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**Feature: Huddling With The Coach**

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## Setting Standards For a Growing Field

Associations of coaches are setting standards for their members.

By Douglas P. Shuit

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**N**o one knows exactly how many executive coaches there are, but it is clear the numbers are swiftly rising.

The International Coach Federation reports that it had 8,000 members at the end of 2004, up 31 percent in two years. About 35 new members a week were willing to pay the \$190 annual dues to become members of the organization, which claims to be the largest such group in the world.

Twana Ellis, the ICF's director of member services, estimates that there are about 40,000 coaches who work with businesses and individuals around the world. There is no official registry of coaches and no one seems to be keeping count. One of the problems is that, like consultants, anyone can call himself a coach, print up business cards and go looking for clients.

The federation is developing standards, and plans are in the works to institute a qualifying process that involves mandatory credentials. The backgrounds of the ICF's coaches are diverse, with lawyers, college professors, psychologists and counselors among its members.

At this point, the ICF has no qualifications for members other than that they submit an application and pay the fee. But Ellis says the organization plans on raising the bar. It has also developed a list of voluntary standards and a code of ethics.

Another coaching group, the Worldwide Association of Business Coaches, doesn't disclose its membership numbers but reports that its base is growing. The association is selective, requiring full members to submit five client testimonials.

"These standards tell our colleagues and business clients that we're serious and committed professionals with experience," association member support specialist Lorenda Franklen says.

*Workforce Management, February 2005, p. 56 -- [Subscribe Now!](#)*

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