

Living According to Gifts and Values

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Is it possible to have a financially and personally rewarding career and fulfilling personal life? Many working people dream of achieving this elusive combination but don't know how to accomplish it. Instead of being a dream, however, it may be obtainable through the use of professional coaching.

Professional coaching, also known as business coaching, has been called a distinctly 90s profession. It uses techniques found in psychology, career counseling, motivational training, as well as spiritual concepts in helping people live according to their values and natural gifts.

The concept was founded in the late 1980s by Salt Lake City financial planner Thomas J. Leonard. He shifted the focus of his practice when he realized his clients were as interested in discussing personal matters as they were tax shelters and T bills.

The business climate also seemed ripe for coaching. Many Americans were wondering "what now" after losing jobs through downsizing while some aging Baby Boomers wanted to change careers or wanted more from life than work.

Today, it's estimated there are 2,000 coaches administering to some 20,000 international clients. People have used professional coaching to increase incomes, jump-start old careers, begin businesses, while also finding more time for family and leisure activities.

"Coaching is action-oriented, not issue-oriented," said Jennifer Corbin, a coach from Park Forest. Psychotherapy, for instance, deals with past events and how they affect lives today. In coaching, the focus is on developing skills needed in creating a desirable present and future.

Corbin was one of the first students at Coach University, or Coach U, as it is called, the virtual institution Leonard established in 1992 for the training of coaches. The two-year program is taught almost exclusively on-line and through telecourses. Corbin is now one of it's five full-time faculty members.

A professional coach since 1996, Corbin describes her typical client as small business owner between 40 and 50 years old, for whom life is good but could be better. "People will hire a coach for a specific reason. They want more of something, be it energy, time or money. There's a sense there's more to life," she said. Generally, women seeking coaching more frequently than men but Corbin said, in her practice, males slightly outnumber females.

Kevin, who asked that his real name not be used, is one of Corbin's clients. He is a Chicago journalist with a weekly television program. In February 1996, he read a magazine article on coaching and thought it would be an interesting topic for his show.

He never used the idea, but Kevin was drawn to coaching. "I thought there were areas where my goals needed to be focused. I'm just a person who thought he could accomplish more if I was better organized," he said. "I was satisfied with my life but I thought it was necessary to

kick it up to the next level. It made me think what is life besides TV." Kevin has been working with Corbin since July.

The price for coaching can cost up to \$500 for four weekly sessions, although the industry standard is \$250. Corbin said her rates fluctuate depending on the client. Some coaches will work for free, depending on a client's circumstances. Sessions are usually conducted over the telephone, although some people prefer face-to-face meetings. "Coaching over the phone works very well. It can make it easier to discuss some issues. I think it takes the relationship to a deeper level," said Corbin. A computer and email access are helpful for exchanging information but aren't necessary.

Individual coaching techniques vary. Some coaches perform a battery of personality tests while others