

The \$1.5bn global business coaching industry takes off in SA

By JANINE EVERSON
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Feted by many and bitterly criticised by others, life coaching remains a little understood phenomenon.

But love it or hate it, there can be no doubt that coaching is gaining a firm foothold in the world of business. According to a new global survey from the International Coach Federation (ICF), a cautious estimate puts the number of coaches working worldwide at 30 000 and the revenue generated by

the coaching industry at an impressive \$1.5 billion.

ICF president Kay Cannon said: "Society is increasingly recognising that a coaching relationship is worth both the commitment of time and the financial investment. This is clearly illustrated by the revenue generated worldwide from the coaching profession."

The ICF is a non-profit individual membership organisation formed by professionals worldwide who practise business and personal coaching.

The independent survey,

carried out by the PricewaterhouseCoopers International Survey Unit (ISU) in 2006, is the first of its kind and has helped to provide a definitive global baseline to use in defining and understanding what is a fairly new profession.

Nearly 6 000 coaches across 73 countries, including South Africa, the UK, United States and Australia took part.

The key findings of the research shows that the US remains the dominant market for coaching with just over 50% of respondents coming from

that country, reflecting the importance of this market in the development of the industry.

Other highlights include the revelation that the average annual earning power of coaches is \$50 510 and that coaching clients are professionals from 38 to 45 years old.

The study also reveals figures relevant to the role gender plays within coaching (68.7% of coaches are female) as well as education levels (the average coach is 46-55 years old and 53% of coaches have an advanced

level of education such as a masters degree or a PhD).

The fact that South Africa participated in this groundbreaking survey is significant.

The response rate of SA coaches to the survey was the highest of any country taking part at 58.1%.

SA has seen its own explosion of coaching with, for example, a proliferation of programmes and courses on offer for people interested in becoming coaches.

The Centre for Coaching at the UCT Graduate School of

Business alone doubled the number of such courses it offers in 2007 and now runs courses in our three main cities.

However, there is a strong need to formalise the profession, which would include the introduction of accreditation procedures and qualifications to improve reliability and standards. The country's participation in the ICF survey is an important step in this regard.

That we get it right is vital. The importance of coaching as a tool to help us sustain and build on South Africa's change

processes cannot be underestimated.

There is strong evidence that coaching can boost the performance of leaders and manage change within organisations. It is able to play a key role in dealing with some of the challenges of transformation and diversity management in corporate South Africa.

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