

Development of Coaches: VI. Does ICF Certification Make A Difference?

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This sixth report is the first in a series regarding potential differences in responses to the Development of Coaches survey based on the training, education and certification of professional coaches. In the previous two studies, we focused on two typical distinguishing features among human beings (and coaches): the gender and age of respondents. In this sixth study, we focus on the certification of professional coaches. Specifically, we divided our sample into two groups: (1) those who report having completed a training program certified by the International Coaching Federation (ICF) and became certified coaches, and (2) those who did not take an ICF certified training program or did not complete such a program. We call the first group of respondents “certifieds.” The second group are called “renegades.” While the term “renegade” might seem to be disparaging, it is not meant to be interpreted in this manner. I am, myself, one of these “renegades.” Rather the term is meant to convey something about the diverse and often a bit defiant nature of this second group. Some leaders in the field of professional coaching would applaud this second group as providing diversity and even innovation in the field. In many cases, these renegades were some of the founders of the field, who never bothered to get certified, having already established themselves as knowledgeable and competent professional coaches. Other leaders in the field would identify the “renegades” as those who are holding back the professionalization of coaching. We will hold further review of these contrasting perspectives for our discussion regarding results obtained from these two groups.

It should be noted that the certified group is much larger than the renegade group: 185 certified and 76 renegades. This discrepancy is quite understandable, given that ICF was one of the sponsors of the first survey and that the second survey relied on lists generated from ICF (among several sources). It should also be noted that the “renegade” group is quite diverse in terms of the background and training of this group’s members. A variety of respondents had to be placed in this one group in order to make it large enough for the statistical analyses being

performed. Future surveys hopefully will attract a much larger number of non-ICF certified respondents so that more finely differentiated groups can be identified.

Results

Having found results from the two surveys to be closely aligned in our initial analyses, we combined the responses to both surveys (having also done so in the two demographically based analyses that we offered in the previous two reports). Furthermore, as we did in the demographic analyses, we went beyond the calculation of means and variances for the two different certification groups. We conducted simple T-Tests to determine if the differences between responses of the certified and renegade coaches were significantly different regarding any of the survey questions. As we did in the previous two demographic studies, we present the mean, variance and T-Test Scores in the next section of this report for each of the seven questions on which we focused in the previous five studies. In addition, because many significant (or near significant) differences were found, we present the t-test score for each question as well as degrees of freedom and, when significant, the critical value (CV) associated with either the .05 or .01 level of significance.

Question: Since you began formally working as a coach . . .

	ICF Certified	Non-ICF Certified (Renegade)	T-Test	P Level
<i>How much have you changed overall as a coach?</i>	Mean=4.20 Variance=0.71	Mean=3.71 Variance =1.05	t = 3.57 df = 210	Significant <.01 CV=2.60
<i>How much do you regard this as progress or</i>	Mean=4.33 Variance=0.71	Mean=4.36 Variance =0.83	t = 0.57 df = 206	>.05

<i>improvement?</i>				
<i>How much do you regard this as a decline or impairment?</i>	Mean=0.21 Variance=0.33	Mean=0.17 Variance =0.37	t = 0.38 df = 210	>.05
<i>How much have you succeeded in overcoming any past limitations in your coaching skills and knowledge?</i>	Mean=3.99 Variance=0.73	Mean=3.69 Variance =1.00	t = 2.15 df = 208	Significant <.05 CV=1.97
<i>How much have you realized your potential as a coach?</i>	Mean=3.85 Variance=1.13	Mean=3.71 Variance =1.11	t = 0.87 df =210	>.05

Results from these two surveys suggest that those with formal ICF certification are more likely than the renegades to perceive themselves as changing overall as a coach since beginning their formal work as a coach. The difference is significant at the .01 level of confidence. In a similar vein, the ICF certified coaches are also more likely than the renegades to have perceived themselves as overcoming past limitations as a coach (in terms of their skills and knowledge). The difference in mean scores was recorded at the .05 level of confidence.

Question: Overall at the PRESENT time . . .

