

**SURVEY REPORT:**

**The State of  
Corporate Coaching  
in Metropolitan Atlanta's  
Major Corporations**

**February 2006**

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**Susan Davidson**

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***Georgia Coach Association***

***www.gacoaches.com***

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The Georgia Coach Association (GCA) is chartered as the Georgia Chapter of the International Coach Federation (ICF), the largest non-profit worldwide association of professional business and personal coaches. With more than 6,000 members and over 145 chapters in 30 countries, the ICF exists to build, support and preserve the integrity of the coaching profession.

The goals of the GCA include supporting professional coach training, credentialing and development of its members, broadening public understanding of the coaching profession, and encouraging standards of ethics and conduct for business and personal coaches.

**For more information about the Georgia Coach Association, please visit:**

**[www.gacoaches.com](http://www.gacoaches.com)**

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# Introduction

Coaching has become a trendy “buzz” word and popular profession in the corporate world. However, there is little objective statistical data that exists to provide insights into the world of corporate coaching, including how corporations are structuring their coaching programs, how coaches are selected, and how outcomes are measured.

This report highlights the findings of the Georgia Coach Association’s groundbreaking research study on the state of corporate coaching among Atlanta-based corporations. The survey sheds some light on the following questions:

- What companies have formal coaching programs and how long have they been in place?
- How is coaching used within corporations?
- Who gets coached?
- How much is spent on coaching?
- How are coaches selected?
- How are coaches and coaching clients matched?
- Are internal and/or external coaches employed?
- What assessment tools are used in coaching?
- How is the return on a company’s coaching investment measured?
- What are the benefits and limitations of coaching?
- What does the future of coaching look like?

## **Background**

In 2005, as part of the Georgia Coach Association’s three-year strategic plan to link its members to useful resources and to promote collaborative strategic partnerships, the GCA embarked on a special project to survey a random number of metro Atlanta’s major corporations to learn about the coaching practices of those organizations. Most of what is known about corporate coaching is based on anecdotes, testimonials and surveys of only coaches and coaching firms. We hear little from corporate users of coaching services and, as we learned, they hear little from each other.

GCA hoped to gather objective data and useful insights on corporate coaching in the Metro Atlanta area to share with its members and with Atlanta's corporate community.

A research team of three GCA members – Arline Berman, Susan Davidson and Harry Rodenhi – identified and conducted one-on-one interviews (both face-to-face and by telephone) with sixteen (16) different organizations that have their headquarters or major operations in Atlanta.

The companies included in the survey and job titles of individuals interviewed are:

- 1. ADP – National Accounts Services (NAS)**  
*Director of Leadership Development & Learning*
- 2. ADP University (serving the global organization)**  
*Director, Executive Development - Global Learning & Performance (California)*
- 3. AGL Resources Inc.**  
*HR Talent Management (and a former interim Director of Talent Management)*
- 4. BellSouth Corporation**  
*Executive Director, Leadership Development*
- 5. The Coca-Cola Company**  
*Director, Talent Development*  
*Principal Consultant, Talent Strategies*
- 6. Coca-Cola Enterprises**  
*Corporate Manager, Leadership Development*
- 7. Cox Enterprises, Inc.**  
*Director of Training and Development*
- 8. Deloitte & Touche**  
*Manager, Deloitte Career Connections (Southeast and Mid-Atlantic Coaching)*
- 9. Earthlink**  
*Director, Talent Development*
- 10. The Home Depot, Inc.**  
*Vice President and Chief Learning Officer*
- 11. IBM Corporation**  
*Vice President, Global Executive & Organization Capability (New York)*

**12. ING Americas**

*Vice President, Organizational Development  
Talent Management Director (U.S.)*

**13. PricewaterhouseCoopers**

*Industry Assurance Human Resource Manager*

**14. Scientific-Atlanta, Inc.**

*Director, Learning and Organizational Development*

**15. A Global News & Entertainment Company**

*Senior Organizational Effectiveness Consultant*

**16. United Parcel Service, Inc.**

*Corporate Development Manager*

Interviews were conducted from March, 2005 through January, 2006. Following is a summary of the Georgia Coach Association's survey findings.

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# Summary of Survey Findings

## **○ Human Resources administers most corporate coaching programs.**

With the exception of ADP University, which is a learning services organization serving the global needs of the entire corporation, all of the other interviewees are employed in the Human Resources function of their companies, from where they manage and administer their organization's formal coaching program. Coaching programs are housed within various functional areas within Human Resources, including Talent Management (also called Talent Development or Strategies), Leadership Development and Learning, Organizational Development or Effectiveness, Training and Development and Career Connections.

