



ALL INCLUSIVE MENTORING  
...FOR YOUR ICF CREDENTIAL

## **Credentials- How Important Are They.....Really?!**

Many coaches wonder whether acquiring an ICF credential will really make a difference in their coaching careers, and to be honest this is a legitimate question worthy of exploration.

We might ask our ourselves...”in a non-licensed profession, why obtain credentials if they are not required by law?” Based on our research and experiences we believe the following adequately and thoughtfully answers both the advantages and the downside of this question for all coaches committed to our growing profession.

Let’s begin with the advantages of credentialing:

- According to the ICF commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers survey in 2006 52% of coaches report that their coaching clients expect the coach they hire to be credentialed. This illustrates how consumers are becoming more educated and savvy in their coach selection process.

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- As coaches often working directly for or subcontracting with companies, we often see credentials as requirements when applying for business and organizational work.
- In this economy, it is important for coaches to differentiate themselves from their coaching peers, and having a credential is one very important way of doing this. Several comments on the Coaching Commons Website indicate that, since the financial meltdown, clients are becoming more cautious in their coach selection process.
- Credentialing portrays to your clients the importance you place on investing in your professional development.
- Credentialing shows that you are part of an organization that adheres to a strong code of ethics.
- In the mind of the consumer, credentials may take the place of licensure in a non-regulated industry.

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- Additional revenue streams can develop to meet the growing demand for credentials, such as comprehensive mentor programs, coach assessor, and mentor coaching, all of which require holding a credential.
- Many coach training programs and coaching companies will hire only ICF credentialed coaches to work as trainers, coaches, and for business referrals.
- Coaching as in other non-licensed professions, leaves room for untrained and inexperienced practitioners. Credentialing differentiates you by removing some of these doubts or concerns.

More and more coaches recognize the above information to be true. In fact, according to the fourth annual Sherpa Coaching survey done in conjunction with the University of Georgia and Texas Christian University, published earlier this year, 50% - 70% of American coaches are finding credentials to be either very important or absolutely essential.

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So, with all of these benefits, what could possibly be the negative of credentialing?

In order to help coaches make an informed decision regarding credentialing we offer some of what the research indicates may be the downside to this debated topic within the profession.

Rey Carr, Ph.D, has written A Guide to Coach Credentials (2004) in which he makes the following points regarding credentialing:

- This process is a political tool, in that the main beneficiaries are the organizations who charge monies for the credentialing process and certificates.
- Credentialing exploits the inexperienced, by creating the illusion that they are necessary to attract clients. Older, more experienced, and life-seasoned coaches may not see this the same way.

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- Requirements for coaching are arbitrary, and based on the outdated university system of giving degrees after number of hours completed, rather than on client results and outcomes.

Angela Spaxman, the current President of the International Association of Coaches reinforces the caution that certifications and credentials do not validate the proficiency and mastery of coaching in all situations, but, instead, can be a starting point for an international quality control standard within the profession. She recognizes as do we, that mastery comes through practice and experience, and, most importantly, bottom line results. She believes credentials can be one method of helping clients choose a potential coach.

The new ICF research published this year indicates that 41% of clients found a coach's credentials or certification to be important, but this jumps to 56% when asked if the coaches level of coach specific training was important. Most clients are not well-informed about the meaning of certification vs. credentialing, and this may be one reason why these numbers are not higher.

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As the profession continues to grow, and more coaches become credentialed, as a means of creating an industry standard of excellence, the public will undoubtedly recognize and demand these credentials as a matter of routine, as has occurred in many other professional fields.

We believe it is up to individual coach to decide for themselves how important credentialing is to them. We also recognize that picking a coach is a very personal and individual process for the client, and many criteria must be considered when making a decision on who to hire. Credentialing can be one of those important criteria and has many benefits as described above.

Recognizing that many coaches who are interested in advancing themselves in the field have chosen to pursue their ICF credentials we have created the A.I.M.™ (All Inclusive Mentoring) Program to meet this need. If you are looking to obtain your credential via the portfolio pathway, have completed more than 35 hours of training, and have provided 50 hours of coaching, please contact us for more information regarding our next session.

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