

Coaching shows it can deliver a competitive edge

Quantitative and qualitative data support the view that it is worth the investment

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COACHING has received much media attention in recent years as it continues to grow in popularity — both among those enlisting the services of a coach and those wishing to pursue a career in the profession. Sceptics, however, continue to point to the fact that not enough hard evidence exists to prove that coaching can deliver the results it lays claim to. Happily, this scenario is changing.

Recent months have seen new research emerging from the International Coach Federation (ICF), the leading professional coaching organisation in the world, as well as from South Africa, which together provide quantitative and qualitative data that support the view that coaching is worth the investment.

More importantly, the studies are showing that coaching works in the African context — and not just for business executives in the US and Europe.

Leading the charge in a bid to prove the efficacy of the practice is the ICF's recently released Global Client Study, carried out by independent researchers PricewaterhouseCoopers and the Association Resource Centre, and released this February.

According to the study, 88,6% of coaching clients in SA were "very satisfied" with their coaching experience, and a further 100% said they would repeat the coaching process if given the chance.

This overwhelmingly positive response — from people who have experienced coaching first hand — confirms that coaching does indeed have a marked and measurable impact on most people who enlist the services of a professional coach.

Interestingly, the study revealed that a high percentage (39,5%) of coaching clients in South Africa have a PhD or Masters degree — and that the majority are between the ages of 36 and 45.

Dianne Brennan, president of the ICF, says the organisation is filling a void in research with this latest study by demonstrating the return on investment and power of professional coaching from the client's perspective.

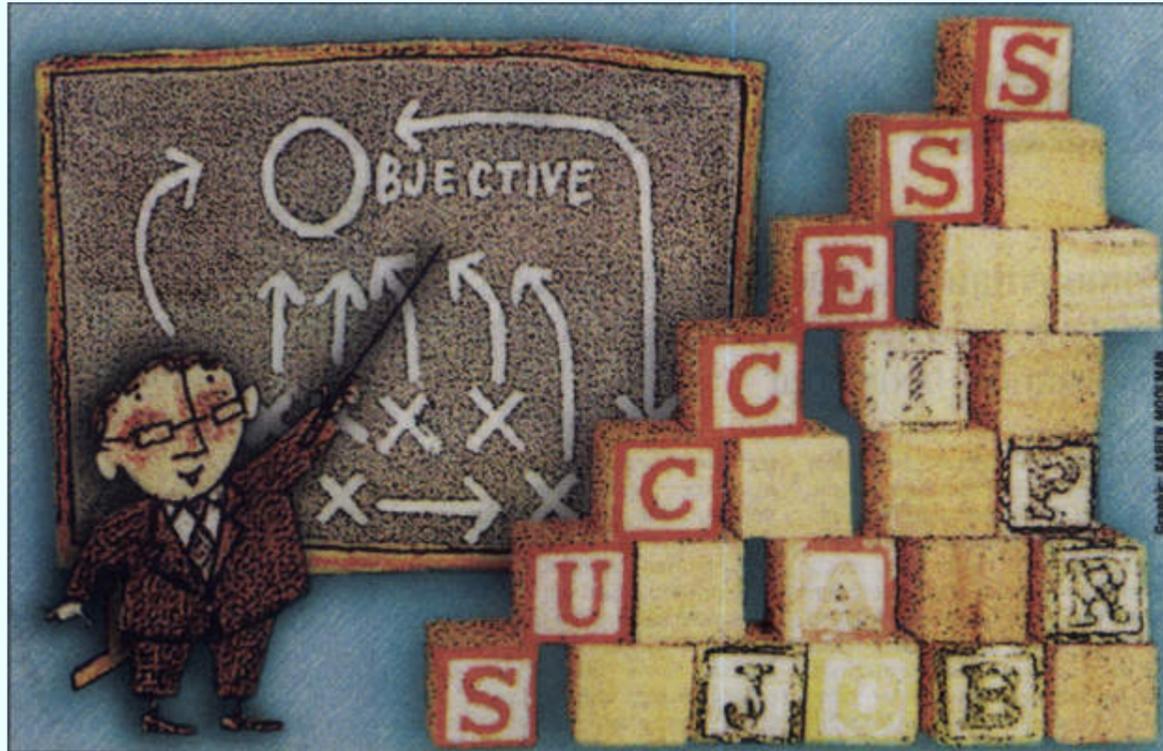
"We know that coaching works. Now we want to build on the individual cases that have been documented and share the results of this global study with the public to demonstrate this."

But while the ICF study proves that coaching works for individuals, more evidence is needed to show that it can work for entire organisations too.

A case study doing just that was recently completed by Duncan Harrison as part of his MBA requirements at the UCT Graduate School of Business late last year.

Harrison conducted a survey to measure the effects of a coaching intervention at Toyota Tsusho Africa's Automotive division in Malawi — and the results weigh heavily in favour of the profession.

According to the study, Toyota Tsusho Africa has adopted integral coaching techniques to enhance



leadership and streamline operations.

Results from Harrison's study, which used quantitative and qualitative techniques during pre and post-coaching periods, show that the coaching intervention has delivered the desired effects at its Malawian operations, at least.

It found that Toyota Malawi observed a massive 92% increase in economic value added after the coaching intervention as well as a 35% improvement in the productivity of its Service Division. A massive 82% of respondents felt that the coaching process had improved their division's productivity and 73% reported that the intervention had improved management effectiveness.

What these results show — although on a micro scale — is that coaching is a highly effective means of boosting company performance and that it even has a positive impact on bottom line.

Within the current context of increased competition for market share and difficult economic conditions, firms would do well to follow Toyota Tsusho Africa's lead and adopt coaching interventions to make their organisations more efficient at every level.

Dealing with a rapidly changing business environment and increasing uncertainty requires that competitive companies address change management at the level of individuals, and not just the company structures and processes that govern employees on an operational level.

Integral coaching is proving to be a

Studies are showing that coaching works in the African context

powerful intervention in this instance precisely because it does not reduce employees to titles and job descriptions, but rather understands that they are multifaceted beings with

unique needs.

It takes a holistic approach to personal and professional development that allows each individual to arrive at a deeper understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, fears and goals. It addresses the cognitive, emotional, physical and spiritual aspects of a person so that real and lasting growth can take place.

At a time when businesses need to get the most out of their employees, more should perhaps consider implementing cross-company integral coaching programmes to gain the competitive edge.

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