



CAREER COACH  
INSTITUTE

## **Career Coaching: The New Methodology for Maximizing Personal Fulfillment and Human Capital**

Marcia Bench, MCCC, CBC, CMP

Career coaching is a profession that is both rapidly growing and greatly misunderstood, both among practitioners in the U.S. and around the globe. The purpose of this paper is to provide a working definition of career coaching, to distinguish it from other related professions, to discuss what career coaches do – both inside and outside organizations – and to dispel myths about qualifications for and roles of career coaches.

### **What Career Coaching Is**

Career coaching can be defined as follows:

“Career coaching is an interactive process of exploring work-related issues – leading to effective action – in which the coach acts as both a *catalyst* and *facilitator* of individual and, in turn, organizational development and transformation.

“Career coaches connect people with their passion, purpose, values and other critical aspects of their ideal work. They equip their clients with career management skills that can be used in future transitions in addition to enhancing their current work. They also facilitate their clients’ process of developing and implementing a job search or business start-up plan to activate their Authentic Vocation™. The desired outcomes of career coaching include enhanced self-awareness, clarity about life purpose and goals, increased ability to be effective in today’s changing workplace and to manage their own career, and overall betterment of clients’ quality of life.”

--Bench, Marcia, *Career Coaching: An Insider’s Guide*

There are several critical elements here:

- **“Interactive”** – Unlike some of the related roles such as consulting and managing, coaching is characterized by its interactivity. Client and coach have what are referred to as “strategic conversations” in which the coach asks probing questions of the client about what’s most important to them and how they wish to be assisted in moving

Copyright © 2001-2016 Marcia Bench Enterprises LLC and Marcia Bench; All Rights Reserved  
No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or database, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written consent. For more info contact [info@careercoachinstitute.com](mailto:info@careercoachinstitute.com) or call 503-308-8179.

forward. Like tennis, coaching is very much a partnership in which both coach and client design their next move in tandem with and flowing from the other party's last "play" or movement – or in the coaching interaction, their last statement.

- **“Work-related issues”** – This distinguishes career coaching from other types of coaching such as life coaching, business coaching, executive coaching, spiritual coaching, and the like in that career coaching specializes in work-related issues. These may include both determining one's overall career direction as well as job search techniques such as resume-writing, interviewing practice, negotiation assistance, and the like. Internal coaches as well as external coaches may also assist with enhancing work satisfaction, career development planning, and similar issues (see the last section of this paper for specific functions fulfilled by career coaches).
- **Catalyst** – The dictionary defines “catalyst” as “one that precipitates (brings on or begins) a process or event. A coach, therefore, precipitates the process of learning at three levels: performance, change, and transformation (otherwise stated as behavior, beliefs, and identity). In chemistry, the catalyst usually does not break down during the chemical process, but rather stimulates, by its very presence, a change in the nature of the other compounds present. This analogy is quite apt for a coach.
- **Facilitator** – To turn again to the dictionary, to “facilitate” means “to make easier.” All of us have what in coaching are referred to as “blind spots” resulting from self-defeating beliefs, childhood messages, role models or experiences, and past disappointments that make it difficult for us to see life as it is. An effective coach makes it easier to see both the blind spots and the strengths that the client has and thereby furthers the process of transformation as the client moves through those hindrances and fully leverages their strengths.
- **Ideal work** – Most career coaches (and their clients!) are not content to help people find “just another job.” Rather, they seek to help the client find work that is truly fulfilling, that allows them to make the contribution they believe they have come to earth to make. This emphasis on “ideal” work, rather than “suitable” or “acceptable” work, sets career coaches apart from employment agencies, many career counselors, and the purveyors of skills-based assessments which ignore life purpose and deeper motivators in suggesting next career moves to a client. Since most workers will change careers 5-10 times during their lives, and many of those transitions are during midlife when priorities are shifting, the focus on ideal work is an important part of the life journey for career coach and client to explore together.
- **Career management skills** – I believe it was Jesus who first made the comparison between giving a man a fish so he can eat for a day versus teaching a man to fish so he can eat for a lifetime. The appropriate goal of the coach, unlike the consultant, is to help the client learn to self-coach, to learn skills they can use again when similar situations arise, and to play a role in a developmental process that results in the client's growth. That is the key reason why the best coaches are known for **asking the right questions, not giving the right answers.**
- **Authentic Vocation™** – At Inspired Business Institute, we teach the Authentic Vocation™ Model of career development and career coaching. Other models begin by evaluating the client's skills, interests and experience to advise them on the best job or career. By contrast, the 8-fold Authentic Vocation™ Model begins by exploring the client's life purpose, continuing with their values, and motivators, and *then* their skills, experience, desired job/industry, and work environment. The final test of whether the client's desired work is truly their Authentic Vocation™ is subjecting it to the filter of Business Reality: is it a financially viable field and position? Can the client attain their

