

**Personal coaches train clients how to score career goals**

**Sharlene Azam**

Life Writer

Lying on her tummy, on her living room floor, Karen Schaffer flips through to the M's in the yellow pages. She runs a tentative finger down the side of the list of marketing consultants.

"I need someone to help me structure my life and help me figure out all the things I'm going to do. I know who I want to be, I just don't know exactly how to get there," she says.

To "get there" - achieve her career objectives - Schaffer is seeking the assistance of a personal coach. Once strictly for athletes or executives, personal coaches are now marketing their skills to average people who want professional help setting and achieving their goals.

At 28, Schaffer is the author of two books, *Hire Power* and *The Job Of Your Life* (both Prentice-Hall). This makes her seem an unlikely candidate for coaching.

"In my books, I encourage people to find their passion and to do what they love," she says, flopping on the couch.

"Finding my passion was the easy part for me. I know what I want to do. I have so many ideas for talk shows, newspaper columns.

"I just need some direction on how to get those things off the ground," she says, pulling out a spiral notebook and jotting down a few names and numbers of marketing consultants.

Unlike the enormous marketing and consulting industry available to assist companies, the personal coaching business is small. Made up of a handful of 30-somethings who have sprung from the belly of marketing companies, these young people are busy launching themselves into business.

While they will help just about anybody, many of the clients are from their peer group, people who are anxious to fast-track up the corporate ladder or simply to find a little structure as they travel from contract to contract.

"I start by discussing what they want and getting a snapshot of what has been

happening in their lives in the last six months," say Sheila Goldgrab, a personal coach in Toronto.

"Mostly I do a personality inventory, so I can understand who they are and they can understand more about themselves. Then, we'll identify the results that they want to see in three months."

When Lisa Humer, an accountant in Vancouver, wanted to see results, she called personal coach Gina Mollicone Long of Goddess Concepts.

"When Lisa came to me, she told me she wanted to become a partner in an accounting firm," Mollicone Long says.

"The first thing I did was to ask her a series of questions, so that we could figure out her values and principles and then see how those supported her big picture goals.

"What we figured out is that her goal was not to be a partner in an accounting firm. Becoming a partner is more the measure. The goal is to bring in a certain amount of new business. For Lisa to achieve that goal, we picked five strategies that would make that happen. Those strategies are actionable, measurable and sustainable."

Humer adds: "The stuff that Gina gave me is very simplistic, which is not a bad thing because it means it's all do-able. To bring in new business, Gina suggested that I add one new person a month to my networking circle. This would be a lawyer or someone like that who can refer clients to me.

"We then decided how to do that. One way would be to join a professional association where I can meet lawyers."

When asked why she didn't take the more traditional route of seeking advice from a mentor, Humer says: "I have mentors who help me with personal development, but that's quite different from someone who can help identify specific tools and strategize about business.

"I wouldn't say that what Gina did for me was in any way mentoring. In fact, I know I could have created this plan on my own, but for me it comes back to not being able to pick my focus and not having the time to put it all down in a plan. It's the same reason why people hire an accountant to do their taxes."

Planning and setting goals has become so important it is now being taught in schools.

"The new standardized curriculum that has been introduced at the Grade 9 level has a component called Choices In Action. It is a formal program to

help students with goal-setting," says Monica Preiner, a teacher at Mayfield Secondary School in Brampton.

"Goal-setting is probably one of the largest things we have always done with kids. The difference is that now every student will have a teacher adviser who will formally sit down with students and help them write their goals down.

"We'll then identify the skills that they need to achieve those goals and help them develop those."

Fear not - for those who won't benefit from the new curriculum, personal coaches are at your disposal.

"People often hire a coach because they want something very important to them to happen, but they feel that life gets in the way. A weekly meeting helps keep them on track with their plan," Goldgrab says. "And it makes them accountable. Who does that for people?"

However, only a lucky handful can afford the cost of having their own personal guide and cheering section.

"I charge \$150 per hour for individual coaching," Mollicone Long says.

Goldgrab says she asks for "a commitment of three months upfront, which is about \$1,200."

While the fee at \$150 is fairly standard, coaches are not required to undergo any particular regime of standardized training.

"The International Coaches Federation, located in New Mexico, certifies training schools and coaches; they don't train, though," says Goldgrab, who has had her own personal coaching business for the past three years.

"My designation as a Professional Certified Coach is from them. The process required that I send in a package outlining the work I've done, which was evaluated by a jury of three. That's it.

"My work experience as a coach with KPMG, an international coaching firm, and with the Canadian Film and Television Producers Association, and also a thesis on mentoring helped me to learn that I love to coach, so that's why I started to do it."

Mollicone Long left her job as a brand manager with Molson Breweries to start her coaching company a year ago.

"I have a degree in engineering, so I approach things logically. Also, I've been coaching all my life. I started coaching gymnastics when I was 15 and teaching swimming when I was 16. Right now, I coach a girl's soccer team. I've always been involved with things that make a difference in people's lives."

Finding someone who will make a difference in her life is exactly what Schaffer realizes she needs.

"I'm open to being coached because I believe we go further when we are coached. My dreams are really big. I can't do it alone. If you think you can do it yourself, you're missing the point; there's a reason why the greatest athletes have coaches."

#### ILLUSTRATION

RICK MADONIK / TORONTO STAR / COACH SEARCH: Author Karen Schaffer, 28, leafs through phone books looking for professional help.

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