## **○ Human Resources does not have a budget to pay for the costs associated with coaching. Costs for coaching services are generally billed back to the coaching client's functional area.**

The individuals in Human Resources who manage and administer their company's coaching programs are not allocated a budget to pay for coaching expenses. Instead, outside coaching expenses are charged back to the business unit, division or department where the coachee resides. The coaching client's functional area usually taps its management development or training budget to pay for its coaching expenses. Only in one case, does the Director of Training and Development in Human Resources receive an annual coaching budget of \$500,000 as part of a broader year-long leadership development succession planning program that includes assessments, seminars, outward bound activities and a year of coaching for high-potentials and select managers with P&L responsibility.

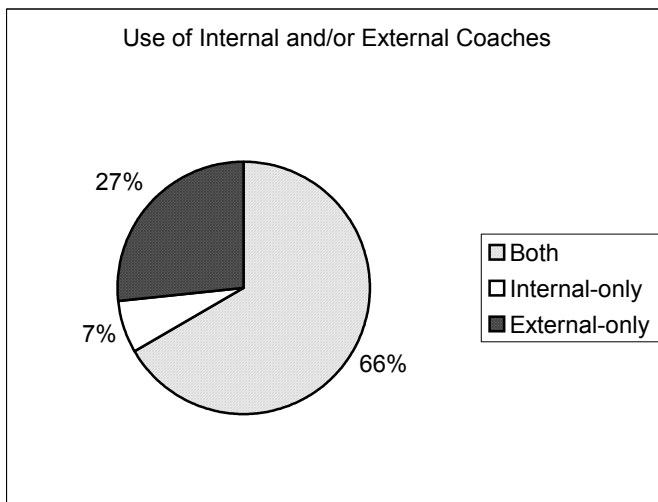
## **○ Most coaching programs have only been in place five years or less.**

While AGL Resources is just embarking on a formalized coaching program in 2006, other companies like Cox Enterprises, IBM and PriceWaterhouseCoopers have had coaching programs in place for ten years or more. Most companies (75%) have had formal coaching programs for five years or less.



**○ Most corporations use a combination of both internal and external coaches.**

More than two-thirds of the companies (66%) employ a combination of internal employee coaches and external coaches for coaching engagements. Only one company uses internal coaches exclusively and four companies utilize only outside coaches.



**○ Corporations using external coaches maintain a small, pre-selected roster of preferred individual coaches and/or coaching firms.**

Companies hiring external coaches generally maintain a pre-selected cadre of preferred:

- a) Individual coaches
- b) Established boutique or large firms offering coaching services
- c) A combination of both individual coaches *and* coaching firms.

Companies retain anywhere from 2 to 18 different coaches and/or coaching firms on their roster at any given point in time, with the average roster size ranging from five to ten coaches and/or coaching firms.

The local, national and global “coaching” firms mentioned also offer a host of other human resource services: assessments, executive search and recruitment, consulting, training and workshops, career transition and outplacement services, organizational effectiveness consulting, succession planning, team building and web interventions. Some specialty firms and individuals who are hired as coaches also consult or may focus on only one skill area such as presentation and communication skills, media and crisis communication, and professional image development.

Named coaching firms include: Alliance for Strategic Leadership, Corporate Performance Strategies, Drake, Beam, Moran, Duke Corporate Education, Interaction Associates, Lee Hecht Harrison, Linkage Inc., McNeil Group, Meridian Resources, Mulling Group, Personnel Decisions International, Professional Image Consulting, RHR International, Right Management Consultants, Speechworks, Turknett Leadership Group, Virgil Scudder & Associates, WJM Associates, Novations Group and Watson Wyatt.

**○ Companies select their external coaches primarily based on referrals, previous relationships and/ or business and coaching experience. Selection of internal coaches varies among companies.**

All companies hiring outside coaches use a selection process that considers one or a combination of the following three factors:

- 1) Prior business relationships
- 2) Referrals from within and outside the organization
- 3) The coach's business experience and/or executive coaching experience

Companies are not as concerned with coach-specific training and credentials. Only one company lists coach-specific training among its selection criteria. Additionally, two companies use coaching firms with respected names because the firms pre-screen their own coaches for previous business and coaching experience.

Two companies utilize an RFP (Request for Proposal) process to screen individual coaches and vendors. Others use an interview process, using a checklist of questions. Says one interviewee who hires coaches, "I have a few key questions that help me decide. One is, 'Do you ever turn down a client?'" Only one global company does not use any particular hiring process.

For companies that use internal coaches, the selection process varies considerably. One company looks for a broad diversity of talent across business units and job levels. Another informally looks for people who have spent time in the organization and are "committed to developing people." A third uses an interview process wherein the candidates are expected to use coaching skills. A fourth automatically requires all managers to coach and mentor six to eight new hires every year. And another company's taps its annual list of high-potentials, representing all levels in the organization, for volunteer coaches. In addition, the company "drafts" other internal coaches (HR Vice Presidents, Industrial Psychologists) because coaching is viewed as a required part of their required leadership role.

