A Survey of Executive Coaching Practices in New Zealand

Ian Brooks, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand,
Sarah Wright, University of Canterbury Christchurch, New Zealand

Contact Email ian.brooks@canterbury.ac.nz

Abstract

Executive coaching is a rapidly growing form of organisation development intervention, and one which is receiving increasing attention in the management and psychology literature. This study reports on the state of the practice of executive coaching in New Zealand, about which little is currently known. Fifty-nine executive coaches responded to a survey that gathered data on the demographics of coaches; their backgrounds, qualifications and training; their coaching method; and aspects of their practice, including typical fees charged, number of client sessions, method of marketing, ethical standards and professional insurance. Conclusions are drawn from the data and suggestions for future research are made.

Key words: executive coaching, executive coaches, coaching literature, executive development, coaching research

Introduction

Executive coaching has experienced rapid growth over the last decade and is now firmly regarded as a mainstream management development practice overseas and in New Zealand. (Wall Street Journal, 2002; Management, 2004a and 2004b). For an intervention as widespread as executive coaching, it is ironic that there is no agreed-upon definition of what the term means (Brotman, Liberi, & Wasylyshyn, 1998; Kilburg, 1996). Kilburg, whose definition we use as the basis for this paper, describes executive coaching as:

… a helping relationship between a client who has managerial authority and responsibility in an organization and a consultant who uses a wide variety of behavioural techniques and methods to help the client achieve a mutually identified set of goals to improve his or her professional performance and personal satisfaction and, consequently, to improve the effectiveness of the client’s organization within a formally defined coaching agreement. (Kilburg, 2000, p. 67)

The history of executive coaching is difficult to track (Kampa-Kokesch and Anderson, 2001), but it appears that the term executive coaching entered business usage in the late 1980s (Tobias, 1996). In an analysis of coaching using a product/service lifecycle model, Maher and Pomerantz (2003) suggest that coaching moved from the introduction phase to the growth phase in the early 1990s with the establishment of specialist coaching-training institutions in the U.S.A. and the publication of articles on coaching in mainstream business journals. There are conflicting views as to whether the market for coaching is still increasing or not, but Maher and Pomerantz (2003) suggest that coaching has now entered the maturity phase in the U.S. The market is becoming saturated, price competition is increasing and buyers of the
service are becoming more discerning. Academic research has lagged behind, as it sometimes
does with management trends, but has picked up in the last five or six years (Grant &
Cavanagh, 2004).

In their review of the history of coaching, Grant and Cavanagh (2004) argue that the
coaching industry has reached a key point in its maturation. They suggest that coaching can
either continue as a generic service industry with pseudo-credentialing (for example, the
International Coaching Federation; ICF) and the use of proprietary coaching systems, or it can
move towards becoming a respected cross-disciplinary profession with a solid research base.
The latter will only come about if there is rigorous theoretical and empirical development, and
if coaches become scientist-practitioners who make informed use of research (Grant and
Cavanagh, 2004).

If it is true that coaching is at key point in its maturation, we would suggest that it is
important to understand the state of the industry at the moment. Relatively little is known
about coaches, their practices and their methods (Grant and Zackon, 2004; Judge and Cowell,
1997), and in particular there has been virtually no empirical research on coaching in New
Zealand. This study seeks to address that shortfall by reporting the results of a survey of those
claiming to be executive coaches in New Zealand. The primary aim of the research is to feed
information back into the coaching ‘industry’, with ensuing benefits in terms of service
quality and efficacy. This survey is an important first step in understanding the development
and extent of coaching in New Zealand.

Methodology

Survey
A national survey of executive coaches was conducted based on a study carried out with ICF
members by Grant and Zackon (2004, hereafter referred to as the ICF study). Using their
methodology as a basis, the current survey invited all known executive coaches in New
Zealand to respond in five broad areas of interest, namely:

1. Demographics – gender, age, education.
2. Coaching professionalism – credentialing, training.
3. Respondents’ coaching career – prior professions, length of time as a coach.
4. Coaching processes used – telephone, face-to-face, online, length of session.
5. Coaching practice – number of clients, fees, marketing, evaluation methods.