desired lifestyle in that field? Is there future growth in the field? By thus aligning their work and their identity through the phases of their Authentic Vocation™, work satisfaction naturally increases. But there is also a benefit to the company: when workers enjoy their work and find meaning in it, they are more productive and it significantly impacts the bottom line. A recent Gallup poll showed that companies in which employees are “engaged” (meaning fulfilled and satisfied in their work) experience higher sales, profits, retention and customer loyalty than those who are not.

## **Dispelling the Myths**

There are a number of common misconceptions about career coaching that need to be “debunked” and the truth clarified.

*Myth #1: A career coach must have a Master’s Degree in counseling.*

Currently, there are no educational requirements in most states in the U.S. for coaches. (However, some states subject some coaches to state regulations; check with your state’s employment or labor department to see what the requirements are where you live.) Career coaching is *not* the same as career counseling, as we will see below. If one were going to be a counselor, they should certainly get a degree in that field! But career coaching is a discrete skill, the primary prerequisite for which is specific coaching training and a knowledge of career development principles. Whether practicing in the U.S. or abroad, degrees in counseling or psychology are *not* required to be a highly effective coach.

*Myth #2: If I can talk to people about their job-related issues, I am (or can be) a career coach.*

Career coaching requires training in coaching knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA’s). A coaching interaction is much more than a mere conversation; it has a strategic component and a transformational impact that puts it at a much higher level than a mere conversation. And the client’s professional future is at stake; are you willing to risk giving uninformed “advice” versus becoming (through training and experience) a trained professional – or referring the client to one?

*Myth #3: I’m already a coach, so when people come to me about a job-related issues, I can call myself a career coach.*

This myth may be partly true. If the coach has received formal coach training and has an effective coaching model that they are using, their coaching skills may be transferable. However, to coach individuals in career issues also requires knowledge of career development theories and principles as well as the science/art of resume writing, helping a client capitalize on their strengths and minimize weaknesses in an interview, components of an effective job search campaign, and the like. Specific training in these areas is needed to supplement coaching skills for one to truly call themselves a career coach.

*Myth #4: Other kinds of coaching are more “advanced” and require more specialized training than career coaching. It’s just a point to begin one’s practice; career coaching by itself isn’t a substantial enough specialty area on which to build a practice*

To put it simply, career coaching isn't as easy as it looks! But it *is* a viable practice specialty. The best career coaches make six-figure incomes. Some of them choose to supplement their actual 1:1 coaching with writing books, ezines and articles, teaching, training, teleclasses, or speaking because they enjoy the variety of activities around the career development theme. But far from being a "basic beginning" for a coaching practice, it is a very viable ongoing business.

*Myth #5: I don't think career coaching would be right for me because I don't enjoy writing resumes, practicing interviewing, and helping the client with negotiations.*

This is one of the best things about career coaching: you can do it in whatever way fits your personality and preferences! Some career coaches prefer to focus on the "direction-setting" or personal exploration part of the process, helping clients figure out "what they want to be when they grow up," as we like to put it. Others prefer the tangible, immediate-results work involved in designing a job search strategy, writing (or critiquing) resumes, role-playing interviews and negotiation sessions, and the like. And still other independent practitioners do all of this! As we will see at the end of this article, internal career coaches (employed by an organization) may have additional responsibilities still. So career coaching is a field that can be tailored to the individual coach's preferences.