### **○ When selecting external coaches, companies look less at coach training and credentials and more at actual business and executive coaching experience.**

The "credibility factor" is essential to most companies when hiring a coach for their leaders. The majority of corporations look to hire coaches with extensive business, management experience and executive-level coaching experience. Several of the corporations use external coaches who have pre-existing relationships with the company, often as consultants. Others

include in their cadre of outside coaches, psychologists and counselors with expertise in behavior change. Still others find business coaches through referrals and references from other organizations. Other qualifications companies say they look for in hiring business coaches include: a focus on business results, industry knowledge, knowledge of specific assessment instruments, a firm with a national reach, and excellent written and verbal communication skills.

Only three companies are aware or knowledgeable of the International Coach Federation (ICF) accredited coach training programs and credentialing process. These companies consider ICF coach training or certification either a “bonus,” or as one of several criteria considered in screening external coaches. As one coach administrator notes, when it comes to finding qualified coaches, “credentials run the gamut.”

**○ Two-thirds of the corporations will hire an outside coach who does *not* have coach training or credentials, *if* the coach has a strong business background and is known to get good results.**

When asked about requiring external coaches to have coach-specific training or credentials, 66% of the corporations say coaching credentials are not very important. “In the end, who cares what the credentials are?” says a Director. “The critical element is not credentials, rather the ability of the coach to grow the manager and help him solve problems.”

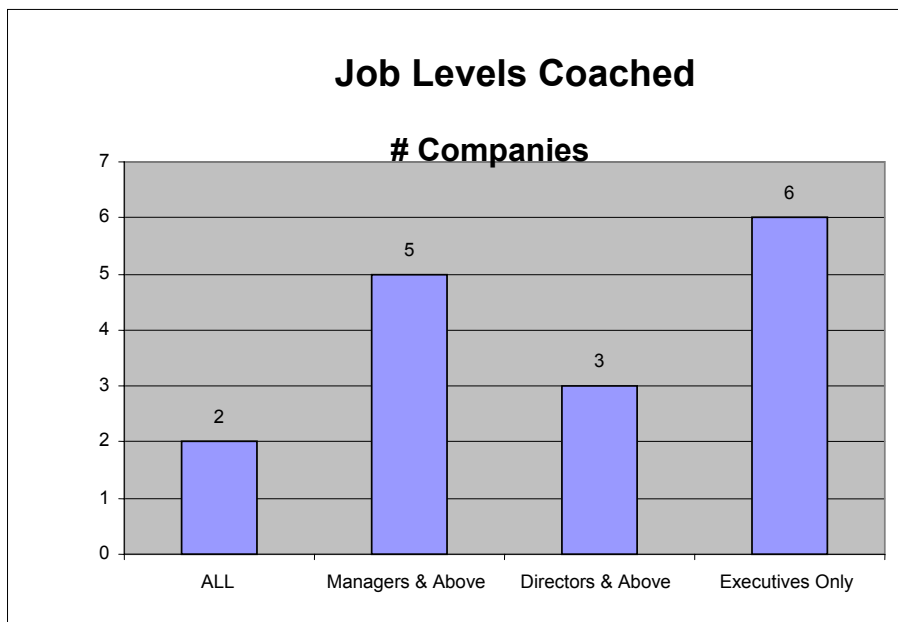
Two interviewees say they have little confidence in the “tons of [coaching] certifications” in the marketplace. Several say coach-specific training and credentials are a valuable asset to a coach and lend greater credibility, but they disagree that coach training and certifications should be a pre-requisite for hiring. “I don’t believe a person has to have formal training to work with us. Clinical psychology, a Ph.D. or other similar background tells me a person has gone pretty deep in areas related to human behavior.” Another says “outcome-based” coaching is what really counts. Several say business experience is crucial to a coach’s credibility and success. “If you grow as a person, hooray! But [coaching] is always linked to business objectives,” says another Director.

Respondents from two corporations are aware of ICF training and credentials, having attended ICF accredited schools or chapter meetings. One looks for external coaches who have coach-specific training (or are affiliated with a firm where other coaches have been trained) and the other values ICF and other certifications as a good way of differentiating experienced coaches from those who simply “hang out their shingles.”

**○ The majority of coaching is reserved for senior leaders. Where coaching is offered to lower-level employees, internal coaches are generally used.**

Over half (56%) of the companies reserve coaching for leaders who are Director level or above. Where coaching is offered to lower ranking or all employees, only internal coaches are used.

Most companies only hire external coaches for their top leadership and, in some cases, their high potential employees.



