

# Coaching in the workplace

The demands of life in the 21st century are many and varied. Juggling a successful career with a family life while also trying to occasionally do things for yourself can be fairly stressful at times.

Setting goals and accomplishing them can deliver considerable rewards, but sometimes it's hard to ensure you remain on track.

What you could be looking for, without even knowing it, is a coach to encourage and facilitate your aims.

Coaching is a relatively new industry in Australia, and still fairly unknown in some sectors. It's a service used by individuals and companies throughout the country, but no statistics are available on how many coaches there really are in Australia.

Estimates put the number of coaches world-wide at about 20,000, and more and more people are choosing to either become coaches or enlist their services as time goes on.

Andrew Price is managing director of Customcall, an outbound telemarketing company. The company was established by Price and a partner around five and a half years ago, and has been utilising coaches for several years.

Initially they began meeting with a management consultant, who helped the two directors establish what their particular skills were, and to restructure their roles in the company based on that knowledge.

From there, they moved on to working with coaches, and have achieved considerable success in doing so.

"One thing coaches are very good at doing is getting you to set measurable and accountable goals,



and making you work towards those," Price said.

"Individuals have a habit of saying, this is what I want to do, but then not necessarily doing it. Coaches try and keep you on track."

Michelle Duval is the director of coaching company Equilibrio, and is also an executive coach herself.

She has been working with Customcall, among other clients, for around two and a half years, and Price says she has helped the company achieve several key goals.

An early goal was to make BRW magazine's BRW Fast 100, something which was achieved in 2000 when Customcall entered the list as 6th fastest growing company (last year they were named as 3rd fastest growing company).

Another goal for Price was to win the award of Australian young direct marketer of the year – a title achieved in June 2000.

Duval says there are essentially three main areas of coaching – corporate, executive and personal, life coaching.

She agrees that there has been a huge surge in the popularity of coaching in recent times, particularly executive coaching, and believes a lot of the interest can be related back to the loneliness which often exists for chief executives.

"CEOs are reporting to a board, and then have a general manager and staff below them. Where do they go to get the support they need? To coaching, coaching fills that gap," Duval said.

Steve Maconachie runs Management Mentor Coaching, a business he started in 1999 after



Coaching can help you navigate your way through 21st century business.

coming away from a CEO position at a media company. Looking to move into semi-retirement but still work around three days a week, Maconachie "stumbled" into coaching.

"I thought I was doing consulting work for businesses, particularly in the strategic planning area, but I soon found that what I was really doing was coaching," he said.

Both Duval and Maconachie are keen to point out that the one thing coaching is not is advisory.

"A coach will never advise or instruct. A coach will support an individual as they come to their own decisions, and help them to find the best tools to make those decisions. A consultant will advise," Duval said.

Essentially, coaches meet with groups or individuals and provide another viewpoint to what is being done in a company.

"It's a relationship not about telling, but about encouraging, nurturing, clarifying and examining," Maconachie said.

"The coach, more than anything, brings a level of enquiry. They provide another set of eyes, and that's the thing people tend to miss in business. Business tends to be so politicised that often you can't go to people for an objective examination because there are too many agendas. A coach's only interest is in serving the client."

Maconachie believes another reason for the increase in popularity of business coaching has been the change in the way we do business.

*"Coaches try and keep you on track" Andrew Price*

"I think the need for business coaching has really developed in the 90s as the management styles used in the 80s and 90s have been seen to be lacking and the rapid change in the business environment throughout the 90s has demanded a much more time effective and efficient approach to business management. In the past you've been able to get things wrong and go back to remedy them. Coaching is about using whatever resources you can to get it right the first time," he said.

And the benefits which result from coaching are many.

"Our business has got better - remarkably so," says Price.

"We have achieved some significant recognition in the industry since we started working with coaches."

Duval believes the HR departments of businesses will become 95 per cent in-house coaching divisions in the next five to seven years.

"Apart from the measurable benefits to the bottom line of increased productivity, revenue, staff retention and staff succession, some of the more soft benefits that executives being coached gain are balance, stress management, happiness, fulfilment, satisfaction, and being able to find the support and tools to bring people and heart back to business," she said.