	ICF Certified	Non-ICF Certified (Renegade)	T-Test	P Level
<i>How effective are you at co-creating</i>	Mean=4.40	Mean=4.26	t = 1.29	>.05

<i>the working partnership with clients?</i>	Variance=0.42	Variance=0.72	df =206	
<i>How authentically personal do you feel while working with clients?</i>	Mean=4.60 Variance=0.33	Mean=4.39 Variance=0.57	t = 2.19 df =206	Significant <.05 CV=1.97

<i>How good is your general theoretical understanding of coaching?</i>	Mean=4.31 Variance=0.55	Mean=4.18 Variance=0.72	t = 1.09 df =205	>.05
<i>How empathetic are you in relating to clients with whom you have relativity little in common?</i>	Mean=4.40 Variance=0.53	Mean=4.28 Variance=0.57	t = 1.06 df =205	>.05
<i>How effective are you in communicating your understanding and concern to your clients?</i>	Mean=4.47 Variance=0.38	Mean=4.33 Variance=0.66	t = 1.40 df =205	>.05
<i>How much mastery do you feel you have of the techniques and strategies involved in practicing coaching?</i>	Mean=3.99 Variance=0.60	Mean=3.98 Variance=0.72	t = 0.08 df =205	>.05
<i>How well do you understand what happens moment by moment during coaching sessions?</i>	Mean=4.12 Variance=0.68	Mean=4.11 Variance=0.65	t = 0.03 df =206	>.05
<i>How effective are you at stimulating client insight?</i>	Mean=4.11 Variance=0.66	Mean=4.32 Variance=0.56	t = -1.50 df =208	>.05
<i>How much precision, subtlety and finesse have you attained in your coaching work?</i>	Mean=3.97 Variance=0.85	Mean=3.93 Variance=0.74	t = 0.23 df =203	>.05

<i>How confident do you feel in your role as a coach?</i>	Mean=4.24 Variance=0.62	Mean=4.33 Variance=0.49	t = -0.76 df =205	>.05
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When appraising themselves as coaches, those with the ICF certification are more likely than their renegade colleagues to describe themselves as “authentically personal” when working with their clients. This difference was significant at the .05 level of confidence.

Question: Currently, how often do you feel . . .

	ICF Certified	Non-ICF Certified (Renegade)	T-Test	P Level
<i>Lacking confidence that you can provide a beneficial effect for a client.</i>	Mean=1.44 Variance=0.47	Mean=1.50 Variance =0.48	t = -0.60 df =202	>.05
<i>Unsure how best to deal effectively with a client.</i>	Mean=1.51 Variance=0.41	Mean=1.40 Variance =0.44	t = 1.05 df =202	>.05
<i>In danger of losing control of a coaching conversation to a client.</i>	Mean=0.89 Variance=0.62	Mean=0.97 Variance =0.49	t = -0.63 df =202	>.05

<i>Unable to have much real empathy for a client's experiences.</i>	Mean=0.63 Variance=0.32	Mean=0.74 Variance =0.42	t = -1.20 df =202	>.05
<i>Uneasy that your personal values make it difficult to maintain an appropriate attitude toward a client.</i>	Mean=0.70 Variance=0.35	Mean=0.71 Variance =0.37	t = -0.06 df =202	>.05
<i>Distressed by your inability to impact a client's life or work situation.</i>	Mean=1.01 Variance=0.57	Mean=1.08 Variance =0.73	t = -0.56 df = 202	>.05
<i>Troubled by ethical issues that have arisen in your work with a client.</i>	Mean=0.60 Variance=0.40	Mean=0.74 Variance =0.46	t = -1.46 df =202	>.05
<i>Irritated by a client who seems to be actively blocking your efforts.</i>	Mean=0.94 Variance=0.58	Mean=1.05 Variance =0.57	t = -0.91 df =202	>.05
<i>Unable to comprehend the essence of a client's problem.</i>	Mean=0.85 Variance=0.42	Mean=0.90 Variance =0.52	t = -0.54 df =202	>.05
<i>Unable to find something to like or respect in a client.</i>	Mean=0.33 Variance=0.24	Mean=0.53 Variance =0.42	t = -2.45 df =202	Significant <.05 CV=1.97
<i>Conflicted about how to reconcile obligations to a client and equivalent obligation to others</i>	Mean=0.76 Variance=0.48	Mean=1.00 Variance =0.89	t = -2.03 df =202	Significant >.05 CV+1.97