**○ Companies determine who should be coached in one of three ways: 1) internal referral 2) self-selection request, or 3) required part of career or leadership development.**

In the majority of companies (69%), a prospective coaching client is referred to Human Resources for coaching by management, Human Resources or both. Referrals are based on a development need that has been identified as a result of informal job performance observation or a more formal 360° feedback assessment. In situations where an employee is referred to Human Resources for coaching, the HR person who manages the coaching program screens the candidate to determine whether coaching is the appropriate intervention and whether, from a cost/ benefit analysis, the coaching candidate is worth the company's investment in hiring an external coach. In most cases, the prospective coachee has the option to refuse a coach.

Interestingly, in two organizations where coaching clients are referred by a higher level manager to address a development need, the C-level (executive) leaders do not receive coaching because they do not perceive the need for themselves.

In five of the 16 companies (31%), eligible employees have the opportunity for self-selection to request a coach. Again, Human Resources determines whether coaching is the appropriate answer based on need, availability of internal coaches, and the potential value of the individual to the organization.

Another four companies (25%) say coaching is mandatory as part of a formal career development program or leadership development program for grooming high-potentials. One firm requires every new hire be assigned an internal manager coach/mentor to promote a coaching culture and to carry out one of its three major business strategies: executing a Unique People Experience.

**○ In most companies, coaching clients select their own external coach based on personal interviews with one to three coaches who are recommended to them by the HR person administering the coaching program. Internal coaches are generally assigned.**

### **Matching External Coaches**

Those managers who administer their company coaching programs understand the importance of, what one Executive Director calls, the “chemistry factors” in making a successful match between coach and coaching client. Once it is determined that an employee will be provided a coach, the Human Resource contact screens the pre-selected roster of coaches and submits the biographies or contact information of 1 to 3 prospective coaches to the client for follow-up interviews.

The Human Resource contact considers matching-making criteria such as business background (psychologist, sales, executive, human resources, etc.) personality type, “chemistry”, even gender and geographical location to find the best possible match for the client’s needs. One HR Director says he relies on “gut instinct” to successfully match coaches and clients. Another says there is no real matching process: “We try it out and see if it works.” No interviewee mentioned any shortcomings in the match-making process.

### **Matching Internal Employee Coaches**

When employees are matched with internal employee coaches, there is less choice and more random assignment. One company matches internal coaches and coaching clients based primarily on their close geographical proximity to each other. Another firm assigns internal career coaches based on geography and functional area.

In another firm, Human Resources randomly assigns all new hires both a Manager coach and a Relationship Partner. Assignments are based on the number of mentees a Manager coach has (typically a maximum of 6 to 8). A new hire may request a change but that occurs less than 50% of the time.

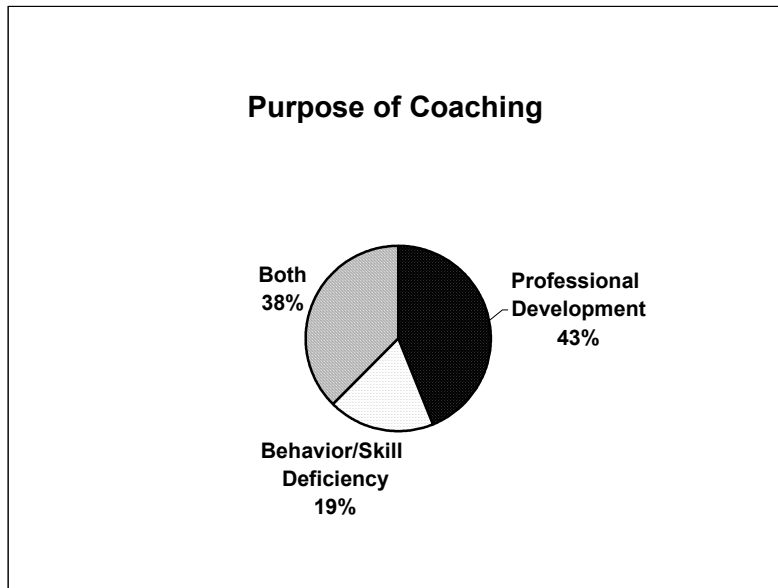
Still another HR coaching program administrator determines whether the prospective coachee should be matched with either an external or internal coach and then matches internal coaches with coaching clients who are at the coach's job level or below, based on the availability of the internal coach.

Another company that uses internal coaches exclusively allows eligible managers who have been through a 360° assessment to directly contact any internal coach they see listed on the company's Coaching Network list that is updated annually. The Coaching Network is comprised of approximately 100 high-potentials who have completed a three-day coach certification class. Only the coach's functional area is displayed, no job titles. Most internal coaches are from HR and are comprised of both corporate and field personnel.