*Myth #6: The best career coaching approach is to start with what the client is good at, their skills (KSA's) in designing their new job/career.*

This is a premise of many career development theories. It can be effective with new graduates or new entrants to the workplace, or to those wishing to find a new job within the same industry and/or position they have held in the past. However, for the majority of people who will seek out career coaching (having exhausted their own resources and ideas about what would most fulfill them), a skills-based model will not achieve their desired result. Instead, the process must begin at a deeper level with their overall life purpose or mission, values, and the like in order to match what they do with what they love and what has meaning for the client. CCI's Authentic Vocation™ model does this.

*Myth #7: You can't make much money at career coaching, especially during tough economic times.*

On the contrary! Career coaching is the one specialty in the coaching field that is recession-proof and actually expands during economic downturns. Why? When the economy turns down, companies lay off workers, requiring outplacement services (and these firms have added coaching as one of their services to such companies) as well as career centers (which can be set up and/or staffed by career coaches). In addition, there are more individuals in job or career transition at these times, and those who are not are overworked and worried if they will be the next to be laid off. So while the independent practitioner may find that they need to offer fee incentives and/or affiliate with an outplacement firm or other organization to serve the clients who have needs during the economic lows (if we assume individual clients have less disposable income to invest in coaching), they will find a lot of work to be done!

*Myth #8: I can get helpful advice about my career from my family and friends.*

Remember the old saying, “you get what you pay for”? There are several reasons family and friends’ advice may not be in your best interest regarding your career. First, they lack the objectivity that a coach can provide. And second, even if the change you’re considering is good for you, it may impact them in a way that is uncomfortable, causing them to discourage or sabotage you. And finally, they may be unwilling to provide the unconditional support (even “cheerleading”) that a coach will do as you pursue your dreams.

*Myth #9: I’ve been doing career counseling or career consulting for years; I’ll just start calling myself a career coach now.*

See the response to Myths #2 and 3 above. Career coaching requires specific training and knowledge!

*Myth #10: Career coaching can only be done in person.*

One thing that is fascinating to most people when they first discover coaching (as a prospective coach or a client) is that most coaching is done by telephone. This is appealing to the coach because it allows them a flexible lifestyle. But it is also appealing to the client because of its convenience! In fact, if you receive training via teleclass (a kind of conference-call format used by Inspired Business Institute and some other coach training programs where class members gather “virtually” over the phone for the weekly sessions), you are receiving the very best preparation to be a highly effective coach – over the phone! Coaches learn to hone their listening abilities to listen “between the lines” to the client’s energy shifts, hesitations, excitement, style, and other cues that lead to deeply thought-provoking questions from the coach. Coaching in person is done by some (though a minority of) coaches, but between the logistics required to physically get together and the sometimes distracting visual cues that are added with in-person coaching, telephone coaching can be an even superior medium to use!

## **Distinguishing Career Coaching from Other Roles**

### **Coaching vs. career counseling**

Though the lines can become blurred between career coaching and career counseling, there are some distinctions that can be made. Coaching is generally more results-oriented, less structured, and guided by the client’s agenda in comparison to counseling. Another distinction is that counseling (and therapy) often seeks to fix pathology, whereas coaching focuses on developing possibilities and leveraging the client’s strengths.

Laura Berman Fortgang puts it well in *Take Yourself to the Top*:

“A coach’s main job is to help you to take action to close the gap between where you are and where you want to be. A career counselor may be the perfect person to help you figure out where you want to be. Counselors can administer personality and capability assessments and help you determine what is an appropriate career for you. A coach might help you determine your next step, but is more likely to help you do so by exploring your needs and what you truly value in life.”

James Waldroop of Waldroop Butler Associates agrees:

Copyright © 2001-2016 Marcia Bench Enterprises LLC and Marcia Bench; All Rights Reserved  
No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or database, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written consent. For more info contact [info@careercoachinstitute.com](mailto:info@careercoachinstitute.com) or call 503-308-8179.

