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Coaches help clarify career goals

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BODY:

There was a time when most people who found a stable job that paid reasonably well stuck with it until retirement. They didn't ask themselves such questions as: "Do I really enjoy what I'm doing?" or "Does this job allow me to express myself?"

But these days, employees are likely to demand much more from their work.

"More people are less concerned with making money and more concerned with balancing their lives," said Brian Howe of Conyers, who includes career coaching as one of the specialties of his business, ThinkTank Coaching. "And they're even willing to take a pay cut for a better quality of life."

But some people who are dissatisfied with their careers aren't clear about what exactly they want to do about it.

Career coaching, a relatively new discipline that has developed over the past decade or so, can be just the boost needed to turn workers in the right direction.

"Career coaching can be a lot of different things," said Augusta Horsey Nash, an Atlanta-based master certified coach who does executive personal coaching, including career coaching.

"It can be a valuable guide to help you choose or change careers. It's a lot about defining what you want, getting clear about it," she said. "There is in each of us a knowing of where we fit, but sometimes external circumstances make us doubt that knowing."

Career coaching differs from counseling or therapy in that it is action-oriented. Howe describes it this way:

"Let's say you want to learn to ride a bike," he said. "A consultant will tell you everything about the bike. A therapist will talk with you about what, in your past, is preventing you from riding the bike. A coach will put you on the bike, give you a push, and you learn to ride the bike."

Methods of coaching can be as varied as the coaches themselves, so it's important to interview several to find a good fit.

Stacey Mayo, who's been coaching for nine years, says she works on "the whole person."

"I help them identify their ideal career, or help create the career that ideally suits them," said Mayo, who is based in Atlanta.

"But we also work on what they do that gets in their own way and help set them up for success. I try to help them get through the fears and blocks, so they can create a great career and a great life."

Nash, a career coach since 1998, uses a tool called the Birkman questionnaire in her practice --- a tool that she says "illuminates the client's personal operating style."

"The questionnaire is done online in about 30 minutes," she said. "And people are always amazed --- they say, 'How did it know all this about me? ' "

Once she has the results, she helps clients interpret and use the data.

"My kind of coaching is, basically, you're fine," she said. "You just might need to become aware of your choices and become more conscious of what you want. The coach helps give you another perspective and helps [to motivate] you to action. Sometimes you need someone to call you on things, or cheer you on."

Kristi Lucariello, who is based in Buford, works only with women in her practice.

"My passion is really in helping women," she said. "We look at choices, beliefs, patterns that may be self-sabotaging --- what's the pattern and how do we change it? That's the key piece."

Sometimes that involves homework.

"I'll give assignments," Lucariello said. "I'll assign something like having them research six companies they're interested in; or interview someone in their field of interest."

Challenging the client by asking questions is one method Howe uses.

"Usually, they're not real sure what they want; they only know they're suffering," Howe said.

"I ask a lot of questions to get them to think who they are, what they're doing and why."

When needed, he also uses an assessment test, Profiles International, "to find out a client's strengths."

Fees for coaching can vary, as can the way fees are assessed, but generally you can expect to pay a monthly fee of \$350 and up for three to four sessions a month. Many coaches offer a complimentary first session, a kind of get-to-know-you discussion to see

if client and coach are compatible. Many coaches do most, if not all, of their sessions by phone rather than in person.

Lucariello has her clients "prepay" for a minimum of four to six sessions, which they can schedule and use as they see fit.

"Some I've coached for three years; I'm almost part of their board of directors," she said with a laugh.

"Others I see for three or six months and never see again."

Jennifer Pounds of Atlanta worked with Mayo for about a year while she was in the process of changing careers.

Pounds said the coaching was invaluable.

"I was working with a software company, but I was really unhappy," she said.

"Working with Stacey, I came to realize I'm much more a people person, not a machine person. So it made sense that I wouldn't be happy in a software company."

Pounds said Mayo then worked with her to create a job that suited her abilities and interests. Now Pounds has her own company called Frog, The Atlanta-Paris Connection.

"I do French [language] translation and interpretation, and I lead immersion trips to France four to five times a year," she said.

"It's really so much fun! I just love what I do."

GRAPHIC: Photo: Consultations with a career coach eventually resulted in Jennifer Pounds' forming her own company. / J.B. REED / Staff; Photo: "It's a lot about defining what you want, getting clear about it," says Atlanta-based master certified coach Augusta Horsey Nash about the growing trend of career coaching. / JEAN SHIFRIN / Staff; Graphic: COACHES' QUALIFICATIONS

Qualifications for career coaching can vary. Many coaches are certified through intensive training programs such as Coach U or through the International Coach Federation, a nonprofit association of professional business and personal coaches. Its local chapter is the Georgia Coach Association.

For a list of certified career coaches in the area, check the Georgia Coach Association's Web site, www.gacoaches.com.

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