<i>Bogged down with a client in a relationship that seems to be going nowhere.</i>	Mean=0.99 Variance=0.56	Mean=0.98 Variance =0.54	t = 0.08 df =202	>.05
<i>Frustrated with a client for wasting your time</i>	Mean=0.71 Variance=0.52	Mean=0.77 Variance =0.54	t = -0.57 df =202	>.05

When compared to the ICF certified coaches, the renegades indicate that they are more likely to encounter some problems with client relationships. This shows up in the responses to two questions: (1) “unable to find something to like or respect in a client” and (2) conflicted about how to reconcile obligations to a client and equivalent.” Those the scores are low for both the ICF certified respondents and the renegades, the mean scores are significantly higher (at the .05 level of confidence) for the respondents.

Question: When in difficulty, how often do you . . .

	ICF Certified	Non-ICF Certified (Renegade)	T-Test	P Level
<i>Try to see the problem from a different perspective</i>	Mean=3.97 Variance=0.78	Mean=3.97 Variance =0.70	t = 0.03 df =199	>.05
<i>Share your experience of the difficulty with a client</i>	Mean=2.86 Variance=1.75	Mean=2.82 Variance =1.42	t = 0.19 df =199	>.05
<i>Discuss the problem with a more experienced colleague</i>	Mean=3.27 Variance=1.51	Mean=2.95 Variance =1.68	t = 1.67 df =199	>.05
<i>Consult relevant articles or books</i>	Mean=2.70 Variance=1.81	Mean=2.87 Variance =1.72	t = -0.82 df =199	>.05

<i>Involve another professional or organization in the case</i>	Mean=1.73 Variance=1.65	Mean=1.79 Variance =2.34	t = -0.28 df =199	>.05
<i>Make changes in your coaching contract with a client</i>	Mean=1.74 Variance=1.63	Mean=1.38 Variance =1.47	t = 1.90 df =199	>.05
<i>Simply hope that things will improve eventually</i>	Mean=0.79 Variance=0.73	Mean=0.80 Variance =0.86	t = -0.08 df =199	>.05
<i>Seriously consider terminating coaching</i>	Mean=1.29 Variance=0.80	Mean=1.03 Variance =0.63	t = 1.96 df =199	>.05 CV= 1.98
<i>Review privately with yourself how the problem has arisen</i>	Mean=3.66 Variance=1.35	Mean=3.74 Variance =1.50	t = -0.41 df =199	>.05
<i>Just give yourself permission to experience difficult or disturbing feelings</i>	Mean=3.21 Variance=1.39	Mean=3.41 Variance =1.28	t = -1.09 df =199	>.05
<i>See whether you and your client can deal together with the difficulty</i>	Mean=3.37 Variance=1.58	Mean=3.41 Variance =1.00	t = -0.26 df =199	>.05
<i>Sign up for a conference or workshop that might bear on the problem</i>	Mean=1.41 Variance=1.49	Mean=1.53 Variance =1.59	t = -0.69 df =230	>.05
<i>Modify your stance or approach with a client</i>	Mean=3.31 Variance=1.20	Mean=3.16 Variance =1.24	t = 1.00 df =230	>.05
<i>Avoid dealing with the problem for the present</i>	Mean=0.94 Variance=0.63	Mean=0.96 Variance =0.80	t = -0.16 df =230	>.05
<i>Show your frustration to the client</i>	Mean=0.83 Variance=0.87	Mean=0.72 Variance =0.69	t = 0.81 df =230	>.05

<i>Explore the possibility of referring the client to another coach</i>	Mean=1.54 Variance=1.13	Mean=1.79 Variance =1.19	t = -1.62 df =230	>.05
<i>Refer the client to some other non-coaching professional</i>	Mean=1.60 Variance=1.24	Mean=1.80 Variance =1.29	t = -1.26 df =230	>.05

When in difficulty, the ICF certified respondents indicate that they are more likely than the renegade respondents to “seriously consider terminating coaching.” This difference is significant at the .05 level of confidence.