Sample
Respondents were recruited from a variety of sources, including the ICF website, telephone
and business directories, website searches, personal contacts, e-mail list servers relating to HR
management, and industry journals. Through these sources, a total of 134 executive coaches
were identified for participation in the study. The survey was mailed to all 134 coaches. Six
copies were returned by the postal service as undeliverable, leaving a potential sample of 128
respondents. In total, 59 coaches completed the survey, representing a 46% response rate.

Results

1. Coach Demographics
The ratio of male to female respondents was almost 1:1 (52.5% versus 47.5%), in contrast to
the ICF study in which female coaches outnumbered males in a ratio of 3:1. The average age
of respondents was 48 years and none were under 25 years. Only 13.5% were under the age of 40 years. This data corresponds with the ICF study and suggests an unofficial minimum age of entry into the field, before which coaches find it difficult to gain sufficient experience and qualifications to be credible.

Most coaches in this study were university educated (81.4%), although only two respondents (3.4%) had a coaching-related university qualification. The majority of respondents held commerce-related degrees. This is unsurprising, given the high proportion of coaches who were previously employed as managers or executives. New Zealand coaches appear to be much less well educated than their American counterparts. In a study of sixty U.S. executive coaches Judge and Cowell (1997) found that 90% of coaches had a Masters degree in business or the social sciences and 45% had doctoral degrees. This compares to 33.9% and 3.4% respectively in our New Zealand sample.

2. Coaching Professionalism

Coaching professionalism refers to the credentialing and training of coaches. There is no formal registration process for coaches in New Zealand, nor is there a national professional body such as those available to psychologists or counsellors. The ICF is the closest organization there is to a credentialing body, with over five hundred members in Australasia. Given the lack of a dedicated organization serving the needs of coaches in New Zealand, professional membership is typically sought elsewhere, with some 84.7% of New Zealand coaches belonging to a relevant professional body (see Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number who belong to a professional body</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional body - International Coach Federation</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>84.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional body - NZ Psychologists Society/Board</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>50.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional body - Human Resources Institute NZ</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional body - NZ Institute of Management</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional body – Other (non-coach)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number who engage in their own professional development</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development – coach specific courses/seminars/workshops</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>57.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development – peer supervision</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development – reading</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development – conferences</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development – delivering workshops/coaching coaches</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The survey also examined the training of coaches, showing that 78% of respondents have completed some form of coaching related training (short courses, certificates, in-house training, internet courses/programmes). This is lower than the 90.3% reported in the ICF study, and leaves almost a quarter of coaches having received no training in coaching. Furthermore, while a high proportion of coaches engage in ongoing professional development (83.1%), such as workshops or seminars, the initial training is less intense and of much shorter duration than university oriented courses, with some being measured in days rather than months or years. It does raise the issue of how much training is required to be a
competent coach, and whether graduates of shorter programmes receive sufficient training to be effective. In the absence of any recognised professional accreditation for coaches in New Zealand, the relatively high proportion of untrained coaches is a cause for concern.

Apart from the obvious need for the micro-skills of coaching and for theoretical models which inform the coaching process, an area of concern with untrained coaches is their ability to recognise and refer clients with mental health issues (Berglas, 2002). The most common mental illness a coach is likely to encounter will be depression, but it is quite possible that they will also come across clients suffering from borderline personality disorder, narcissism, anxiety disorders, and other forms of mental illness. The consequences of failing to recognise these conditions could vary from rendering the coaching ineffective, to facilitating a course of action that might worsen the client’s condition.

3. Coaching Career

Grant (2003) notes that coaching is an emerging cross-disciplinary practice, a view reinforced by the ICF study which showed 99.9% of coaches come to executive coaching from a prior professional background. The majority of respondents in the present study came from management roles (67.8%), followed by professional services/consultancy (28.8%), human services (15.3%), and small business owners (6.8%). These categories hide the breadth of backgrounds of people who have become coaches. Respondents include ex or current directors, CEOs, IT, finance, accounting, HR, sales, marketing, production and operations managers, lecturers, psychologists, counsellors, nurses, social workers, lawyers, accountants, priests, teachers, real estate agents, journalists, engineers, trainers, bankers, sports coaches, and a wide variety of small business owners. The richness this variety of people brings to the coaching industry is a real strength. However, it could be argued that it also creates a need for good quality training of sufficient duration and intensity to create competent coaches.

