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GOLD	EURO	TSX	TSX VE	TSX 60	DOW	S&P 500	NASDAQ
\$424.50 US +0.60	\$1.0671 -0.34	9,619.07 -11.83	1,872.36 -13.92	533.83 -0.18	10,488.46 +37.32	1,181.39 +5.27	1,999.32 +8.25

Help behind the scenes

Business coaches help managers polish leadership skills and find the fortitude to meet challenges

BY STACEY ASH
RECORD STAFF

SMALL BUSINESS

Business managers looking to polish their skills are taking a page from the world of sports. The professional coach is starting to rival the briefcase and BlackBerry as a must-have accessory for success.

"Sometimes when you're in small business you've got no one to talk to," says Art Schooley of Kitchener who operates a consulting business that's called The Personal Coach.

"You may be having a bit of a confidence crisis, so to have someone to dump on, to use as a sounding board... can be very beneficial."

Much like the strategists behind the benches of professional sports teams, business coaches are hired to deliver support, motivation and fresh ideas.

"Sometimes folks are already on the right track, but they just need reinforcement," Schooley says.

Coaching is all about providing perspective, observes Ken Zelazny, a former Com Dev International manager who holds the franchise for Action International Business Coaching in Cambridge.

"Sometimes they need that outside push, an outside influence that they can't get from inside," Zelazny says.

"What they're looking for is a different perspective for their business."

To get that perspective, many businesses pay coaches anywhere from a few hundred dollars for a one-time assessment to more than \$50,000 for weekly face-to-face meetings that continue for a year or more.

The payoff? More clients, higher profits, more effective teamwork and an improved life-work balance, Schooley says.

"For some, instead of the business running them, they are running the business," he says.

Schooley's business focuses almost exclusively on coaching small businesses in the financial sector, such as insurance brokers and investment services.

Since opening in January 2002, The Personal Coach has grown to include four consultants and a Montreal office, where Schooley has a bilingual associate. He hopes to grow the company across Canada.

"I think the whole coaching thing is growing, but in financial services, we're going to continue to see that growth," he says.

Large insurance and finance corporations used to provide coaching to employees and representatives internally, but that has changed in the past decade, partly due to cost-cutting, says Schooley, an employee of Manulife Financial for more than 34 years before striking out on his own.

"It's a problem, but it provides an opportunity," he says.

Zelazny says he has several clients in the high-tech sector, thanks to his previous experience in the field. But he has tried to keep his client base broad, working with companies ranging from manufacturers to restaurants.

More important than the type or size of business is the willingness of the owners to



Ken Zelazny, a former Com Dev International manager, now works as a business coach in Cambridge. He is a franchisee with Action International Business Coaching.

make changes, Zelazny says. "They have to be coachable, they have to have the want and the will to make changes in their lives," he says.

In his experience, Zelazny says, there are three stumbling blocks that many businesses need help hurdling: time, team and money.

A business coach can provide advice that helps free up time and money, as well as building more effective teams.

Zelazny recommends a minimum one-year commitment from his clients, believing that meaningful corporate change doesn't happen quickly.

"If you're looking for someone to make it happen overnight, you probably shouldn't

be talking to me," Zelazny says. "There is no magic wand."

Like all Action International franchisees, he speaks regularly with an accountability coach from the Australia-based organization to help keep his own business on track.

Com Dev's late founder Val O'Donovan was one of his most important mentors, he adds.

Bill Smith says part of the strength of his coaching service is allowing clients to be the subject matter experts while he helps them reach their goals.

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Q&A

We asked Ken Zelazny of Action International Business Coaching in Cambridge.

Q. Who are your typical coaching clients?

A. "We typically work with business owners and the senior management team, because strategies need to be implemented from the top down."

Coaches: Demand could grow with employment crunch

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An ordained minister with degrees in theology and counselling, Smith manages the Kitchener office of Knightsbridge Career Management, a spinoff of the KPMG accounting firm that has offices across Canada.

There was a time, Smith says, when coaching came with a stigma — it was considered a form of discipline or remedial training for employees who weren't making the grade.

But today, a growing number of managers seek out coaches to help them do their jobs better or climb the corporate ladder, he says.

Many corporations are also seeing the value in using outside expertise to help rising employees adapt to new challenges.



Bill Smith of Knightsbridge Career Management says major firms are increasingly hiring coaches to advise managers.

"Most of the coaching we do is systemic, where a person has been promoted into a leadership position," Smith says.

"When a company hires and it doesn't work out, there is a cost. The more senior position, the higher the cost."

Often it's more cost effective to "fix" employees than replace them, he says.

While the private sector has a longer history of hiring outside coaches, there has been a recent surge of public-sector interest, Smith says.

Jim Clemmer, of The Clemmer Group, a Kitchener-based management consultant, keynote speaker and retreat leader, is cautious about the new cachet associated with coaching.

"The word coaching is being used a lot more today, but it's also being misused in a lot of instances," he says.

"In some organizations, it has become a euphemism for discipline... in other cases, managers have really just made a few feeble attempts at conversation and called it coaching."

The author of five books on leadership and professional development, Clemmer says he is often approached

by executives seeking advice.

In his experience, team coaching does more for a business than working with an individual.

"It's more effective, because you're changing the behaviour of the team or the organization," he says.

With many baby boomers approaching retirement age, Clemmer says he expects coaching will be increasingly important to companies hoping to retain experienced staff.

"Unless something very significant changes, we are looking at a major employment crunch, especially in terms of management and leadership roles," Clemmer says.

"My prediction is that we're going to see a real battle for talent."

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