Question: In your RECENT coaching how often . . .

	ICF Certified	Non-ICF Certified (Renegade)	T-Test	P Level
<i>Do you feel you are changing as a coach?</i>	Mean=3.72 Variance=0.97	Mean=3.42 Variance =1.61	t = 1.92 df =225	>.05 CV=1.97
<i>Does this change feel like progress or improvement?</i>	Mean=4.16 Variance=0.91	Mean=3.87 Variance =1.62	t = 1.80 df =222	>.05 CV=1.97
<i>Does this change feel like decline or impairment?</i>	Mean=0.23 Variance=0.38	Mean=0.06 Variance =0.09	t = 2.11 df =224	Significant >.05 CV=1.97

<i>Do you feel you are overcoming past limitations as a coach?</i>	Mean=3.52 Variance=1.53	Mean=3.51 Variance =1.59	t = 0.05 df =224	>.05
<i>Do you feel you are becoming more skillful in practicing coaching?</i>	Mean=4.08 Variance=0.84	Mean=4.03 Variance =1.30	t = 0.32 df =224	>.05
<i>Do you feel you are deepening your understanding of coaching?</i>	Mean=4.14 Variance=0.96	Mean=4.09 Variance =1.23	t = 0.33 df =224	>.05
<i>Do you feel a growing sense of enthusiasm about doing coaching?</i>	Mean=3.93 Variance=1.44	Mean=3.92 Variance =1.70	t = 0.03 df =222	>.05
<i>Do you feel you are becoming disillusioned about coaching?</i>	Mean=0.42 Variance=0.76	Mean=0.57 Variance =1.04	t = -1.09 df =224	>.05
<i>Do you feel you are losing your capacity to respond empathetically?</i>	Mean=0.16 Variance=0.44	Mean=0.13 Variance =0.24	t = 0.32 df =224	>.05
<i>Do you feel your performance is becoming mainly routine?</i>	Mean=0.45 Variance=0.55	Mean=0.48 Variance =0.98	t = -0.26 df =224	>.05
<i>How capable do you feel to guide the development of other coaches?</i>	Mean=3.75 Variance=1.60	Mean=3.69 Variance =1.79	t = 0.32 df =223	>.05
<i>How important to you is your further development as a coach?</i>	Mean=4.64 Variance=0.55	Mean=4.37 Variance =1.48	t = df =	Significant >.05 CV=1.97

While the mean scores of both the ICF certified and renegade respondents were generally quite low with regard to the extent their changes as a coach in recent times “feel like decline or

impairment,” a significance difference (at the .05 level of confidence) was identified. Those with ICF certification were more likely to identify decline or impairment than were the renegades. At the same time, the ICF certified respondents were more likely than the renegade respondents to believe their own future development as a coach to be very important, the level of confidence being at the .05 level.

As we move to our report on the final two questions, we wish to note that the respondent scale changes from a 1-5 rating to a scale that ranging from plus 3 to minus 3. Hence, the mean scores will usually be lower than is the case with the previous questions.

Question: How much influence has each of the following had on your OVERALL development as a coach?

	ICF Certified	Non-ICF Certified (Renegade)	T-Test	P Level
<i>Experiences in coaching clients</i>	Mean=2.75 Variance=0.29	Mean=2.69 Variance =0.43	t = 0.62 df =182	>.05
<i>Taking coaching specific courses, seminars or workshops (including online courses)</i>	Mean=2.37 Variance=0.73	Mean=1.93 Variance =1.14	t = 3.00 df =181	Significant <.01 CV=2.60
<i>Collaborating with other coaches</i>	Mean=2.12 Variance=0.83	Mean=1.90 Variance =1.01	t = 1.49 df =182	>.05