In New Zealand the preferred path to coaching is through management and consulting. The benefits of this path are obvious: coaches will be familiar with organisational contexts and leadership issues, and they will have credibility in the eyes of other managers (Kiel et al, 1996; Levinson, 1996). However, when we analyse the data on the degree of coaching training received in conjunction with the probability of a coach having managerial/consulting background, there is potential for problems. In the absence of comprehensive training in micro-skills coaching and in the theories of human behaviour that underpin coaching, it is likely a coach with a management or consultancy background will fall back on their strength – which is likely to be problem solving skills and experience, and therefore an over-reliance on giving advice. Future research could look at the effectiveness of short duration coaching training.

4. Coaching Processes

Coaches typically operate within the city in which they are located: only 5.1% reported working in multiple locations. This local focus is quite different to the ICF study which reported that 72.9% of coaches worked nationally. The likely cause of the local nature of New Zealand coaching practices is that word-of-mouth is the primary source of marketing for most respondents in this study.

The mean number of clients seen per month is 10, the median is 8, and the range is between 1-40 clients. On average coaches see their clients 2.7 times per month. These averages hide some wide variations in the number of client sessions, from a low of 2 per month to a reported high of 120 sessions. Only 5.1% of respondents have more than 40
coaching sessions per month, indicating that for the vast majority of respondents, coaching is not a fulltime activity.

The most common (54.2%) duration of each coaching session is 50-60 minutes, reflecting the length of time of a conventional counselling/therapeutic session. The range of duration was 15 minutes to four hours, but only 5.1% of respondents had sessions of longer than two hours.

Approximately one-third of coaches will work with a client for between one and three months (32.2%), slightly less than a third for four to six months (28.8%) and similarly for longer than six months (27.1%). The ICF study reported that 53.2% of coaches work with their clients for longer than six months, which is double the New Zealand figure. The reason for this difference is not known.

Coaching is conducted primarily in person (67.8%), with as many coaches meeting in the client’s premises as in the coach’s own office. Coaching over the phone is also widely practised (57.6%), and if overseas trends are an indication, this will become more popular (Grant & Zackon, 2004). Online coaching by e-mail is more popular here in New Zealand (22.0%) than reported in the ICF study (1.4%), perhaps reflecting the fact that New Zealanders have a reputation for being early adopters of technology.

Respondents were asked to identify which coaching model(s) they employed in their practice, and their responses were very diverse (see Table 2 below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2 –Coaching Models Used</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managerial problem-solving approaches relating to identifying needs/goal setting/gap analysis/problem solving/action planning</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GROW model</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solution-focused model</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBT approach</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselling Approach</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heron Model</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching Conversation Model</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holistic/Spiritual Model</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>360 Degree Feedback</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NLP Model</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Babcock Sinclair Model</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (modality technique, results coaching system, 5s model, ICF model, home of change model, emotional intelligence, head/heart/hands model, Action International 6 step model, do-review-learn model, 1-2-3 model)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple models, eclectic approach or self-developed model</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No model</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most commonly used approach is the rational managerial problem solving model (What is the problem? What are its causes? What are the potential solutions? Which one do we choose? How do we implement it?), followed in usage by the GROW model (described in
West and Milan, 2001, p. 19), and the solution-focused brief therapy model, which is referred to by Hudson (1999, p. 75) as the type of therapy “that informs the field of coaching the most”. Manthei and Brooks (2005) and Greene and Grant (2003) also support the use of the solution-focused model in coaching because it is non-pathology based, it is appreciative, builds on existing strengths, and is typically brief. It is notable that only 5.1% of respondents use a Cognitive Behavioural (CBT) approach, which is also recognised as being particularly suitable for coaching (Skiffington & Zeus, 2003). The relative paucity of use of established therapeutic models in coaching can be explained by the low numbers of ex-mental health professionals who have taken up coaching in New Zealand, making up only 16.9% of the current sample.

The popularity of the use of the conventional managerial problem solving model can be explained by its familiarity to managers – both for clients and coaches. Two significant implications flow from its widespread application, however. The first is that it is a very rational approach to problem solving, and has been criticised for being naively rational and for failing to recognise the emotional component of problem solving. Secondly, from a coaching process perspective, the model does not require, and adherents are not taught, any coaching micro-skills.

