

## Team spirit

More executives and small business owners are turning to professional coaches to help solve what ails them

BY DEVIN WILSON

**B**ob Fenton was two years into his new career selling real estate with Green Keefe in Belfast when he reached a dead-end. The difficulties of breaking into the business were getting the better of him; he couldn't figure out how to solve the problem, and he struggled to make a living. He shared his plight with friends and was eventually referred to Nancy Lubin, who runs a business called Coach Associates in Camden. Lubin is a professional coach, a person who works one-on-one with clients to help them improve their business and personal lives. Fenton, who calls himself a "born cynic," was skeptical, unsure exactly what a professional coach was and even less convinced she'd be able to help. Still, something had to change, so he gave it a try.

Two-and-a-half years later, Fenton says his business is thriving and he's met or exceeded every goal he's set since he hired Lubin. During sessions, he and Lubin worked to improve all aspects of his life by defining Fenton's personal values as well as his business goals. As a result, Fenton says he's been able to develop a solid business plan that works; he's also more organized and structured, takes more pride in his appearance, and knows how to prioritize. "The changes I made may seem insignificant, but they were monumental," Fenton says. "My wife still thinks [Lubin's] a quack, but that's not the case at all."

Leading professional coaches in Maine say that over the last five years the business has quickly established itself in the state and that it's poised to continue growing at a rapid pace. The Coaches Alliance of Maine (CAM), which promotes the ethical standards created by the International Coaching Federation (ICF), the world's largest association of coaches and the de facto regulatory body of the profession, has about 30 coaches involved in the organization. Lubin says this is a significant increase from just six years ago, when she knew of fewer than five coaches in the state. Throw in internal coaches at companies and people working outside CAM, and she says the total is likely closer to 100.

Filomena Day, CAM's president and a

coach based in Lewiston, says the emergence of coaching in Maine follows a nationwide growth in the business, which includes coaches with all kinds of specializations. There are millionaire coaches, positive body image coaches, retirement and adult transition coaches, spiritual coaches and life purpose coaches, to name but a few. "More programs are being introduced for coach training [nationally] and there are more criteria for certifying coaching," she says. "I would say the coaching profession is growing because of need. The need was there first."

There are more than 100 coach training schools across the country, fewer than 10 of which are accredited by the ICF. Day says that in an unlicensed profession like coaching, rigorous standards and certification help in establishing it as a legitimate business. Today there are more than 4,000 ICF certified coaches working worldwide.

While skeptics remain, conversations with coaches — and the clients who use them — show that at least for some, coaching can change lives and improve how they do business. "Not everybody needs a coach," says Day, but she says that almost everybody would likely benefit from one. "All the best performers have a coach. There's a reason for that — people who are nurtured and developed succeed to their highest potential."

### Lighting the path

In simplest terms, coaching combines aspects of sports coaching, business consulting, psychotherapy, a best friend, cheerleading and a solid dose of positive nagging. At its core is the belief that the client already has the skills, resources and creativity necessary to make changes — the coach's job is to show



*Game plan: Nancy Lubin, a professional coach from Camden, goes one-on-one with a client*

him how to use the skills to his advantage while keeping him focused and clapping for him along the way.

An experienced coach will have gone through hundreds of hours of coaching training and will likely have some form of certification, usually through the ICF. Almost all coaching is done over the phone in sessions that last 30-45 minutes, three or four times a month. Private clients generally pay between \$200 and \$500 a month for the coaching services, while corporate clients can pay up to three times that amount. Clients typically sign on for three to six months at a time.

Although people working in professions such as therapy, human resources and leadership consulting had been using coaching methods for years — and still do — it wasn't until the late 1980s and early 1990s that coaching as a term, and a profession, caught on. Many practitioners credit Thomas Leonard, a financial-planner-turned-coach, for jump-starting the industry when he founded CoachU in 1992 because he felt there was critical need for a standardized form of coach training. (Leonard was also a co-founder of the ICF.) The classroom-without-walls school is now the largest coach training company in

# Tough love, anyone?

## Ten signs you might be ready for coaching

**P**rofessional coaching took off during the 1990s and continues to grow rapidly across the nation, including Maine. Its basic purpose is to help people improve their business and personal lives through frequent, intensive coaching sessions, conducted most often over the phone. Generally, coaches say, the people who hire them are psychologically healthy and reasonably, if not very, successful. They commonly turn to a coach because they feel stuck, frustrated, stressed out and ready to make a change, often with the idea of improving their business.