“I think of career counseling as more the direction-setting part of things and coaching as the execution – whether [and] how to interview, developing networks, or how to enter an organization, how to gain and use power, or how to work as a woman in male-dominated organizations.” (Barbra Lewis, “Hiring a Career Counselor: How to Be Effective Behind the Desk.”)

Career counselors may get more in-depth training in the use of psychological assessments, and will typically use a battery of such assessments at the outset of the counseling relationships. While career coaches may be trained in and/or use some assessment tools, they only do so as the client’s presented needs appear to require it.

### **Coaching vs. consulting**

The simplest way to distinguish coaching from consulting is this: coaching focuses on asking the right questions; consulting focuses on solving problems through providing the right answers. “Many coaches are consultants, but not all consultants are coaches,” to again quote Laura Berman Fortgang. Consultants are experts in a specific topic area and are paid to provide advice, do analyses, write reports and make recommendations within that subject area. The consultant typically has business experience and/or education in the client’s business or in the discipline about which they are consulting (marketing, operations efficiency, etc.).

A coach, on the other hand, need not have had experience in the client’s business at all. The primary experience they need is practice doing coaching using an articulated model that leads to the client obtaining results. Period.

See also <http://www.coachfederation.org/natureofcoaching.htm> for the International Coach Federation’s comparison of coaching and consulting.

### **Coaching vs. therapy**

This recent article accurately summarizes the distinction between coaching and therapy:

“Coaching is not the same thing as therapy, experts agree. One is an open-ended exploration of the origins of emotional makeup; the other is usually short-term and focused on achieving concrete goals, often in the context of career.” Benedict Carey, “Mentors of the Mind,” *L.A. Times* 6/18/01.

This area can be a trap, particularly for personal coaches, who in some states such as Colorado may be subject to the regulations governing psychotherapists even though they lack equivalent credentials.

“Therapists address major emotional issues and try to help clients find context and understanding, based on the past. If a client is in emotional pain, therapy is a better choice than coaching. Coaches will take business and personal issues and explore them in a framework that is action oriented... We look for the source of obstacles as a therapist might, but do not deal in introspection.” Laura Berman Fortgang, *Take Yourself to the Top* (Warner Books 1998)

See also <http://www.coachfederation.org> for the International Coach Federation’s comparison of coaching and psychotherapy.

### Coaching vs. mentoring

Mentoring is a related skill to coaching which nevertheless can be distinguished in several ways.

“Mentoring is a method of teaching and learning that can occur among all types of individuals across all kinds of knowledge bases and settings. In the workplace, mentoring normally consists of teaching, giving feedback, coaching on the job, counseling through change, and structuring ongoing contact over a designated time period.” “Mentoring for Performance Improvement,” Great Circle Learning (<http://www.gclearning.com>)

As the diagram in the next section illustrates, mentoring is somewhat more directive than coaching in that a goal of most mentoring programs or relationships is to pass on information or knowledge from the mentor to the mentee. However, because the ultimate goal is to “build capability” as it was explained above, the mentor may use coaching techniques and questions to help the mentee think for him/herself about the skills or situations which are the subject of the mentoring relationship.

### Coaching vs. managing with a coaching approach

Thomas Crane, in his book *The Heart of Coaching*, defines transformational coaching for managers to use like this:

“a comprehensive communication process in which the coach provides performance feedback to the coachee [employee]. Topics include broad, work-related dimensions of performance (personal, interpersonal, or technical) that affect the coachee’s ability and willingness to contribute to meaningful personal and organizational goals.”

It is increasingly accepted that coaching has a place in the management toolkit. However, one critical difference between an independent coach and a manager as coach within an organization is that the manager has “R.A.A.,” or responsibility, accountability, and authority, for the employee/client’s performance. Therefore, the employee/client is constrained from being completely candid with the manager/coach in the coaching interactions because the manager has another (even if silent) agenda.