Future research could investigate the factors which influence the length of coaching relationships, including the influence of type of training coaches receive. For example, some models such as solution-focused brief therapy are short-term in nature. The impact of the duration of the coach/client relationship on coaching outcomes could also be investigated. Given the inherent difficulty of picking up non-verbal cues during telephone or online coaching, the effectiveness and suitability of such coaching processes is also worthy of investigation.

5. Coaching Practice

Coaching practice includes the coaches’ employment status, how coaches market their services, what proportion of their income is derived from coaching, what content areas they coach in, the adoption of ethical guidelines, and whether coaches carry professional indemnity insurance.

The majority of coaches are in fulltime self-employment (66.1%). The next largest group is made up of coaches who are in fulltime employment (23.7%), with the balance being in part-time or mixed employment/self-employment. The high proportion of self-employed reflects the ICF study results (73.7%) and reinforces the idea that many managers/consultants have moved out of corporate life and into coaching perhaps as a lifestyle change. There are obvious attractions to coaching; there are very low capital barriers to entry, there are no formal credentialing qualifications required, coaches can draw on their previous work experience, and because work comes incrementally one’s workload can be managed more easily than it can in large-project based consultancy practice.

The range of hourly charge-out rates varies considerably, from a low of $NZ30 to a high of $NZ1,000 (approximately £10 to £320). The mean hourly charge-out rate was $NZ192 (£61) and the median was $NZ225 (£72).

Given that coaching is typically just part of a portfolio of professional services offered by respondents, the average and median percentage of respondents’ professional income
derived from executive coaching was only 40%. The range was from 5%-100%. Only a small proportion of respondents (7.6%) reported that their income from coaching makes up their entire personal income. The preferred method of marketing is through word-of-mouth. Referral from clients or other professionals is the most effective method for 89.8% of respondents. Other methods of building a coaching practice are shown below in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marketing Method</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Referral from other professionals or client engagements</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>89.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free introductory session</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>50.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public/media talks</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (e.g. book publications, networking)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The large majority of coaches (88.1%) are involved in leadership development coaching, with business strategy (59.3%) and business start-up (50.8%) also being popular areas for coaching. Other areas included marketing, sales, finance, life coaching, career coaching, sports coaching, and team development coaching. About two-thirds of respondents actively coach in two or more of the above areas.

Most respondents have some form of evaluation built into their practice (78%), with the most common type being client feedback (66.1%). Very few coaches evaluate the effectiveness of their coaching using organisational performance measures (5.1%) or seek feedback from the organization that is sponsoring the coaching of one of their employees (8.5%). Grant and Zackon (2004) argue for a more rigorous evaluation of the return on investment on coaching, as opposed to forms of evaluation carried out by coaches themselves, often for marketing purposes.

One of the most reassuring aspects of this survey is the almost universal adoption by coaches of a recognised code of ethics (96.9% were bound by the ethical guidelines of the International Coaching Federation, NZ Psychologist Board, HR Institute of NZ, company ethics, or other membership body). This is particularly important in the absence of a professional accreditation body in New Zealand with its own code of ethics. In any emerging profession there will always be the risk of a ‘wild-west’ mentality where unethical operators seek to take advantage of, to some extent, the uneducated demand for the new services. Positively, there were no open-ended free responses to the survey which indicated that this was happening in New Zealand.

Finally, 61% of respondents have professional indemnity insurance, a worryingly low figure which leaves almost 40% of coaches unprotected against liability claims. Future research could investigate why such a low percentage of coaches in New Zealand do not carry indemnity insurance. Have they consciously decided not to? Or, in making the switch from being employees to self-employed – in an occupation which, because of its ease of set-up, might not require the involvement of legal or accounting advice – is something which has simply been overlooked?
Discussion

The survey results provide a snapshot of the state of executive coaching in New Zealand in 2005. The survey was mailed out to every executive coach in New Zealand who could be identified as such, and with a response rate of 46% the results are based on a sample of almost half the total population of coaches in this country. The results raise a number of interesting topics for discussion, which are discussed below.

