

Assessing Awareness of Coaching

Mark Ruth

Every year, the [International Coach Federation](#) (ICF) invests in [industry research](#) to demonstrate the highly effective nature of coaching. This allows the community of professional coaches to stand strong with fresh knowledge of industry trends to inform their decisions. ICF research also builds a platform for advocacy, helping spread awareness of how people can unlock their potential through coaching. The latest addition to our portfolio of industry research is the [2014 ICF Global Consumer Awareness Study](#) undertaken by the ICF in collaboration with PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP.

While it will always be important for the ICF to produce studies about coaches and the global coaching market, our members continually underscore their need to access current and relevant data about those who intend to purchase coaching services. One of the primary advantages of the *2014 Global Consumer Awareness Study* is that it has been designed to tap directly into the insights of adult consumers around the world—irrespective of their awareness of or preconceived notions about coaching.

Awareness of unbiased consumer perceptions is crucial, as it can empower coaching practices in many ways. By having a finger on the pulse of the population residing in their nation or region, coaches can familiarize themselves with various triggers that may cause a consumer to select (or perhaps to reject) coaching as a solution. If information truly is power, then coaches can use this information to enhance their marketing approaches toward potential clients. Furthermore, knowing how and why consumers value coaching could help validate some of the most important decisions a coach makes about individual professional development.

This research was derived using broad-reaching geographical input. When the ICF completed the benchmark version of this study (the [2010 ICF Global Consumer Awareness Study](#)) our survey was deployed in 10 languages that were considered most appropriate to serve consumers who were living in the 20 nations that participated in the research. (The 2010 study was conducted across the ICF's top 20 countries as determined by the ICF Members Rank league table. Those countries represented approximately 90 percent of the ICF's critical mass of known membership clusters.) As the coaching profession has evolved over the last several years, the critical mass of coach practitioners has become more dispersed and is growing rapidly in emerging global regions. As such, we expanded our global reach in the 2014 study to include consumer feedback from 25 nations—this time, using a survey instrument that was supported in 16 different languages!

We are all mindful that significant economic challenges were present in nearly every corner of the world over the last several years. This climate clearly prompted some individuals (having lower discretionary income) and organizations (having reduced budgetary allocations) to make very difficult decisions about how they invested their resources. Despite the reported impact that these fiscal decisions had on other—more established—professions and industry sectors, the overall awareness of professional coaching actually grew steadily around the world in the years since the benchmark study was completed by ICF.

Of course, one of the main advantages of the 2010 study data is that it affords us a wonderful opportunity to provide global trending data that spans the last three-plus years. Within nations that appeared in both the 2010 and 2014 studies, the proportion of consumers who indicated that they were “very aware” of professional coaching rose six percent since 2010 to nearly one in five (19 percent).

It also appears that, among those consumers who have been in a coaching relationship, ensuring the knowledge, skills and professionalism of their coach is of paramount importance. When these same consumers were asked to describe the importance of their coach “having a certification/credential,” the vast majority (83 percent) of consumers affirmed that it was an important factor. In fact, two in five (40 percent) responded that this designation was “very important.”

In March 2014, ICF produced an infographic, titled [Who’s Buying Coaching?](#), that provided some initial demographic information gleaned from our research about the current buyers of coaching. Among those individuals who had not yet been coached, more than half (55 percent) under age 45 indicated that they would consider coaching as a solution. We also noticed some interesting developments among younger consumers. Among respondents aged 25 to 34 who had been coached, more than half (54 percent) made it a point to confirm whether or not their coach held a certification/credential. So, what is the best news of all? Regardless of their age, the overwhelming majority (85 percent) of those individuals who had been coached indicated that they were satisfied (either very or somewhat) with their coaching experience.

Because there are so many more storylines still to emerge from this research, I invite you to visit Coachfederation.org/consumerstudy2014 to access summary reports, data sheets and other content based on findings from the *2014 Global Consumer Awareness Study*.

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