**○ Coaching is primarily used for professional development of current and future leaders (high-potentials) and, to a lesser extent, to address a skill deficiency or behavioral issue.**

Over 80% of the companies use coaching for continued professional development of top leaders (Vice presidents and above) and high-potential talent. Another third (37%) use coaching for *both* professional development *and* to address a performance deficiency, either a skill or behavior. Only three companies (18%) use coaching strictly for remedial purposes, to address what are referred to as “derailers,” “blind spots” or “career stallers.”

In terms of professional development, coaching is most often used to prepare leaders for new and bigger roles and to build interpersonal skills such as influencing, relationship-building, team effectiveness and communication.



The deficiencies most often mentioned for a coaching interventions also involve improvement of interpersonal skills. Specific interpersonal issues include communicating less directly or abrasively, building greater credibility and influence and learning how to give constructive feedback.

Other specific reasons for using coaching include: general career development, work/life balance, leadership vision and strategy, sales effectiveness, understanding organizational dynamics, innovation, self-assuredness and awareness, customer focus, goal-setting, special needs for women and people of color, and executive presence.

**○ The average cost for employing an external coach is between \$2,000 and \$2,500 per month.**

While monthly costs for outside coaching services range from a low of \$750 a month to a high of \$4,100 a month – depending on the coachee’s job level and the amount of time the coach and client spend together per month – the average monthly cost is in the \$2,000 to \$2,500 range.

One company says it likes working with an outside coach and coaching firm who both offer an innovative flat-fee structure with a performance guarantee. A flat fee is charged for the

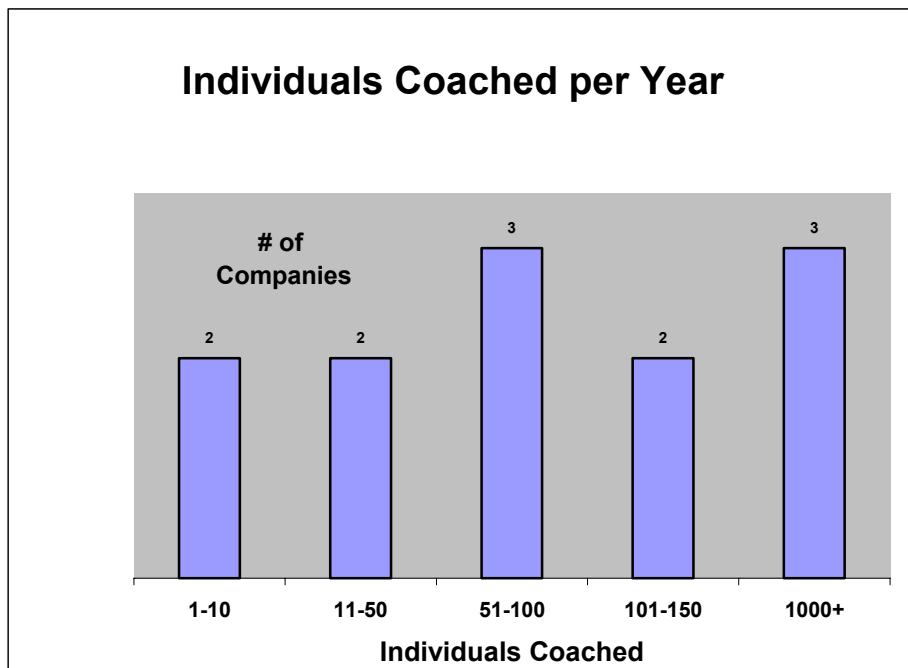
complete coaching engagement (flat fee varies based on the coaching client's job level) and the coaching continues until the goals of the coaching engagement are achieved.

**○ The average length of a coaching engagement is 5 to 11 months.**

Some coaching engagements may be as short as one session -- assisting a client in interpreting his 360° feedback assessment -- or as long as two years for executive and high-potential coaching clients. The average length of a coaching engagement, however, ranges from six months to a full year.

**○ In most companies, between 10 and 150 employees a year receive coaching.**

A range of 10 to 150 employees per year receive coaching, with the average number around 65. Two companies offer internal coaching to their entire workforce for career development purposes, which accounts for 1100 and 1200 employees a year receiving periodic coaching and mentoring. A third company has coached up to 800 employees with internal coaches and another 200 to 300 employees, using outside coaches. One Vice President at a global company does not track the number of executives who receive coaching each year because it is too fragmented and occurs in different locations worldwide.



**○ Internal coaches are required to attend a certification class, usually developed and delivered by the company. Most internal coaches spend approximately 10% to 20% of their time coaching other employees.**

Of the six corporations that use internal coaches extensively: two have no mandatory training for their employee coaches ... one requires its high-potential group of coaches to attend an internally developed and delivered three-day certification course, covering the company's 360° assessment process, its coaching model and audience understanding ... another requires all new managers to become coach/ mentors and to attend at a four-day New Manager class with 1 ½ days of coach training ... and still another puts its internal coaches through a rigorous one-year program that includes a two-day ICF accredited training course, 10 mentor coaching sessions followed by feedback, five book readings, listening to coaching critiques from web sites, three recorded coaching sessions, and a five-page final case study project.

