
Manila Women's Forum

A Network of Women Professionals

April 2007

Finding Balance through Coaching

By Natasha Davis

The March MWF meeting started with over 40 women introducing themselves, all of whom came out especially to listen to Shana Montesol Johnson speak on life balance and coaching. Shana is a remarkable woman who manages to balance working with having a young family, just as she helps some of her coaching clients to do. Shana is a consultant and a coach. Her areas of expertise in consulting are strategic planning, change management, facilitation, and organizational development. She has previously worked in the US for IBM Business Consulting Services and PricewaterhouseCoopers.

As a coach, Shana works with individuals to help them meet their personal and professional goals. She coaches people in a variety of areas, including leadership, management, career development, transitions, and life balance. Specific issues addressed in coaching may include a dispute with a colleague, the need to make a critical decision about one's career, or the desire to become a better partner.

Shana is able to draw on her life experiences in her role as life coach. She openly shared with us three defining "snapshots" in her life when she grappled with the issue of life balance. The first was when she was

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Shana Montesol Johnson, consultant and coach

NEXTMWFMEETING ■ **When:** 6:30 p.m. Monday 2007 April 16. **What:** Aurora de Dios, Director of the Women and Gender Institute at Miriam College, will speak about migration and women's rights. The Institute has launched a master's study program on migration, a first in the region, and a summer certificate course will be offered in May. **Where:** Lisa Lumbao's house, 26-B Casa Real Townhouses, Real St., Urdaneta Village, Makati. **Bring:** Something to share for the potluck dinner (for 30). **May meeting:** Monday, 2007 May 21.

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living and working in Washington, DC as a management consultant and decided that in her spare time she would set up a not-for-profit organization to provide tutoring and mentoring to low-income students. The organization became her passion, but balancing her volunteer commitments with her career was also exhausting at times. The second instance was when Shana moved to Manila as a trailing spouse and experienced the difficulties of adjusting to a very different life in which she was not working and didn't have a support network of family and friends. In the third "snapshot," Shana became a mother a bit over a year ago, and now experiences – as many moms do – the challenge of balancing motherhood and personhood.

Shana explained that it is important to first define balance – it doesn't mean that all parts of your life must be equally proportional. Rather, in her view, balance is about making the parts

of your life work the best together so that they serve you the best.

Achieving and maintaining balance in your life requires constant effort, and there are no silver bullet solutions to achieve balance once and for all. You may have had your life in balance for a season, yet due to new circumstances (either external to you or within yourself) your life has become imbalanced. Over time you change, the outside world changes, and you need to adapt and change the way you balance your life.

How can a coach help you achieve life balance? A coach is someone who walks alongside you, who listens, reflects back what she is hearing from you (and sometimes what she is not hearing), provides a sounding board, asks powerful questions, and challenges your assumptions. A good coach asks you to draw up an action plan and then holds you accountable to the plan. A good coach checks in with you regularly to help keep you on track. This is where the power of

coaching comes from, and that accountability is one of the main reasons people experience great results from coaching. Coaching differs from counseling; counseling is needed when there are mental health issues involved, and tends to focus on resolution of past issues, while coaching is more focused on taking action in the present and in the future.

There are many different types of coaching and each has a different focus. Executive coaching focuses on the corporate world. It addresses management, leadership, and how to achieve specific work-related goals. Work-life balance for busy executives may also be addressed through executive coaching. Career coaches assist individuals in identifying and pursuing their desired career; they can be very helpful to those wishing to make a career change. Life coaching can focus on setting life goals, navigating personal transitions, improving inter-personal relationships,

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MWF members doing an exercise that addresses life balance



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increasing creativity, improving health and wellness, and attaining better life balance.

Coaching is a one-on-one dynamic, and as such, it is extremely tailored and customized. It is all about you, and you set the agenda. Coaching can help you clarify what you want to achieve, and may result in improved productivity, enhanced effectiveness, and achievement of personally relevant goals. Having a conversation with a good friend is not the same as

coaching, since a friend may have trouble stepping away from her own interests and biases. A coach's only stake in the matter is in your success.

Our host, Christine Purka, has benefited from coaching during the course of her career. The relationship between coach and the coachee is confidential, so we were fortunate that Christine was very open in sharing her experiences. Seven years ago she engaged a coach to assist her in working through some staff management issues and forge her own

identity apart from her business partner. Recently, Christine has engaged Shana as a coach to help her rebalance her life, which had become too focused on managing and growing the consulting firm she co-owns. She now makes time to exercise and write in her journal, both of which she loves. Christine shared that initially, she felt that she didn't have time to take on the action steps that came out of her early coaching sessions, such as writing in her journal or exercising – she was

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“Coaching.” Where did that term come from? Some believe that “coaching” recalls the multitasking skills associated with controlling the team of a horse-drawn stagecoach!



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Selected and edited by
Beulah Pedregosa Taguiwalo

Executive, Life and Personal Development Coaching

Executive Coaching - what is it?

A way to improve “problem” managers. That was how Executive Coaching was viewed before. Later, it became a popular perk for senior executives. Now, managers of all levels and abilities see it as an effective process for helping them meet their goals.

Organizations use the term “coaching” to encompass skills training, instruction, and daily guidance. In Executive Coaching, a “coachee” works one-on-one with a qualified coach. Together, coachee and coach assess and understand the

coachee's development task, challenge current constraints, and explore new possibilities. The coachee aims to reach his or her goals and sustain his or her development, while the coach ensures accountability and support.

Coaching for Life and Personal Development

Life & Personal Development Coaching is about helping individuals to improve themselves, their lives, and in a business setting, their company or the company they are employed by.

