

A day in the life of a coach

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If you are thinking about a career as a coach, it can be useful to get a classic 'day in the life' view to see if coaching looks like a profession that may suit you. However, the reality is that coaches come from so many walks of life, and practice their profession in so many different ways that 'A Day in the Life of a Coach' is more a coffee table book than a snapshot!



What kinds of people become coaches?

For most practitioners, coaching is a second career and they arrive from backgrounds that range from the corporate to the art worlds; from working in general healthcare to having personal experience of surviving a dreaded disease. Coaches may come from people-centred professions such as HR to intensely left-brain careers in finance. Their motivations to become coaches are also diverse. Some have experienced a striking life transformation and become aware that they can help others navigate change and reach goals. Others have naturally 'coached' people in their circle for years, and then decided to develop themselves formally and professionalise what they intrinsically know they can do well. There are coaches who were deeply inspired by their own experiences of being coached or mentored, as well as those whose personal development and learning journeys have positioned them well to coach others. As coaching has emerged over the past decades as a viable career, some have simply become aware, felt the calling and followed their paths. These are amongst the better reasons to consider coaching as a career versus the perceptions of easy remuneration or 'the freedom from the daily grind', which can easily turn out to be illusions.

We asked Executive Coach and [SACAP \(South African College of Applied Psychology\)](#) Coach Educator, Nicky Wilson-Harris to give us her snapshot of a day in her coaching life:

"There just isn't a typical day. Clients are as different as the challenges they choose to face and the situations, even when they appear to be similar, are approached in such diverse ways. I may have scheduled meetings in the diary which looks very regular, but there's no predicting what may emerge in a day. I choose to work with a very broad range of clients, and so I move from non-profit to corporate, and from individuals to teams. My days are never boring, and never the same.

There really is the possibility in any day to go from a walking coaching session along the beachfront to a boardroom setting wearing corporate gear (with sand between my toes), and then shift into a community group gathering before the end of my working day. It all depends on where you want to work and what connects you to that particular type of work.”

Transformation Coach and Consultant, Althea Banda-Hansmann outlines some of her typical routines and rhythms:

“I coach leaders, managers and professionals in business and non-profit contexts, and I coach students as they are developing their careers. I begin my day with an early morning meditation and prayer as a commitment to developing awareness and growth in my own journey of transformation. If I have not yet prepared for the day’s coaching sessions, I will do this in the morning by looking over previous session notes and refreshing myself about how I might approach and hold my coaching clients in the session. In a typical coaching day, I schedule two to four one-on-one coaching sessions which may be between 60 to 90 minutes long, sometimes 45 minutes. The duration of group coaching sessions are typically 2h30 minutes. After the coaching sessions for the day, I may follow-up with clients and email them resources such as reading material or videos they desire as a support and perspective-taking in thinking through and working on their coaching objectives or a particular issue of focus. Some variations of a typical coaching day might include furthering my own research and writing. A coaching day might also include my own one-on-one and or group supervision as a coach which continually sharpens my craft. I might also read to refresh and develop my thinking and doing as a result of questions that I have about my practice or an issue that I wish to support a client with creatively. Outside of supervision, part of my typical coaching day might also involve prioritising thinking and discussion with other coaches about our practice or about organisational coaching projects that we are working on. From time to time, I might attend networking events for coaches.”

So, what personal qualities and habits help Nicky to manage her coaching practice and succeed as a coach?

Curiosity - I am fascinated by people, what makes them tick, what informs their decision-making processes and what supports or gets in the way of their ability to take action

Openness to learning - I'll never know all there is to know about coaching or working with individuals and teams. I take whatever opportunity I can to engage with other coaches and learning opportunities to expand my capacity. My clients and the coaching students I work with are also remarkable teachers - I look at life differently with each engagement I have, and with each class I teach

Taking time out – It’s important, on a regular basis, to be with family and friends who bring perspective and help me not take myself too seriously. Being a coach means you take care of yourself, and then learn how to extend that care and attention to others in a way that builds their capacity to self-generate, self-sustain and self-regulate.

Althea shares her foremost insights for someone considering a coaching career and wanting to know what their life would be like:

Determine your purpose – understand why you want to become a coach, in alignment with what you offer as a coach intentionally attract or draw to you the individuals, groups, teams and organisations you wish to work with. You will need vision and purpose to sustain you through the difficult times.

Learn – commit to your own, unique growth path that embraces every learning opportunity, including learning how to listen to yourself, others and the world and ask incisive questions.

Find your best tools - learn and study various coaching models and tools. Select and practice using the models and tools that reflect who you are and choose to be as a coach as well as your coaching niche.

Create your paid vocation as a coach wisely - most South African coaches who I know, don't coach full-time. They also

have other human development roles, or use other skills to generate income. So, it is important to think, to network and to talk to coaches in the market to understand how they make their living in order to inform your own use of time as you set out on a coaching career.

Join SACAP as we unpack what it takes to become a coach, what a typical day in the life of a coach looks like and what personality traits and habits can help you succeed as a coach:

Twitter Talk on Thursday, 15 February from 12pm to 1pm. Just follow the hashtag #SACAPCoachDay or @SACAPGrad_CL and join the conversation.

Facebook Live with SACAP on 22 February from 12.30pm to 12.45pm, featuring Karolyne Williams (SACAP Head of Coaching), Althea Banda-Hansman (Transformation Coach & Consultant) and Nicky Wilson-Harris (Executive Coach). Just follow the SACAP Coaching Facebook page.

If you are interested in becoming a coach, please visit: www.sacap.edu.za/coaching/overview/

All three of the coaching programmes offered by SACAP (the South African College of Applied Psychology) are accredited by the International Coach Federation (ICF) and approved by COMENSA. The ICF, which was founded in the USA in 1995, is the world's largest coaching organisation connecting practitioners and educators in a professional community that today, spans more than 100 countries.

With 15 years of coach training experience, SACAP empowers South Africans to harness their potential and effect change through its rigorous coach education. The part-time courses are designed for working professionals who aim to either develop as professional coaches or practice coaching in their own workplace.

SACAP's two-year Postgraduate Diploma in Coaching (PGDC) is a comprehensive NQF 8 level qualification, equivalent to an Honours degree, while their Coach Practitioner Programme is five months and the Advanced Coach Practitioner Programme is six months long. These learning programmes respectively provide foundational and in-depth theory as well as extensive practical skills.

SACAP's Postgraduate Diploma in Coaching, Coach Practitioner Programme and Advanced Coach Practitioner Programme are available on both the Johannesburg and Cape Town campuses. Courses begin in May 2018, and admissions close at the end of March 2018.

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