1. Coaching background: What sort of person is succeeding as a coach?

The typical executive coach could be either male or female, is in their late forties, is university educated but with limited coach specific training, and comes from a business or management background. The most striking feature of the demographic data is the age of coaches, both as evidenced in this study and in the ICF study (Grant and Zackon, 2004). Not a single coach in this survey was under the age of 25 years, and 86.5% of them were over 40 years. This profile would not be found in professions such as law, accountancy, engineering, psychology, or counselling, so why amongst coaches? The survey did not ask this question, but, *prima facie*, there could be two, related, reasons. The first is that potential coaches in their twenties and thirties might feel they lack the life/organisational experience or credibility to attract clients, and so they self-select themselves out by not becoming coaches. The second explanation, and a corollary of the first, is that organisational clients are unwilling to be coached by people whom they feel lack business credibility. Age on its own does not explain all of this perception however, because managers are willing to be advised by young lawyers, stockbrokers and accountants. Perhaps the reason lies in the fact that these other professions offer technical advice which young talented graduates are equipped to provide, whereas coaching is more likely to involve problems and issues which are less rational and more subjective. Each of us has a set of criteria which defines who we are prepared to take problems to, and perhaps relevant work/life experience is the prerequisite for a successful coach. The ‘choice-of-coach’ process is worthy of further research.

Approximately 70% of coaches enter coaching after a career in some business or managerial role. What the data does not tell us is whether the pool of coaches is driven by supply-side factors, i.e. the attraction of former business people to coaching, or demand-side factors, i.e. clients being attracted to coaches who have business experience, resulting in those coaches being more successful and present in greater numbers than coaches with other backgrounds. Therefore, the question becomes: is it more desirable to train a business person with coaching skills or to have a mental health professional acquire knowledge of organisational contexts? There are conflicting views on the answer to this quandary. The first view is that psychologists and other mental health professionals are the most qualified to be executive coaches because they already possess many of the skills required (Auerbach, 2001; Brotman et al, 1998; Hart et al, 2001). The contrary view is that while having the necessary skills is important, it is not enough. It is also necessary to have a thorough knowledge of business, organisational, managerial and leadership issues (Harris, 1999; Kiel et al, 1996).

One of the leading authorities on coaching, Richard Kilburg, is an ex-psychiatrist. He argues that while very few coaches have any formal training in helping people change, not all therapists have what is required to be a coach:

I am not arguing that coaches must be trained as mental health professionals to be successful. On the contrary, I do not think that the majority of therapists could work successfully as consultants or coaches in organizational contexts.
There are many attitudes, values, behavioural patterns, and personality traits that would make it difficult for them to adapt their ideas and methods to the typical corporate setting. Rather, I am arguing that the average consultant who is working closely in coaching individuals, dyads, or management teams can benefit greatly from an increased knowledge of the unconscious dimensions and processes that influence behaviour regardless of the setting (Kilburg, 2000, p. 17).

Coaching has been around long enough for mental health professionals to have become more numerous in coaching, and the fact that most coaches have a business rather than a mental health background would suggest one of two things: there is either something about coaching that appeals more to the type of person who enters business than to mental health professionals (for example, a focus on organisational performance), or people with business experience are more successful coaches than mental health professionals and have survived as coaches in greater numbers. Again, this is an area worthy of further research.

2. Coaching Professionalism: Is coaching a profession?

Another question, taking into account the career demographics, work practices and training of coaches, might be whether coaching should be regarded as a profession in the same way as psychology and counselling are. Or is it more accurate to speak of coaching as just one of a number of services offered by organisational and business consultants?

The more commonly applied definition of a profession is that it is a vocation in which a theoretical and scientific body of knowledge is applied in a learned fashion, and to which one is called or admitted. At present, based on the data contained in this and the ICF survey, the coaching industry does not meet any of the criteria of a true profession:

- there are no barriers to entry,
- there is no shared common body of knowledge (see Table 2 above),
- no formal university level qualifications are required (in fact, only 3.4% of respondents in this study had a coaching-related university qualification),
- coaching is not governed by any regulatory bodies,
- there is no shared enforceable body of ethics,
- there is no state-sanctioned licensing of coaches in New Zealand.

It is therefore incorrect to refer to a ‘coaching profession’, or to coaches as professionals. There are a number of implications that flow from this conclusion. Until coaching becomes a profession there will be no way of ensuring that minimum standards of competence and ethical behaviour can be managed reliably. Service quality and the coaching outcomes will be unpredictable, particularly from those coaches surveyed who had no training in coaching at all. Potential users of coaching services would be rightly cautious about the quality and ethics of coaches and this will inevitably be reflected in their willingness to engage an executive coach and remunerate him or her appropriately for ‘professional services’.