<i>Getting formal supervision, mentoring or consultation</i>	Mean=2.11 Variance=1.00	Mean=1.62 Variance =1.40	t = 2.92 df =182	Significant <.01 CV=2.60
<i>Having informal case discussion with colleagues</i>	Mean=1.80 Variance=1.12	Mean=1.71 Variance =0.95	t = 1.59 df =182	>.05
<i>Reading books or journals relevant to your coaching practice</i>	Mean=1.98 Variance=0.58	Mean=2.09 Variance =0.78	t = -0.86 df =182	>.05
<i>Observing coaches in workshops, films or on tapes</i>	Mean=1.53 Variance=1.31	Mean=1.29 Variance =1.09	t = 1.35 df =182	>.05
<i>Getting personal coaching</i>	Mean=2.18 Variance=0.89	Mean=1.79 Variance =1.32	t = 2.43 df =182	Significant <.05 CV=1.98
<i>Giving formal supervision, mentor coaching, or consultation to other coaches</i>	Mean=1.88 Variance=1.27	Mean=1.59 Variance =1.55	t = 1.59 df =182	>.05
<i>Teaching coaching courses or seminars (face to face or online)</i>	Mean=1.78 Variance=1.68	Mean=1.47 Variance =1.87	t = 1.49 df =182	>.05
<i>Doing coaching related research</i>	Mean=1.16 Variance=1.59	Mean=1.21 Variance =1.36	t = -0.24 df =181	>.05

<i>The institutional conditions in which you practice</i>	Mean=1.21 Variance=1.41	Mean=0.84 Variance =0.78	t = 2.03 df =181	Significant <.05 CV=1.98
<i>Experiences in your personal life</i>	Mean=2.13 Variance=0.82	Mean=2.20 Variance =0.82	t = -0.47 df =179	>.05

There were four areas of significance difference in the average (mean) responses of ICF certified coaches and renegade coaches to this set of questions regarding overall influences on their development as coaches. Three of these areas relate to the influence of outside agencies of change and improvement. Overall (during their career as coaches) ICF certified coaches are significantly more likely to be influenced by specific coaching courses, seminars or workshops (including on-line courses) (.01 level of confidence). They are also significantly more likely than renegades to be influenced by formal supervision, mentoring or consultation (.01 level of confidence) and to be influenced by personal coaching (.05 level of confidence). These significant results can alternatively be interpreted (because of the wording of specific items) as the respondent's rating of the extent to which they *make use* of these outside support services.

The fourth item that yielded significant difference between the ICF certified and renegade coach responses concerned the overall influence of institutional conditions in which they have done coaching during their career. The ICF certified respondents are significantly more likely than the renegade respondents (.05 level of confidence) to indicate that they have been influenced by the institutional conditions.

Question: How much influence does each of the following have on your CURRENT development as a coach?

	ICF Certified	Non-ICF Certified (Renegade)	T-Test	P Level
<i>Experiences in coaching with clients</i>	Mean=2.61 Variance=0.60	Mean=2.48 Variance =0.54	t = 1.06 df =214	>.05
<i>Taking courses, seminars or workshops (including online courses)</i>	Mean=2.05 Variance=0.82	Mean=1.71 Variance =1.22	t = 2.42 df =216	Significant <.05 CV=1.97
<i>Getting formal supervision or consultation</i>	Mean=1.76 Variance=1.68	Mean=1.67 Variance =1.46	t = 0.53 df =216	>.05
<i>Having informal case discussion with colleagues</i>	Mean=1.84 Variance=0.94	Mean=1.60 Variance =1.06	t = 1.62 df =216	>.05
<i>Reading books or journals relevant to your coaching practice</i>	Mean=1.88 Variance=0.89	Mean=1.92 Variance =0.78	t = -0.36 df =216	>.05
<i>Getting life coaching for yourself</i>	Mean=1.64 Variance=1.42	Mean=1.44 Variance =1.57	t = 1.15 df =216	>.05

