
Money

Male Execs Like Female Coaches

By Del Jones, USA TODAY

Men hold 94% of the highest corporate jobs, but they usually turn to women when they want the advice of an executive coach.

- InterCoach, an executive coaching company, kept one man on its eight-person staff — for awhile.

"Nobody asked for him," so he resigned, says InterCoach President Laura Berman Fortgang, author of *Take Yourself to the Top: The Secrets of America's #1 Career Coach*.

- George Habel, vice president for Capitol Broadcasting, says the company offers coaching to its highest executives. The executives can choose the gender of the coach, but only one has selected a man.

Many of Capitol's executives run minor league baseball teams, and all rate at least an 8 on "a macho scale to 10," Habel says. "In their worklife, they're competing primarily with men. In the end, they're just more comfortable talking to a woman."

- When Cambria Consulting needed a partner to develop its strategic executive coaching practice, it chose Ellen Kumata, whose clients have included Deloitte & Touche, Fortis, Gap, J.P. Morgan Chase, Merrill Lynch, MetLife and Wachovia.

Not that men don't try. Twenty-five percent of 4,300 certified members of the International Coach Federation are men, and Coach U, the largest training school for executive coaches, with 6,000 graduates, says more than three in 10 graduates are men.

Good coaches are intuitive, good communicators and have done a lot of personal development work, says Sandy Vilas, a man and CEO of Coach U.

"Generally speaking, that profile tends to fit women better," Vilas says. "CEOs are hard-charging, Jack Welch-type people. They recognize, in order to be balanced, they need a softer side."

"The fantasy is that women will listen better," says Susan Bloch, who heads the

120-person executive coaching practice at the Hay Group.

"When a man is asked to coach another, they have a tendency to compete. Man to man, they have to show each other how great they are."

The glass ceiling has shown few cracks recently. Of the 53 CEO openings at *Fortune* 1000 companies in the first 6 months of 2001, one went to a woman, according to executive search firm Christian & Timbers.

Women fill 6.2% of the corporate "line" positions, those with profit-and-loss responsibility, according to Catalyst, a non-profit organization to advance women in business.

But coaches are showing that access to the top can come in other ways. The executive coaching profession is less than a decade old, but growing.

The first convention, in 1996, drew 250. Today, there are about 15,000 coaches, and that number is expanding by about 200 a month, according to the International Coach Federation.

Companies including IBM and Motorola offer coaching as an expensive perk. Top coaches charge CEOs as much as \$750 an hour for 4 to 8 hours of phone conversation a month.

Unlike consultants, coaches are not experts in the business and are not hired to give advice about the day-to-day operations of the company. They are trained listeners who help with goals and personal problems.

Coaches say they spend a lot of time on the personal lives of striving male executives, which are commonly a wreck. Executives often complain of bad marriages and the inability to make it to their children's ballgames.

Candice Carpenter, former CEO of the women's Web site iVillage, is now coaching entrepreneurs to make succession plans. She says she has had six clients, all men.

As a rising executive, Carpenter says she had two coaches. One was a woman, but the other was David Zelman, now Carpenter's partner.

But Carpenter apparently is an exception. Coaches say that while male executives usually want female coaches, *female executives always want another female.*