Coaching is now large and mature enough to contemplate a move in the direction of increasing professionalisation, as also noted by Bluckert (2004). However, there have been no moves in New Zealand to create a professional structure for executive coaching. While there
are various models of professionalisation, it is unclear which one, if any, coaching will adopt. One option would be to maintain the status quo, with coaching remaining as a completely unregulated service industry. Moving along the professionalisation continuum, the next model would be voluntary credentialing. An example of this type of model is the organisation development (OD) industry in the U.S. OD consultants can apply to be registered with bodies such as the OD Institute, and depending on the consultant’s qualifications and experience a grade of membership is awarded. However, by choosing not to opt in to such institutes, a consultant is not barred from practice or from describing themselves as a practitioner. The same model applies to counsellors in New Zealand. At the other end of the continuum are the truly professionalised occupations such as psychology, psychiatry, and social work. To describe oneself and to practise in these fields, a practitioner must be licensed and is subject to all of the requirements of belonging to a profession described above. The establishment by Anthony Grant of a Coaching Psychology Unit at the School of Psychology, University of Sydney, is a first step towards professionalisation of coaching in Australasia.

In the absence of formal coaching qualifications, and given that coaching is a business related service similar in nature to OD, it is likely that coaching will move to a model of voluntary credentialing and let the market make its judgments about credibility and professionalism. At the moment the ICF, with 500 members in Australia, could be regarded as the most likely organisation to become the pseudo-credentialing body for coaches.

3. Coaching processes
The data relating to coaching processes raises some interesting issues and questions. In many respects coaches in New Zealand seem to have adopted conventional therapeutic practices. Half of the respondents in the study use the standard 50-60 minute appointment time, and on average clients are seen every one to two weeks. Internationally, coaching seems to have moved further away from these therapeutic norms. For example, the ICF study found there was a much higher rate of coaching at a distance, and as a consequence, a greater use of telephone coaching. There is an element of freedom and willingness to try new things that makes the coaching processes an exciting one, including the use of telephone and online coaching, offering a wide variation in session times from 15 minutes to 4 hours, observing clients in their work environment, and of seeing clients in their workplace instead of the coach’s office. Because coaching has not yet adopted the scientist-practitioner model, there is little or no research into the efficacy, risks, or benefits of some of these practices.

Coaching is an eclectic practice, as shown by the data on the range of coaching models used by respondents (see Table 2). However it is worrying that a third of the sample in this study employ the conventional management problem solving model. The widespread use of this basic model could suggest that a large proportion of New Zealand coaches fail to adopt a specific coaching model and so rely on a business model they are familiar with. This model is problem-centred, deficiency-based, and does not in any way draw on the positive psychology models that have become more efficacious in recent years. These models include Appreciative Inquiry (Watkins and Mohr, 2001), solution-focused therapy (de Jong and Berg, 2002), strengths-based assessment and many others. The lack of knowledge of a coaching model may also lead those coaches who come from a business background to engage in advice-giving behaviour, which is more typical of managers and leaders.
Conclusions

This study is the first to explore the situation in relation to the coaching industry in New Zealand. The results paint a picture of an industry not too dissimilar from its international counterparts. It is largely unregulated by obligatory codes of practice and ethics, and does not meet any of the requirements of being a profession. Over 95% of coaches in New Zealand lack any university-level coaching training, and a quarter of coaches have no coaching training at all. These figures are a cause for concern as it is likely that the quality and efficacy of coaches varies widely as a result.

As a service industry, coaching can continue in its present form – with none of the attributes of a true profession and with all of the risks that brings. Alternatively, coaching can make a move towards voluntary credentialing, or seek to become a true profession based on the scientist-practitioner model. Any move towards either of the latter states will require a level of leadership from within the profession that is largely lacking at the moment.

References


Harris, M. (1999) Look, it’s an I-O psychologist…no, it’s a trainer…no, it’s an executive coach, *TIP*, 36(3), 1-5.


Management (NZ), February 2004a, 47-51.

Management (NZ), November 2004b, 7-8.