Not sure if you need a coach? If one or all of these characteristics apply, coaches say you may be a likely candidate:

- You feel stressed out and overwhelmed by your work and can't seem to find a way to keep up with the demands of your business.
- Your work is rewarding financially but does not leave you personally satisfied.
- You are preparing to start a new career and aren't entirely sure it's the right decision.
- Your business is making money, but you would like to find a way to take it to the next level.
- You have a difficult time communicating with colleagues and are frequently misunderstood.
- You would like to improve your leadership skills.
- You want to be able to solve current problems faster and have fewer problems in the future.
- You want to make fewer mistakes in your business and personal life.
- You want to be more effective and influential in your relationships with colleagues, friends and family.
- You would like to find a way to use your professional skills toward making money and improving your community and the world around you.

*Devin Wilson*

the world, churning out hundreds of coaches a year with more than 5,000 students and graduates located in more than 36 countries. The school, which charges \$4,300 for a degree that takes about two years to obtain, trains the coaches using weekly conference-call classes, online exercises and written and oral tests. Other schools, like the Coaches Training Institute (CTI), train their coaches using a series of in-person weekend workshops that cost \$900 each and are held in cities throughout the United States.

Ames, who worked as a therapist before training at CoachU, says coaching has a unique position in the helping industry. "You can't go to an attorney, or therapist, or psychiatrist to get what you can get from a coach," she says. "As a therapist I felt like an archeologist digging around in the past. Now I'm no longer a shrink, I'm an enlarger."

Day, who also trained at CoachU, uses a bicycle metaphor to illustrate these differences. She says a client would go to a consultant if she simply wanted to be told which was the best bike for her and why. If the client wanted to find out why she was afraid of riding the bike, she'd talk to a therapist to address the fear. "But if

you want to get on that bike and plan a trip, the coach will help you create the map," she says. "A coach will shine the flashlight on the path when you're in the dark and won't let you forget why you're on that path."

### Engaging in an "outsourced partnership"

Lubin, a CTI graduate, says clients will get the quickest and best results when matched with the right coach for their needs. With so many business-related coaches out there — real estate coaching, executive coaching, corporate organization coaching, communication coaching and small business coaching — she says odds are good that potential clients can find the right coach for their particular business concerns.

For example, Lubin says small business owners could benefit from using a coach both because it allows them to talk to someone outside the company and because it can save money. "What happens when you're a really small business [owner] and you don't want to talk to your employee about the growth and change in your business?" she

says. "A coach is a great way for business owner to get some help and input without making an investment in another fulltime employee. It's an outsourced partnership."

Beth Newlands Campbell, senior vice president of operations at Hannaford Bros. in Scarborough, found the right fit almost by accident when she hired a coach more than two years ago to help her with public speaking. "I was looking for someone to be the random person in the audience to give me feedback," she says. "At the time I wasn't in hot pursuit of a coach. But as I got to know her I realized it was adding value to my life and how I do business. She came with a skill set that was way beyond public speaking."

Newlands Campbell says it was helpful that her coach wasn't an expert in the grocery business or in corporate behavior, because it provided her with a fresh perspective on the work she does and how she

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Filomena Day, president of the Coaches Alliance of Maine

does it. "She can push me and ask questions that I might not normally ask," Newlands Campbell says. "She helps me hear the things I might not want to hear, but that I know could be true."

Newlands Campbell also says the intensity of the sessions makes them worth the money. "It's a great expenditure," she says. "I can go through a bunch of training programs and they can add some value, but individual work sorting out real life issues really helps. It takes the theoretical and puts some meat on it."

Newlands Campbell says her coaching work has helped her improve both her work and personal life. "I don't think you can totally separate the two," she says. "I don't have a work person and a home person. I'm a mom at work. And I'm a working mom. I'm sure [coaching] helped me all around."

Fenton, who uses coach Lubin less often now that his real estate business is going well, says he also found boundaries between professional and personal improvement disappeared soon after coaching started. "It's holistic," he says. "It's like fixing a car that has a flat tire and is also in need of a tune-up. If you just do the tune-up, it's not going to run as well as if you fix the tire, too."

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