

By Jennifer Gleeson Blue, BA

The Next Frontier

Quarterlife coaches are the future of the coaching profession

One of coaching's most fundamental facts is this: most coaches are middle-aged women who are embarking on a second or third career and want to coach other middle-aged women. Indeed, the 2007 ICF Global Coaching Survey conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers reveals that nearly 70 percent of coaches are women and over 60 percent of coaches fall between 46 and 65 years old. Additionally, over 60 percent of coaching clients fall between the ages of 38 and 55.

So here's my deal: I'm a coach. I'm a woman. My clients are usually 20- and 30-somethings. And I'm 28 years old.

This last detail makes me a significant minority in the coaching world. I was the youngest student in my coach training program; I'm the youngest member of my local ICF chapter (and the youngest to serve on its executive board); and I can count on one finger the number of other coaches I personally know who are under the age of 30. In fact, that same ICF survey revealed that fewer than eight percent of coaches are under the age of 35.

At first glance, these facts may merely seem like interesting bits of trivia. However, as the coaching profession grows and seeks to increase its impact in the world, it needs to become a place for more people like

me. Quarterlife (20-something) coaches will be the ones to mold the profession and take it into new frontiers. As in every profession, we are the future, and the profession's ability to recruit and retain us will determine coaching's future.

Sorry – I Don't Work Weekends

The necessity of cultivating young coaches may give pause to older and more established members of the field. Generations are invariably different and with the advancement of technology, a more globalized network and personal/professional roles that are increasingly flexible, the gap between them can seem wider than ever.

Additionally, some of the traits that define both Gen Xers and Yers can prove to create significant challenges that fuel misunderstanding between generations. For example, while wanting to accomplish a lot, quarterlifers can exude a sense of entitlement while ignoring their own responsibility within an overall experience. Moreover, they often want it all – the 30-hour work week and six-figure salary by the time they turn 30. They might also have a hard time focusing. After all, they have



been raised with endless opportunities and activities, leaving many to find themselves pulled in different directions or struggling to commit to a particular career path.

These challenges are significant and worthy of examination when looking at the potential impact of quarterlife coaches. More significant, however, are the many assets quarterlifers bring to the table. Importantly, 20- and 30-somethings have been raised with a sense of purpose, mission, and an embracement of the personal development field, resulting in individuals who hold a firm belief in their capacity to effect change. They are also innovative – technological know-how combined with idealism and global awareness have produced in quarterlifers a unique ability to think and work in innovative ways. Additionally, because they are often unmarried, childless, relocatable

and relatively new to the working world, they have energy and time to develop new business ideas and move forward into new frontiers.

What Do I Really Have To Offer?

I first became aware of the coaching industry when I was 24 and that same year I interviewed a coach to determine if this was the field for me. I loved everything I heard and yet it took two more years of job-hopping to finally take the plunge. In retrospect, I understand that I was hung up, in part, on the fundamental belief that my age prohibit-

I've worked with:

→ a 26-year old seeking to combine her love of the arts with her passion for education;

→ a 25-year old wanting to create balance in her life while pursuing her dual interests in business and social justice;

→ a 36-year old working to construct a lifestyle that supports a long-term, intimate partnership;

→ a 28-year old hoping to unite his unique skills in golf with a passion for personal development.

In my experience, coaching these younger clients increases tenfold their ability to navigate well the

capture the energy many coaches threw into their first careers and unleash it immediately, in this way, at this time, providing a firm foundation for change in the world.

I Know I'm Not Alone

Like most people (especially from my generation), I spent my early twenties agonizing over my career choice. I wanted to be doing something meaningful and yet I found myself bored in every job I took and struggling to support the mission of an organization that was not my own. Then I discovered coaching.

Occasionally, I receive emails and phone calls from others in my demographic who are thinking about becoming coaches and want me as their sounding board. The excitement in my voice increases during these conversations because, as a quarterlife coach, I understand the significance of making this choice at this age. I live it firsthand.

I hope to field these types of calls more often – it will demonstrate that coaching is growing among those in my generation and is becoming a sustainable industry for the future. I understand that to miss out on the recruitment of and commitment to young coaches is to miss out on the growth of the profession and the potential for significant world impact. Quarterlife coaches are needed. Quarterlife coaches are ready. •

Jennifer Gleeson Blue is founder and president of Get There From Here, a Philadelphia-based coaching company dedicated to helping organizations get the most out of their young employees while equipping 20- and 30-somethings to create inspired, sustainable and authentic lives.

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ed me from making a significant contribution as a coach.

I've since come to understand that becoming a coach at a young age is actually enabling me to experience significant personal, client and world change. While becoming a coach at any age can be a life-altering experience, the personal development involved can provide a quarterlifer with more years to live within a changed paradigm and alter the way many of life's key decisions are handled. Fundamentally, the skills required to be a coach make better parents, better friends, better lovers, better employers, better employees.

Furthermore, because clients generally gravitate toward coaches who fit their own profile, I find I'm able to make a unique difference.

many important decisions made in the first third of their existence and results in clients who can live the bulk of their lives in a more integrated fashion.

This personal and client impact simply ripples outward. How might the world look in 30 or 40 years if today's 20-somethings begin to populate the coaching world – both as coaches and as clients? Imagine a future wherein leaders from all walks of life received coaching when they were 25. What if a CEO in her 60s spent her 20s and 30s coaching others on work-life balance? How might that affect her treatment of employees – and the way her employees treat their families?

As coaches, we believe that what we have to offer is important and necessary. To be a young coach is to