

Nice little earner

Meyler Campbell's first annual survey asked business coaches a range of probing questions – from fees and motivation to age and status. Henry Marsden reveals the results

EXCLUSIVE

Coaches earning £200k a year, working three days a week, living in the country, plenty of time with the kids, lifestyle satisfaction: we've all heard the rumours, but do these coaches really exist?

Business coach training provider Meyler Campbell has carried out years of research into coaching and was conscious of a lack of reliable, independent information about the business of coaching. How much do coaches charge? Is it safe for a professional to leave a job they hate or don't find fulfilling? Can they really earn enough to live comfortably and, if so, how long does it take?

This year we took a deep breath and, in our first annual survey, commissioned independent research to try to find some answers to these questions.

It's a deep breath, because we also wanted to put coach training to a tough test. For example, do our own and other training organisations' graduates earn enough to

make the investment worthwhile?

First, the rumour: it's true – partly. Yes, there are business coaches out there earning £250,000 a year – but they're working their tails off to do it. There are also plenty who work flexibly, maybe three days a week, travelling up from their homes in the country. But their incomes are much lower, in the £50,000-£100,000 a year range. Typically, it takes at least two years to reach those levels.

So if you're thinking of taking the plunge, our advice is: don't. It's far better to work four days a week with a secure income, and spend the fifth day building up a practice. It's also a good idea to begin by working as an associate with a reputable coaching company. They have the burden of winning

the business; you just deliver the excellent coaching, while building your own practice at the same time.

So what does business coaching today look like? Paint a picture and you have a broad and varied canvas. Here is an overview of some of the survey's key findings:

Fees These range from £100 to £700 an hour. There appear to be two business models. One group of coaches (the majority) charges lower fees (£200 an hour, on average) and offers mostly or solely coaching. The other, smaller group (which contains most of Meyler Campbell's graduates) charges much higher fees, averaging £500 an hour, but mixes this with other work as part of a portfolio career.

Services Some 98 per cent of coaches offer face-to-face meetings (unlike in the US, where phone coaching predominates), while 70 per cent offer 360-degree feedback and psychometrics. **Age** Business coaches are typically aged between 40 and 60, with 45 per cent aged

40-49, a third aged 50-59, and 11 per cent over 60.

Motivation and satisfaction Some 87 per cent of respondents felt their objectives for becoming a coach had been met – a stark contrast with the many surveys reporting job dissatisfaction in other fields. The 13 per cent of coaches who were less satisfied cited not enough business as the main reason.

Work status Some 63 per cent of coaches were employed when they went into coaching; 28 per cent were self-employed. And they're senior, too: 43 per cent of employed coaches were at board director level; 42 per cent were senior managers.

Training One of the surprises in the survey was that there are at least 43 types of coaching training provider, ranging from specialist to university programmes to independent consultants with coaching as one of their many training course offerings. Personal recommendations and training methods used were the most important reason for choosing a particular course.

Supervision Seventy-seven per cent of coaches undergo some form of supervision. Eighty-nine per cent of these say they believe it to be good value for money (although almost 40 per cent is provided on a no-fee basis).

This, combined with the few respondents with supervision training – 16 per cent – compared with the 30 per cent currently offering supervision, raises potential alarm bells. We will be keeping a close eye on this in our next survey.

Fees paid for supervision average £100-£200 an hour, but there is evidence of elite (or at least, more highly paid) supervisors emerging, as a smaller but significant number are paid £300-£400 plus an hour.

Accreditation Some 65 per cent of respondents were members of a coaching accreditation body although no single dominant name appeared, with respondents naming 10 different organisations. The most frequently cited were the Association for Coaching (31 per cent), the International Coach Federation (24 per cent) and the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (20 per

cent).

Emerging trends

Finally, we asked what respondents considered to be the key emerging trends in coaching. More than 200 trends were mentioned, including:

- organisations creating coaching panels;
- commoditisation at the lower end/market segmentation/polarisation;
- more emphasis on psychological models;
- coaching integrated in training;
- coaching becoming better understood;
- a desire to measure coaches;
- increased sophistication of buyers;
- increasing professionalism;
- demand continuing to rise;
- accreditation becoming more important;
- business focus becoming increasingly important.

Next steps

Our first survey has focused on the suppliers of coaching – people seeking

to work as independent or in-house coaches. In our next survey, we plan to build on this while tackling the demand side, helping buyers of coaching and coaching strategists with a similar level of detail.

Areas we wish to dig deeper into next year include the structure of fee arrangements beyond the hourly rate, tracking the evolution of fees over time and market trends.

We also want to identify trends in coach selection along with the business aspects from both the buyer's and coaching clients' perspectives.

The business of coaching

is extraordinarily dynamic and we look forward to tracking changes over the next year – and reporting back on our findings. ■

Meyler Campbell's inaugural annual business coaching survey was conducted by Jeremy Coyle Associates early this year. Some 115 coaches were asked how they offered their services, how they were trained, what they charged, whether they were supervised and accredited, and what they saw as emerging trends.

Henry Marsden is a faculty member at Meyler Campbell. To participate in or make suggestions for next year's survey or to read the report, email henrymarsden@meylercampbell.com