized, interacting with others, improving presentation skills, being more creative, having a more positive impact, decision making, setting priorities, assertiveness and more.

It's not unusual for personal goals, spirituality and relationships to enter into a business coaching session. "Our clients set the agenda," said Halsey. "We are there to support and encourage them on their journey."

Coaching isn't always just one-on-one. An ineffective and inefficient team is a huge drain on resources, said Diane Boivie of Catalyst Coaching & Training who helps business groups and organizations.

"If your team doesn't get the job done and no one's having fun, it's a killer for business. But a team that really knows how to collaborate, communicate, build and maintain trust, and has the tools, processes and procedures in place, outperforms the competition and in today's business environment, you need to do that."

Some companies bring in staff from the Coaches Training Institute to train their own internal coaches, who often work in human resources and at executive-level positions.

"The Internal Co-Active Coaching program is working well at many firms, from small businesses to Fortune 500 companies," said Kimsey-House. "We train key personnel in coaching skills so they can use them on a day-to-day basis within the company. It can make a big impact on everything from productivity to employee morale."

Another option for executives and business owners is the Leadership Program at CTI, said Novato resident and CTI Vice President of Global Leadership Development Sabrina Roblin. Consisting of four residential retreats and projects over a 10-month period, the Leadership

Program is designed to uncover, deepen and build on a person's natural strengths as a leader. It fosters the development of an international community of peers and leaders who grow and learn together through adventure-based activities, lively discussions, interactive exercises, physical challenges and ongoing feedback.

"CTI Leadership training helps business people be the kind of leader that people line up to follow," said Roblin. "When you are truly being yourself, not the leader you think you should be, people are drawn to that."

For those looking for a new career, executive and life coaching is becoming an increasingly popular career choice because of the independence offered and salary potential. Coaches make anywhere from \$200 to \$1,200 per client each month based on how much time is scheduled and the level of coaching.

Coaching sessions are usually done by phone in three 40-minute sessions per month; or an hour, twice a month. Many coaches offer free sample sessions.

It's always advisable to check the training and background of a coach, because anyone can say they are one. Those who graduate with a certificate from the Coaches Training Institute often go on to receive their coaching credentials from the prestigious International Coach Federation (ICF).

This can be accomplished in as little as 18 months.

- For those who would like to learn more about coaching skills for managers, a free seminar will be held Thursday, Aug. 14 from 7 p.m. until 8:30 p.m. at the Coaches Training Institute, 4000 Civic Center Drive, Ste. 500 in San Rafael. Call (415) 451-6000 to reserve a spot, as seating is limited.



SHEILA MASSON/ADVANCE Executive coaching can help businesses through challenging financial times according to (L to R) Mary Reynolds Thompson, Sabrina Roblin, Karen Kimsey-House, Jennifer Kelley, Diane Boivie and Akasha Halsey.