The following chart outlines the above distinctions for those professions most commonly compared with career coaching:

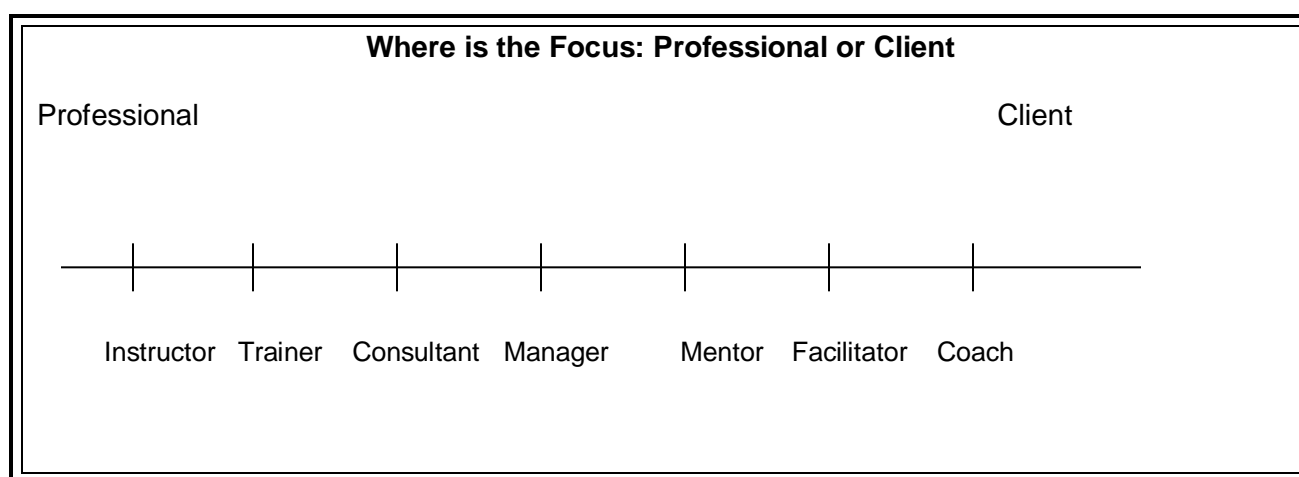
Factor	Career Coach	Career Counselor	Consultant	Manager as Coach
<b>Focus</b>	Questions	Q&A	Answers	Q&A
<b>Agenda</b>	Client’s	Shared	Consultant’s	Company’s
<b>R.A.A.*</b>	No	No	No	Yes
<b>Orientation</b>	Process, what’s possible, results	Process, next logical step	Results, solving problems	Results
<b>Education</b>	Coach training	Master’s degree preferred	Varies	Varies

Copyright © 2001-2016 Marcia Bench Enterprises LLC and Marcia Bench; All Rights Reserved  
 No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or database, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written consent. For more info contact [info@careercoachinstitute.com](mailto:info@careercoachinstitute.com) or call 503-308-8179.

<b>Voluntary?</b>	Yes	Usually	Sometimes	No
<b>Time perspective</b>	Present, future	Past, present	Present, future	Present, near future
<b>Use of Assessments</b>	Yes, as appropriate	Yes, standardized	Sometimes	360 most common
<b>Time to results</b>	Quickly!	Slower than coaching	Sometimes never!	Varies
<b>Ownership of results</b>	Client	Counselor	Consultant	Manager and employee

\* = Responsibility, Accountability and Authority

Another important factor in making these distinctions is where the primary focus lies, whether with the professional (of whatever discipline) or the client. The following graphic demonstrates this continuum:



### What Career Coaches Do

- ✓ Connect people with a deeper level of motivation than “just a job;” clients **discover their passion and purpose** to guide their decisions, empowering them to choose work they love, make a good living and still have a balanced life
- ✓ Distinguish themselves from career counselors and consultants by **building capability in the individual client and getting results in real time**, which leads to creating proficiencies, not just the ability to overcome deficiencies
- ✓ Probe for openings that lead to **long-term developmental opportunities** rather than providing just a “quick fix”
- ✓ Create effective **coaching interactions** by listening, observing, discerning, and modeling
- ✓ **Deliver effective coaching** through feedback, questions, statements, challenges and ideas

Copyright © 2001-2016 Marcia Bench Enterprises LLC and Marcia Bench; All Rights Reserved  
 No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or database, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written consent. For more info contact [info@careercoachinstitute.com](mailto:info@careercoachinstitute.com) or call 503-308-8179.



