

Business Coaching Provides ROI for Companies

It's a new year and, like many people, business leaders are also resolving to make some personal and professional improvements.

A global look at company management trends reveals that an increasing number of executives are going the extra mile to up their A games, particularly in a shaky economy. Memphis is no exception. Locally as well as internationally, the executive coaching industry is thriving.

"Business leaders are high performers, and most of them want to stay that way. A coach can help them look at themselves objectively, capitalize on their strengths and focus on their weaknesses," said Bill Burtch, Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR) and Professional Certified Coach (PCC). "And sometimes they're so high up in an organization, they don't get that kind of candid feedback."

Burtch is the president and founder of Memphis-based Harmony Coaching & Consulting, a full-service management consultancy focusing in the areas of executive/team coaching, professional development training and human resource consulting. He also is one of the founders of the Memphis Coaches Network (MCN), an organization of 20 trained professional and personal coaches that aims to promote coaching in the Mid-South.

Burtch said all levels of Memphis professionals seek assistance from MCN members, including executive job-seekers who want to polish their interviewing skills, people who want to get promoted, people in new positions who want to excel and people who feel like their careers are in a rut.

"We often see people get promoted because of their technical skills," he said. "They excel at their jobs, so people automatically assume they'll be a good manager. But it's an entirely different set of competencies that need to be developed."



Bill Burtch is executive coach, president and founder of Harmony Coaching & Consulting and co-founder of Memphis Coaches Network.

According to the International Coach Federation, the world's largest accrediting coaching organization, 41,300 professional coaches worldwide were actively in business at the end of 2012, compared to 2,100 in 1999. The ICF 2012 Global Coaching Study, which polled more than 12,000 coaches from 117 nations, also reported that the majority of study participants reported an increase in fees, hours, clients and revenues during 2012. In addition, ICF adds approximately 2,000 new members a year.

"The biggest change in my business came in 2008; during the recession, my clients almost doubled," said [Jeanne Gray Carr](#), Certified Business Coach (CBC) and managing partner of Team Trek Coaching Group, as well as co-founder of Memphis Coaches Network. "During that time, organizations had to take the employees they had and make them better because they could not afford to let them go."

Other economically driven motivators include increased pressures to perform at higher levels, broadening responsibilities of management and more strategic, competitive business goals that require higher productivity levels.

Specific return-on-investment statistics vary, but most available studies, including the most recent one published in the December 2013 edition of the American Journal of Positive Psychology, agree that there is a quantifiable, positive ROI on an executive coaching investment.

"We operate on a money-back guarantee and do an assessment at the front and back end of the process to track improvements," Carr said. "Primarily, coaching looks forward and we help professionals envision the type of person they want to be tomorrow. There's always a gap. I help people put a plan together to navigate that gap."

Some organizations strive to create a coaching culture by hiring an internal coach. One example is Methodist Le Bonheur Healthcare, where [Lisa Baker](#) is a development specialist responsible for creating and facilitating leadership classes and coaching leaders on an as-needed basis.

She's always handling the misconception that "getting sent to see the coach" means an employee is doing something wrong. In fact, it means just the opposite, she said. The company wouldn't invest time in coaching if they didn't see leadership potential in that person.

"Coaching is a good thing. It's for development, and we could all use a little help," she said. "I would personally love to have a coach. You've got a neutral party who's just trying to help you figure things out and find your own way. It's a very positive experience."