In two corporations, most internal coaches come from Human Resources and related functions. Two other organizations recruit internal coaches from diverse functional areas and job levels. Another requires all new managers to become coaches, encouraging them to coach new hires three to four times a year, with spot Instant Message coaching along the way.

In one corporation, the internal coaches, who have mostly consulting backgrounds and are certified in the company's toolkit, and spend 100% of their time coaching and consulting with the top 300 global executives in the company. They conduct both one-on-one and team coaching.

**○ Most companies use 360° multi-rater assessments and a variety of other assessment instruments to obtain objective feedback on a coaching client's strengths and development needs.**

Approximately three-fourths of the companies use a 360° multi-rater feedback assessment instrument and/or interviews as a starting point to evaluate the strengths and development needs of coaching clients. Four companies (25%) customize their 360°s or develop them internally to address specific organizational competencies. Generally, an internal or external

coach will work with the coaching client to provide feedback on the 360° assessment and help the client subsequently create a development plan with goals, based on the feedback received. The surveyed companies also use a number of other assessment tools to identify employee strengths and development needs, as indicated in the chart below.

<b>Assessments Used</b>	
<b>Assessment</b>	<b>% Companies</b>
360°	36%
Hogan Assessment Systems	14%
Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI®)	14%
FIRO-B®	6%
PDI Profiler®	6%
DiSC®	3%
DDI Leadership Mirror	3%
Strong Interest Inventory	3%
Hermann Brain Dominance Instrument® (HBDI)	3%
Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal (WGCTA®)	3%
Birkman Method® Assessment	3%
Ryan Group Assessment	3%
Emotional Quotient Inventor (EQi®)	3%

**○ Approximately half the companies require coaches to follow a structured process or model and the other half do not. However, every company expects the coaching process to begin with a formal assessment and/or goal-setting session.**

While 46% of the companies want their coaches to follow a prescribed process or model and 54% of them have no prescribed process, every company requires the coaching process to begin with a formal assessment of the coaching client’s strengths and development needs and/or establishment of specific business goals.

Companies that want coaching to start with an assessment phase, also require the coach and client to jointly create a development plan with specific goals/ results as the second step in the process. Some companies require the coaching client's manager to be included in the goal-setting phase.

Additional steps that companies require for their coaching engagements include:

- Coaching clients review of individual action plans with their managers within 45 days of developing their plan
- Status report to both the HR contact and coaching client's manager at various milestones or "touch-points" during the coaching engagement
- Coaching client attendance at various coach-driven seminars and senior leader interaction sessions during the year (high-potentials)
- Coaching client solicitation of feedback from colleagues during the engagement
- Monthly "energizer" calls with internal coaches for ongoing professional development
- Quarterly business meetings between coach administrator and external coaches
- Contractual agreement that assures the engagement is properly set up and results-focused
- Mini 360 review after a year to assess coaching client's progress
- Year-end assessment of the coaching client's performance against goals (new hire coaching)
- An exit strategy for the coach specified upfront

**○ Most companies concede their methods for measuring the return on their coaching investment are unsatisfactory and are looking for ways to more accurately measure coaching ROI. Two companies do not want to measure ROI.**

More than half the companies concede they do an inadequate job of measuring the return on their coaching investment and are looking for better methods to measure ROI. As one HR Director put it, "It's difficult to do. I have lots of anecdotal stories but haven't done a complete analysis or thorough evaluation of coaching benefits." Some of the methods currently used include:

- Obtaining informal feedback from coaching clients, coaches and those who work with the coaching client.
- Anecdotal stories of coaching successes
- Tracking the rate of retention and turnover
- Obtaining feedback from employee satisfaction surveys to measure improvements
- Tracking career promotions
- Having the coaching client self score his performance against his coaching development plan before and after coaching.
- Changes in performance evaluations
- Measuring behavior changes against a baseline 360° assessment conducted prior to coaching, compared with a 360° assessment conducted after coaching

One Director says ROI is important, “but it is not the be all to end all. If a Group Vice-President sees the difference [in the coachee], it doesn’t matter what the ROI is. Did this person get through the transition and become effective in a short period of time?” He attributes part of the \$3.2 million bottom-line impact of specific business projects to the annual executive leadership program, of which coaching and group training both play a part.

Vice Presidents for two major corporations believe that attempting to measure coaching ROI is either unimportant or unrealistic. Asked if the corporation measures return on coaching investment, one Vice President replied, “No, we wouldn’t be that silly,” The other responded, “We don’t do it and we don’t want or need to.” Instead, his corporation looks at the direct impact that leadership behaviors have on the “climate” (environment) which positively impacts business results and reduces turnover. “That’s all we need now,” he says.