A 1995 survey showed that 70% of line managers use coaching and that this was expected to increase dramatically, with 70% of the respondents stating that they expect to increase their use of coaching.

Today, coaching is now widely recognised as an extremely effective tool for improving organisations and their employees. In the UK, Life & Personal Development Coaching has become the second fastest growing industry after IT.

Controversy about Life Coaching

There is some controversy surrounding life coaching, primarily because of its current unregulated, unstandardized nature.

Critics assert that the practice of life coaching amounts to little more than a method of practicing psychotherapy without any restrictions, oversight, or regulation.

In the U.S. however, the legislatures of Colorado have ceased to pursue this kind of a request after a hearings on the matter, asserting that coaching is unlike therapy in that it does not focus on examining nor diagnosing the past, instead focusing on effecting change in a client's current and future behavior.

Adapted from Wikipedia

Credentials for Life Coaching

There are several different training programs and coaching institutes available, but no official regulatory standard currently exists. There is also no governed education or training standard which a person must achieve before they may appoint themselves a coach. Additionally, there is a high degree of confusion around the terms “certification” and “credentialing” as used within the coaching industry. There also exists a wide variety of certificate and credential designations, the status of which are still in flux.

At present, there are two internationally recognised standards and self-appointed accreditation bodies: the International Coaching Federation (ICF), and the European Coaching Institute (ECI). However, there is no independent supervisory board which evaluates these privately owned programs.

ICF, self-proclaimed as the largest worldwide not-for-profit professional association of coaches, has made an attempt to self-regulate the coaching industry by developing a system of credentialing coaches that includes:

(a) specified number of hours of coach-specific training,

(b) number of hours of coaching experience, and

(c) proof of ability to coach at or above defined standards for each credentialing level.

The credentialing levels defined by the International Coach Federation are Associate Certified Coach (ACC), Professional Certified Coach (PCC), and Master Certified Coach (MCC). Coaches credentialed by the ICF and members of the ICF, regardless of whether they are credentialed, agree to abide by a code of ethics.

*Adapted from Wikipedia,
The Free Encyclopedia*

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already overwhelmed, that was why she sought out coaching in the first place. However, she found that by carving out the time to do these things, she gained greater energy for her work and other areas of her life. Christine feels that she has benefited immensely from the experience; she feels like a much more relaxed and happier person, a better wife, mother, and manager.

Coaching is a professional, business relationship. Coaching may take place by phone, e-mail or face to face. Being able to relate to, feel comfortable, and connect with your coach on a personal level is critical. Even if a coach is highly skilled and otherwise qualified, if that personal sense of connection is missing, that person may not be the best coach for you. This is why coaches – including Shana – generally give their first session for free so you can decide if the fit is right.

Shana led the group through an exercise that addresses life balance. Participants were asked to draw up a pie chart of how their time/energy is currently spent, and another pie chart of their desired allocation of time/energy. Then they were asked to brainstorm a list of possible actions that would help them shift from reality to the desired scenario.

Participants had a chance to share their insights from the exercise both in small groups of three, as well as with the larger group, which proved to be a lively discussion. The issue of working and not working was discussed and someone noted that when you are

busy you can get more done because you are more organized and have a positive energy flow. Sometimes newcomers to the Philippines find it difficult to achieve life balance due to the changes brought about in their lives, but after the settling in they find a good life balance is feasible.

Another member said by doing the exercise she realized that she wants to simplify her life into three main categories, and she will have to be ruthless in reducing unnecessary things to achieve this.

How long should a person receive coaching? A three month commitment to coaching to start with is ideal. It is up to the coachee to decide how regularly she wants to meet with the coach. The usual practice is weekly meetings or phone calls, but it can also be structured on a biweekly or monthly basis. Again, this is an example of how coaching is tailored to the needs and interests of the coachee.

What training can you get to become a coach? A seminar is available locally at In Touch Foundation, as well as a series focused on executive coaching offered through the People Management Association of the Philippines.

The lucky prize for three free coaching sessions with Shana was drawn, much to the delight of the audience. We were all happy for the lucky winner.

If you would like to get in touch with Shana for more information on coaching, her details are: e-mail: smj@post.harvard.edu, cell phone: 0921-333-4938. ■

Counselor, Mentor, Coach

Unlike a counselor or mentor, a coach rarely offers advice. A coach provides expert opinion and “how to” answers, helps clients to find their own solutions by asking questions that give them insight into their situations. A coach holds a client accountable. If a client agrees to a plan to achieve a goal, a coach will help motivate them to complete their plan.

The Manila Women’s Forum

The Manila Women’s Forum (MWF) is a cross-cultural network for women. It provides opportunities to build friendships, to talk to women of various cultures, and to share information about resources. Our meetings are intended to provide intellectual stimulation and lead to personal and professional development. All women are welcome to join. The current officers are **Lisa Lumbao**, Chair, Programs, Treasurer, and Newsletter. **Cecilia Leung**, Programs. **Beulah P. Taguiwalo**, Newsletter, Website.

Cost of membership is P300 per year. Members receive a copy of the current mailing list in addition to the newsletter, which is also sent to non-members. A contribution is collected at each monthly meeting: P20 for members, and P40 for non-members. Please contact Lisa Lumbao at Tel. 813-0168, or at lumbao@mozcom.com for more information about MWF.

Visit our website – a work in progress
www.geocities.com/manilawomensforum

MWF Newsletter
c/o Lisa Lumbao
26-B Casa Real Townhouse
Real St., Urdaneta Village
Makati City 1225