<i>Getting coaching on your coaching work</i>	Mean=1.65 Variance=1.52	Mean=1.47 Variance =1.27	t = 1.01 df =212	>.05
<i>Coaching other coaches on professional or life issues</i>	Mean=1.72 Variance=1.39	Mean=1.38 Variance =1.90	t = 1.83 df =215	>.05
<i>Giving supervision or consultation to other coaches</i>	Mean=1.57 Variance=1.83	Mean=1.32 Variance =1.64	t = 1.30 df =214	>.05
<i>Teaching coaching courses or seminars (face to face or online)</i>	Mean=1.65 Variance=1.76	Mean=1.30 Variance =2.28	t = 1.71 df =213	>.05
<i>The workplace conditions in which you practice</i>	Mean=0.85 Variance=2.55	Mean=0.82 Variance =2.12	t = 0.17 df =214	>.05
<i>Experiences in your personal life outside coaching</i>	Mean=1.77 Variance=1.68	Mean=1.71 Variance =1.59	t = 0.35 df =214	>.05

This final set of items is directly aligned with those of the previous question – except in this instance the items focus on the current (rather than overall) development of the coaches. Only one item yielded significant differences between ICF certified and renegade coaches. This is the item concerning “courses, seminars or workshops (including online courses).” ICF certified coaches are more likely to indicate that they are influenced currently by participation in these training and education services than are renegades (significant at the .05 level of confidence).

Discussion

As we mentioned even before presenting these results, there are quite a few significant differences regarding responses to the Development of Coaching questions as a function of whether or not the respondent completed ICF certification. While most of the differences in mean scores as a result of gender and age were minimal, we find not only many differences as a function of certification that are significant at the .05 and .01 level, but also many that come close to significance (hovering at the .10 level of significance). Unlike in our demographic

analyses concerning gender and age, we seem to have discovered at least one of the sources of variance in the responses of coaches to the two surveys – though we should be reminded of Rey Carr’s cautionary note regarding Survey Monkey results. Furthermore, we need to be reminded that when many statistical calculations are being performed, the use of .05 and .01 confidence levels become suspect. Put simply, if one hundred calculations are performed, then five of them will be significant by chance. Technically, the levels of confidence should be adjusted and the “bar” of significance raised when multiple t-test (or analyses of variance) are performed.

Given these cautions, it is important to note that the differences to be found among respondents who are ICF certified and those who are not certified (the “renegades”) are quite striking and do not resemble in any way the minimal differences to be found as a function of age or gender. Furthermore, there are some specific differences that reached significance: our respondents seemed to be discerning in their rating of specific items. There is not some generalized “social desirability” or “acquiescence” biases that impacted on one of our two groups. In sum, we do seem to have “hit the mother lode” with regard to identifying at least one of the major factors contributing to variance in mean scores--and, this is with the division of respondents into two very rough categories (especially those in the “renegade” category). With finer differentiations in future studies, even greater differences are likely to be found. With these caveats and considerations in mind, we can turn specifically to the significant differences we did discover and speculate on what these differences might mean.

Two Parallel Universes

To a certain extent, the results confirm the observation (and conclusion) made by our colleague, Rey Carr, about the world of ICF coaching certification and the world of coaching outside this certification. Rey suggested that these are “parallel universes.” Through examining results from the Development of Coaches survey, we have found some expected differences: ICF certified coaches are more likely to have been influenced by their training as a coach, as well as the supervision and personal coaching they received. These coaches are also more likely to indicate that they have changed as a coach and have overcome limitations in their coaching. It is not surprising, in addition, that the ICF certified coaches are more likely than renegades to value further professional development. All of this is a large part of what the ICF certification process is about: training, supervision, being coached by a senior colleague or mentor – valuing their

ongoing development as a professional and looking forward to further professional development in the future. In this regard, ICF-based coaching is closely aligned with many other human service professions – such as psychotherapy, clinical social work and even medicine. This is part of the professionalization of coaching (following in the tradition of these other human service professions).

