

# Executive Coaching Gets Personal

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## The Sherpa Global Coaching Survey

Emerging industries operate in a state of flux: new players and processes surface, delivery methods change. Even the credibility of a new industry can change dramatically, year on year. That's certainly the case in executive coaching.

The second annual Sherpa Global Coaching Survey was created by a desire to find out and share exactly what's going on in a very important industry: leadership development and executive coaching.

Two major universities' executive education programs co-sponsored the survey this year: Penn State Executive Programs and the Tandy Center for Executive Leadership at Texas Christian University. Both work with the survey's developer, Sherpa Coaching, to offer executive coach training and certification conducted by the firm's author / educators.



## Where the Results Came From

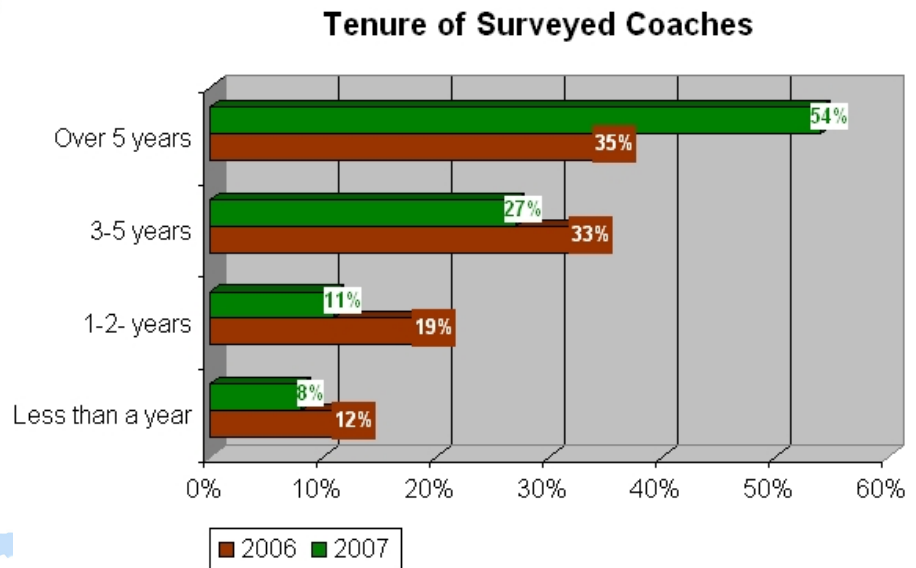
The response to this year's survey indicates a growing interest in coaching. The number of coaches who took part in the survey was up 43%, to almost 500.

Over 20% of this year's respondents also participated in last year's study, so changes and trends in the business are revealed accurately.

Survival of the fittest does create turnover among coaches. The survey's sample looks to be highly representative of established, successful coaches.



A larger percentage of participating coaches were veterans this time around:



The number of people who have used an executive coach and those who purchase coaching services both tripled this year, allowing us to start drawing some conclusions from the numbers.

The survey revealed that HR professionals and those who purchase coaching services agree that the value of executive coaching is high, but the industry's credibility is not nearly as good as its perceived value.

One of the hottest debates in coaching centers around how services should be delivered: in person or otherwise. A review of widely available research shows that well over half of our communication is non-verbal. Most of what we hear and say goes beyond our words and tone of voice. Still, a significant amount of coaching is done over the phone.

## How is Coaching Delivered? Live vs. Phone

Most coaching takes place face-to-face, and there's movement toward in-person coaching. 44% of executive coaching is delivered live, up from 39% last year. Phone coaching is second in frequency, at 37%. Email, internet chat and webcam meetings making up the remaining 20%. Email as a delivery system lost a big piece of its market share over the last year, dropping from 26% of coaching situations down to 15%.

What's most effective? It depends on who is answering the question.

Personal and life coaches actually report a higher rate of phone coaching than in-person meetings, at 41% to 39%. They also believe that phone coaching is more effective than in-person communication, by a 54% to 46% margin.