- ✓ **Remove blocks to career progress**, including such developmental needs as communication, interpersonal skills, lack of clarity, limiting beliefs, incomplete awareness of marketable skills, lack of purpose and more
- ✓ Improve clients' **ability to market and sell themselves** in the job market regardless of economic conditions
- ✓ Increase individual **potential for career growth** and **future earning power**
- ✓ Assist clients in becoming "**career self-reliant**," taking control and ownership of their own career development
- ✓ **Enhance their clients' job satisfaction** through the discovery of their Authentic Vocation™

*Specifically, career coaches' duties often include:*

- Assist with clarification of overall purpose/direction
- Administer assessments: interest inventories, personality type instruments, etc.
- Help clients match their skills, interests and passions with ideal career path, jobs and work environments
- (Sometimes) draft resumes, or provide feedback to client on their resume design/content
- Link clients with potential jobs, both published and unpublished
- Role play with clients: networking meetings, interviews
- Coach clients on communication skills, professional image
- Help clients deal with obstacles to their progress, whether due to job history, lack of the "right" qualifications, or personal/family issues
- Encourage the client to pursue their dream!
- Work in/manage/set up career center
- Assist clients with negotiating

### **Additional Responsibilities of Internal Career Coaches**

- ✓ Increase the client's awareness of career paths and **enhance fit** to achieve "right person/right job"
- ✓ Improve the capability of both individual and organization to **manage constant change and transition**
- ✓ Provide and model **communication styles** that enhance internal problem-solving skills, appreciate differences, and lead to long-term progress, rather than creating codependencies
- ✓ Promote a **win-win balance of work/life priorities**, using the desired states of both individual and organization as benchmarks
- ✓ Guide organizational systems to **evolve their culture** by increasingly valuing their employees, implementing career development as a priority, and retaining human capital

- ✓ **Blend training, organizational development, career/ employee development and coaching** at every level in an organization

*Specifically, internal career coaches' duties may include:*

- Designing career ladders and matrices
- Analyzing job competencies and working with HR to match recruiting practices to competencies (particularly regarding existing employees wishing to change positions within the company)
- Coaching employees regarding their career development needs
- Working with managers to help them coach employees on career/work issues
- Set up/maintain/staff a career center for existing and/or outplaced employees
- Coach employees to resolve performance issues as/when they are due to work dissatisfaction
- Facilitating match between right person and right job
- Working with organizational development staff to integrate career management and development into the company's overall strategic plan

---

**Marcia Bench** is a Master Certified Career Coach™, and Certified Business Coach. She is the Founder and Director of Inspired Business Institute, and in demand as a speaker and career/executive coach. CCI offers training, certification and support for entrepreneurs who want to change the world through their businesses. Marcia has over 30 years of experience in coaching and consulting and has authored 25 books including *Career Coaching: An Insider's Guide* and *Thriving in Transition*, as well as numerous articles.

## **WHAT TO DO NEXT**

I hope you have found the discussion in this white paper helpful. But if you are seriously considering career coaching, I urge you not to stop here. If you don't yet have a copy of my book, *Career Coaching: An Insider's Guide*, I invite you to purchase it at Amazon or at our web site, [www.careercoachinstitute.com](http://www.careercoachinstitute.com). This the *only* step-by-step guide to career coaching that exists, and the foundation for the Inspired Business Institute coach training program. If you later decide to purchase the full career coach training kit or one of our certification programs, the cost of the textbook will be deducted from the tuition.

As part of my personal commitment to facilitate positive change in the workplace, I and my companies are continually creating new products, services, and programs. I encourage you to visit our web sites regularly for updates.

My sincere wishes for your fulfillment and success.

*Marcia Bench*

Copyright © 2001-2016 Marcia Bench Enterprises LLC and Marcia Bench; All Rights Reserved  
No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or database, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written consent. For more info contact [info@careercoachinstitute.com](mailto:info@careercoachinstitute.com) or call 503-308-8179.