## **○ Coaching achieves a variety of soft “people” benefits.**

Corporations cite a multitude of benefits that they derive from their coaching programs. Most of the benefits address softer people needs rather than bottom-line issues. Coaching benefits include:

- Provides support and a sounding board from a partner who has no agenda
- Sends message to employees that the company values them enough to invest in them
- Improves leadership effectiveness, which directly links to organizational improvements

- Gives coaching client better sense of how he/she is viewed by the organization
- Improves performance
- Reduces turnover – “*retains the best and brightest*”
- Provides powerful tactic to address management behavior or performance problems
- Gives coaching client better understanding of how to influence their boss, peers and others
- Accelerates ability of leaders to take on greater responsibility
- Provides feedback and an action plan from the coach’s assessments
- Helps leaders better manage relationships at executive level
- Gives employees access to confidential resources, which they value
- Enhances interpersonal skills
- Gives leaders insights into their strengths and development opportunities
- Commits leaders to action plans and team development
- Improves the climate (work environment) and morale
- Better aligns leader’s personal and professional pursuits
- Increases greater self awareness
- Helps employees build trust and relationships
- Gives client a broader perspective
- Demonstrates that individuals are capable of behavior change

### **Coaching Benefits: Verbatim Comments**

*“I’ve had a number of General Managers as coaching clients say, ‘I have no one to talk to about these things except my coach.’”*

*“It’s the Hawthorne principle. People who are given coaches believe the company cares about them. Performance improves because the expectation is there and we’ve made a commitment to invest in [our people].”*

*“Coaches aren’t telling people anything new, they’re just getting through to the person. I remember a coachee commented, ‘Someone held up a mirror to me. I’d never seen myself that way up to that point. My coach didn’t let me evade what I’ve been hearing for a long time.’”*

*“A coach helped one of our directors polish her communication style and soften her directness. He taught her how to ask questions and listen. She’s making real progress and catching herself when she thinks she has all the answers.”*

*“There’s some credibility from an outside person and also that confidentiality aspect. A coach can build better trust with an individual, knowing that things are only shared at a high level with the immediate manager.”*

**○ The limitations of coaching include lack of defined outcomes, client dependency on the coach, coaching engagements that are unnecessarily prolonged as well as a variety of other factors**

Coaching limitations include:

- Dependencies can be created where clients cannot manage themselves (3)
- Coaches’ roles and outcomes are not clearly defined (3)
- Coaching engagements continue too long beyond their usefulness (2)
- Internal coaching takes place virtually, not face-to-face
- Developing internal coaches is a long, time-consuming process
- Internal coaches are hampered by time constraints
- Organizations don’t always recognize positive changes that occur in the coaching client
- Coaching is expensive
- Some at senior levels may take issue with using internal coaches
- Keeping pace with the demand for coaching from the middle management ranks is difficult
- Coaching is less effective the second time around
- Much of good decision-making centers around understanding business, not behavior
- Employees need greater awareness of the availability and benefits of career coaching
- Coaches don’t always understand the specifics of a client’s job, which is important to the client
- The contractual relationship between the coach, the coaching client, the boss and the HR person needs greater consistency
- Coaches and their clients must be held accountable
- No mechanism in place for sharing coaching success stories
- No tools to support coaching since it is not tied to leadership development initiatives
- Coaching is sometimes misperceived as a quick fix to behavior change

## Coaching Limitations: Verbatim Comments

*“Coaching is one of the least understood HR services because of its inability to define itself and its outcomes.”*

*“Without structure, coaching can feel good for the manager but, unless there is some implicit understanding that there is an action plan, the manager is not working on something. It’s not just about ‘let me bound some things off you.’”*

*“Sometimes coaching is a black hole. The coach can sometimes become an enabler to some of the behavior we’re trying to modify. It’s hard to extract them. My philosophy on coaching is it’s a booster shot, not a crutch.”*

*“Coaching has a fairly narrow window. By and large, intervention coaching is a one-shot thing. Regarding developmental coaching, once managers learn their impact on others and the value of getting feedback, the coach tends not to have as much value.”*

*“Allowing a coach and coachee to go off on their own without building in touch points – without holding the coach and coachee accountable – it’s a partnership, but putting those touch points in place and setting clear expectations is important.”*

*“Coaching has the perception of fixing someone, like taking a pill, which minimizes the complexity of behavior change.”*

*“I fundamentally believe you have to have expertise in the coachee’s field. Last time I checked, people who didn’t play basketball don’t coach basketball.”*

*“Coaches who are one-trick ponies, who can talk behavior but are not strong on the business side, don’t work as well for us as those who have a deep business understanding of what it’s like to manage.”*