However, something more complex seems to be operating in these two universes. The ICF certified coaches perceive themselves as being more authentically personal in working with clients than do the renegades. Conversely, the renegades are more likely to acknowledge difficulty in working with some clients and to find it sometimes difficult to reconcile obligations to client and equivalent obligations to other stakeholders. Are the ICF coaches just naïve or perhaps more blindly optimistic about their work, whereas the renegades are more experienced, realistic and perhaps more honest? Or do the ICF coaches simply do a better job in working with their clients – having received more training and having been tested extensively for their competence as coaches?

Three other findings make the picture even more complex. The ICF certified coaches indicate that they are more likely to be influenced by the institutional conditions in which they are operating. They are also more likely than are the renegades to consider terminating a coaching contract with difficult clients and are more likely to see the changes that have occurred in their coaching profession to be a decline (rather than an advance). Admittedly, the mean scores for all respondents on these last two items are quite low, and some of the significant differences in mean scores might be attributable in both instances to a few “outlier” responses by ICF respondents who are either very candid or truly in some trouble with regard to their coaching practices.

Coaching and the Locus of Control

Each of these findings needs to be further verified and more carefully examined in future studies. There certainly are no results from these two surveys that can be taken as final (though some of them yielded differences that are significant at the .01 level of confidence). There does seem to be a pattern, however, that can lead us to a theme that I believe might be worth further discussion within the profession of coaching. This theme concerns the so-called “locus of control” to be found among respondents to the Development of Coaches Survey.

Substantial research has been done that suggests people differ with regard to the extent they have adopted an “internal” or “external” locus of control. Those who hold a bias toward an internal locus of control tend to believe that they have considerable control over (and accountability for) the actions they have taken as well as the environment in which they live (and have helped to create). Conversely, those with a bias toward external locus of control tend to believe that they have very little control over (and hence minimal accountability for) the actions they have taken or the environment in which they live. For those with an external locus of control, life seems to be in the hands of other people (authority) or other forces in their world (fate). The men and women who tend to embrace an internal locus of control are inclined to take responsibility for everything in their life. They are always putting in extra time and devoting extensive energy to getting everything “right.”

In examining the results obtained in this study, it would seem that those with ICF certification are more inclined toward an external locus of control, while those who are renegades tend to be inclined toward an internal locus. The certified coaches look to outside resources when preparing to be a coach and seek external verification (through ICF) regarding their own professional competence. They also might be more sensitive to their environment and might consider themselves to be more interpersonally-sensitive (personal authenticity) than are their more internally-focused colleagues without certification. The renegades, on the other hand, might (as their name implies) be loners who are “guided by their own star”, rather than relying on any external verification.

Coaching and the Frontier Village

In the past, I have drawn an analogy (as have many of my colleagues) between the emerging profession of coaching and the establishment of a frontier town. Perhaps the renegade coaches are the pioneers and trail-blazers. They like their town to be a bit wild and filled with interesting people from many different backgrounds. These innovators, rogues, and rascals don’t want the town to get “too civilized” and are inclined to move on when everything gets too “settled.” Conversely, the ICF certified coaches may be the ones who want to build a sustainable community (I have called them the “burghers” who build the foundation and govern their town). These men and women often become the school teachers, the bankers and even the preachers and sheriffs of their town. They want law-and-order and do not take kindly

to those who insist on going their own way and causing problems in town. These “law-abiding” community-builders are often relieved when the renegades leave town so that they can seek out new frontiers that allow them to remain staunchly a non-confirming individual.

Obviously, this is just an analogy and certainly does not capture the much subtler processes going on in the field of professional coaching. There might, however, be an ounce of truth (and reality) in drawing this analogy. We will have to explore further the differences between ICF certified coaches and those without certification. Is Rey Carr accurate in his identification of “parallel universes” – and is there room for both law-abiding citizens and rogues in the community being built by those of us who care about and serve as stewards of the coaching profession? Is there a place for both innovation and credibility? Can we embrace both diversity and uniform standards in this field? Do we want professional coaching to become something more than a frontier village – or is that the primary appeal of this human serve endeavor for many of us? I believe that these questions and alternatives are yet to be fully addressed. Stay turned . . .

Reference

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