

**Coaches Hit on Game Plan**  
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**by Kelli Cottrell**

When he started his own company, Hall Data Solutions in Riverside, Chris Hall had a degree in computer information systems and knew how to customize databases for clients.

He did not know how to attract customers, manage employees or increase profitability.

Shirley Coates, a real estate agent in Riverside who formerly owned a multibillion dollar aerospace business, wanted help starting her second career.

Within a few months, Coates had increased her realty listings by 25% and Hall tripled sales from the previous year.

Both business owners turned to an executive coach for help with their goals.

Executive coaches are in increasing demand nationwide. A recent survey by the International Coach Federation in Lexington, Ky., found the profession generates \$1.5 billion in revenue a year. . The group has increased membership of certified coaches at a rate of 200 a month.

And the number of coaches taking the test to be credentialed by the International Coach Federation has tripled since last year, according to its Web site, [www.coachfederation.org](http://www.coachfederation.org).

"The profession of coaching continues to grow," said Pamela Richarde, president of the federation, which has a membership of 11,000 trained coaches.

Ursula Mentjes, an executive coach specializing in sales performance, founded Potential Quest in Riverside, a coaching and consulting firm, in 2004. She has 40 clients nationwide, including Hall.

Mentjes works with chief executive officers and their sales teams to "double or triple sales," she said.

"Many times a client doesn't know who its target audience is," said Mentjes, who began her career in sales in 1996 for Knowledge Alliance, an international technical training company in Santa Ana. She became president of that firm in 2001 after increasing sales by 90% to \$20 million.

Many of her clients have established businesses already and are "doing OK," although she works with startups that want to "go to the next level," she said. She begins by asking the client questions about what he wants to accomplish, who his client base is, who he wants to attract.

Then she helps the client identify fears that may be holding him back from achieving his goals.

"Time management is a huge problem for a lot of executives," she said. "I help the client write down an ideal schedule and learn to delegate items. It may seem obvious, but it's an ongoing problem."

Many clients go after the wrong targets, said Mentjes, who wrote "Selling With Intention," a book on sales principles.

Her services cost \$200 to \$2,500 a month, depending on the client's needs, said Mentjes, 32, a certified coach with a degree in psychology and communications. "I work on a sliding scale."

Clients commit to a three-month contract.

"Sometimes it takes three months to see some habits change," she said.

They are not motivational sessions, Coates said of her talks with Lisa Marie Platsky, a certified life coach in Riverside.

"I want to do what she says because I see results," said Coates, who met Platsky at a Greater Riverside Chambers of Commerce event two years ago. "I wasn't looking for a life coach because I thought I had it all together. I've made millions, had it all. People come to me for answers."

Coates learned how to lay out her business plan and get organized with help from Platsky.

At each 45-minute coaching session, Platsky asks open-ended questions to help clients figure out for themselves what they want in life.

Her sessions include asking the client to close his eyes and visualize his goals. Based on what the client needs, she helps him set goals to keep him focused. That may include organizing the client's private life.

"There is no cookie-cutter approach," Platsky said. "Every client's needs are different."

"But it works, so I do it. I've seen results," Hall said.

Redlands life and business coach Jim Vuocolo, who teaches classes online for the International Coaching Federation, warns people to check the credentials of coaches.

There is no regulation in the industry, he said.

"Life coaching has become big," said Vuocolo, who started coaching 12 years ago after being a full-time minister in Redlands.

"Anyone can hang a shingle and say they're a coach," said Trent Blanchard, who hosts a weekly radio program in Palm Springs called "Ask the Life Coach." Listeners call in and ask questions.

"In the next couple of years, I hope that changes," he said. "People should be skeptical of coaches and ask for credentials."

Blanchard, a New York native, has a degree in human resource management from the University of Massachusetts in Boston, a master's in spiritual psychology from the University of Santa Monica and is an ordained minister on staff at the Interfaith Ministries Worldwide in Palm Springs.

He charges \$1,500 for a three-month contract.

Blanchard also teaches several workshops including, "Getting on Purpose" and "Dreams Can Come True," throughout the year.

"Each of us is born into the world with a unique talent and a unique way of expressing it," he said. "It's time to take command of your life and figure out what that talent is."

"You're cheating yourself and the world when you're not expressing it. Your passion in life is said directly related to your life purpose."