*“I’ve had to cut a few relationships short because the coach had a good thing going and established a nice relationship with that person. The coachee became dependent. I believe [coaching] is a temporary relationship to ‘rehabilitate’ the person. There’s a 25,000 mile tune-up but not weekly therapy sessions.”*

**○ The demand for coaching has grown in the past few years and the future looks bright for coaches who can add value and sustainable results to organizations.**

All of the corporations in the survey say coaching has experienced noticeable growth in the past few years and will continue to grow in the future. Word-of-mouth stories involving

coaching successes have fueled increased demand for coaching. Several respondents observe that companies are shifting their view of coaching from remedial to developmental. “Due to the positive results people are seeing, we now view coaching as a perk, not a punishment.” Other companies note that coaching is now the “prestigious thing to do” ... a “country club membership type of thing.”

However, several company representatives caution that the proliferation of coaches that currently exists will reverse itself through a natural selection process where “the cream will rise to the top.” In the future, certain coaches are destined to fall the way of the dinosaur – “hobbyist coaches,” “the out-of-work clinical psychologists looking for a dollar,” and some of the “faddish” life coaches.

Some companies warn that it will be increasingly difficult for coaches to prove their value. Still, coaches who can add value and create sustainable results will be in demand due to several future trends:

- A shrinking talent pool that will make talent retention essential
- Continued succession planning
- An emerging workforce of women and other minorities in senior positions who want coaching and objective feedback
- The need to develop people faster
- The growing pressure on managers to think fast, be strategic, build relationships, adapt quickly to change and to different cultures

Two respondents say coaching will always have its skeptics until it can demonstrate sustainable results and develop meaningful metrics to measure success. Until that time, it will remain the “esoteric bring-in-the-coaches flavor of the day.” As one interviewee points out, “Corporate coaching is always looking to get more results.”

# Conclusion

The International Coach Federation's definition of professional coaching is simple and straightforward:

*An interactive process that helps individuals and organizations improve their performances and achieve extraordinary results. As a result of professional coaching, clients set better goals, take more action, make better decisions, and more fully use their natural strengths*

Atlanta's corporate community defines and practices coaching in ways that are as broad and varied as the organizations themselves. While some companies use the term "coaching" for what may be more accurately described as mentoring, training, consulting or facilitation, all are committed to developing their people in a positive, partnering way.

Coaching evolved as a profession in the early 1990's and is still in its infancy, relative to other business professions. It is only natural then that many of the coaching programs described in this survey by Atlanta's leading corporations are also going through their own growing pains – changing, evolving, looking for greater discipline and better results – just as the profession is doing.

The success stories about what coaching can do to help people realize their potential are powerful and plentiful. Still, they are stories – not statistics. If coaching as a profession and as an effective human resource intervention is to achieve its fullest potential within the corporate arena, then it must demonstrate measurable value and sustainable results.

As corporations compete in the future to recruit and retain talent from an ever shrinking pool ... as they seek to integrate and promote an increasingly diverse workforce ... and as they strive to grow global leaders faster than ever before ... coaching can play a vital and valuable role in helping accelerate the achievement of these goals. The future looks bright for coaches, for those who bring vision, value and results to their craft and their clients.

## Georgia Coach Association Survey Questionnaire

1. What is your title and responsibility regarding your organization's coaching program?
2. In what Department/Division is your coaching program managed?
3. How long has your company had a formal coaching program for its leaders or teams?
4. Does your coaching program support or align with your strategic business objectives? If so, how?
5. Does your company use internal coaches, external coaches or both?
6. What job levels in our organization are offered coaching?
7. What qualifications, training and/or credentials do you look for from your coaches?
8. Describe your selection process for coaches.
9. How is it determined who should be coached within your organization?
10. How do you match coaches to your coachees?
11. For what purposes is coaching used in your organization?
12. Do you require your coaches to follow a structured process or model? What are the elements?
13. Typically, how many employees are coached in a year?
14. What is the typical time frame for a coaching engagement?
15. What, on average, does your organization spend on a single coaching engagement?
16. Are assessment tools used in conjunction with your coaching program? What assessments are used and how are they used?
17. Does your organization also offer coaching skills training for your managers?
18. How does your organization budget for coaching?
19. How does your company measure the ROI (return on investment) or the measurable benefit of your coaching investment?
20. What would you say are the greatest benefits your company has realized from coaching? Any examples?
21. Are there any shortcomings or limitations of coaching that you did not anticipate?
22. From your perspective, how has the demand for coaching changed in the last 3 years? (Increased substantially/ Increased slightly/ Remained at the same level/ Decreased slightly/ Decreased substantially)
23. To what do you attribute the change?
24. What are your thoughts about requiring external coaches to have specific training or credentials for corporate assignments? What kind of training, background, credentials do you think they should have to be deemed as qualified?
25. What do you think the future looks like for corporate and executive coaching?