### The most effective coaching is delivered in person



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In-person coaching is judged most effective by 70% of executive coaches, against just 30% who selected phone coaching as most effective. That's a slight improvement compared to last year's 67/33 ratio. Among veteran coaches who participated in both this year's survey and last, 7% moved away from the phone and towards in-person delivery, boosting their approval rate of in-person delivery to 81%.

Coaching customers and HR experts see thing this way:

82% of those who purchase coaching see in-person as the most effective.

89% of self-described HR and training professionals agree.

96% of those who had worked with an executive coach say in-person coaching is best.

## How is training delivered??

How do people learn to be a coach? Coaches do place value on formal training and certification. Among executive coaches, 70% said their development as a coach came through either formal training or a certification program. The trend toward certification looks very strong. Among coaches participating in both this year's survey and last, an additional 15% listed certification as their primary development tool this year, taking formal certification from 39% to 54% as the preferred background for these veteran coaches.

So, how is training and certification delivered? There are a number of ways coaches can receive training. Peer Resources, a clearing house for information about coaching and mentoring, lists over 200 coach training programs, offering a wide variety of delivery methods. In some cases, coach training is delivered by computer-based CD's and by telephone. Private schools offer both in-person and online courses.

The executive education programs at a half-dozen universities offer unique programs for training and certifying executive coaches. These university-based programs include in-person classes offered by local coaches and on-line learning.

One executive coaching certification has been adopted by multiple universities. Using *The Sherpa Guide: Process-Driven Executive Coaching* as a text, and the book's authors as instructors, six universities, most recently Penn State and Texas Christian, have agreed on a standard course for certification. *The Sherpa Guide's* authors advocate in-person coaching, so they deliver 80 hours of in-person classroom instruction.

"If we advise people to coach in person, we certainly owe it to them to offer in-person training and certification.", says Judith Colemon, Sherpa Guide co-author and instructor. "Coaching is an in-person endeavor. How can someone learn the nuances of coaching unless they interact directly with their instructor? That's the very best way to learn the skill set."

## What's Next?

One thing that surprised survey sponsors is the low popularity of webcam coaching. It offers the efficiency and reach of the phone along with some of the benefits of an in-person meeting. Only 2% of coaching is taking place by webcam, though, up a percentage point from 2006.

The Sherpa Global Coaching Survey for 2007 shows that there's a movement toward live, in-person coaching. 96% of coaching clients say in-person coaching is the most effective delivery method, and coaches are responding. Since last year, veteran executive coaches are doing 7% more of their work in person. Telephone delivery of coaching is still popular, because it's efficient, and can match the best coach with a client, regardless of geography. Email coaching has fallen off the map.

Coach training programs are all over the map, but the most widely accepted university program is solidly in the camp of in-person training. We'll look for trends in the coach training business over the next few years, as dominant players emerge.

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## **Addendum: The 2007 Sherpa Global Coaching Survey's Methodology**

The Sherpa Global Coaching Survey is designed to gather information about the state of executive coaching, from coaches and those who hire them.

Invitations were sent to a worldwide list of practicing coaches, including business and personal coaches. The survey was offered in English, French, German and Spanish.

The survey sponsor, Sherpa Coaching LLC in Cincinnati, also invited HR professionals likely to hire coaches. Penn State Executive Programs and the Tandy Center for Executive Leadership at Texas Christian University, also survey sponsors, sent survey invitations to selected business professionals.

The survey was designed to differentiate between groups of respondents, and even asked different questions of coaches and non-coaches. When questions involved a subjective multiple choice, respondents were shown the choices in random order.

Research indicates that last year's Sherpa Global Coaching Survey was the largest published survey on executive coaching. The 2007 survey contains many of the same questions reported in 2006. Year to year comparison produces new information about trends in the ways coaching is practiced and perceived.

IQS Research of Louisville, Kentucky (USA) again hosted the survey and validated results. Respondents could take the survey more than once, but technology behind the scenes at IQS Research flagged duplicate responses. Once the data was collected, survey sponsor Sherpa Coaching LLC verified, analyzed and reported results using a Microsoft Access database developed for this project.

The survey is offered annually in early December, with publication of results on January 15th of the following year. Those who respond to the survey receive the results directly by email, the day they are released.



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