



ICF Global Coaching Client Study short essential highlights

“This global initiative is the most ambitious project thus far to gather valuable information on the coaching profession from the unique perspective of the coaching client.”

— Karen Tweedie, 2009 ICF President and Professional Certified Coach

In early 2008, the ICF announced its plans to conduct a comprehensive global coaching client research study, to serve as the companion piece to the 2007 *ICF Global Coaching Study*.

The study was designed as a means to gather in-depth data on the ever-growing number of individuals throughout the world who have experienced professional coaching in their lives.

In addition to developing a contextual profile for the coaching client, the study was designed to provide the coaching profession with valuable new insight into areas of client research that have yet to be explored on such a level, including:

- Client perceptions about the industry prior to receiving coaching services;
- Client motivations that led to their decision to seek professional coaching;
- Overall decision making process for the client to choose a coach;
- Physical/psychological impact of the coaching experience on the client;
- Effectiveness of the coach and/or the coaching process from the client perspective;
- Return on investment (ROI) from coaching as identified by the client; and
- Any lasting impressions that the coach and/or coaching profession had on the client.

The ICF commissioned two global firms to conduct this valuable research: PricewaterhouseCoopers’ International Survey Unit (ISU) and The Association Resource Centre Inc.

The project was conducted in three distinct phases to encompass all study objectives.

- The first phase concentrated on the *qualitative coach research*, necessary to ensure that the information collected in the study was relevant to practicing coaches:
 - ARC conducted a series of 14 in-depth phone interviews with professional coaches located in six different countries to get their input on the types of questions that should be addressed by the research.
- The second phase focused on *qualitative client research*, during which PwC conducted a series of five focus groups with a total of 41 coaching clients from five cities around the world.
 - These focus groups were used as a means of exploring in-depth client attitudes and opinions (to help with the design of the survey) and these groups were used to answer the research questions that could not be effectively assessed through a survey.
- The third phase, the key component of the research, focused on *quantitative client research* through a 20-minute online survey of coaching clients. Between September and November 2008, a total of 2,165 coaching clients from 64 countries participated in the survey, which was offered in English, French, German and Spanish.

Results of this report are representative of survey respondent sample.



Highlights of the study findings include:

- ✓ **96.2 percent** of coaching clients report they **would repeat** their coaching experience.
- ✓ **82.7 percent** of coaching clients report they are **“very satisfied”** with their coaching experience.
- ✓ The top three motivations for obtaining coaching are **1) Self-esteem/Self-confidence (40.9 percent); 2) Work/Life Balance (35.6 percent); and Career Opportunities (26.8 percent).**
- ✓ The largest cluster of coaching clients are between the ages of 36 and 45 (35.9 percent).
- ✓ The majority of coaching clients have acquired an advanced level of education (a post graduate degree such as a master’s degree or Ph.D.).
- ✓ The duration for the average coaching relationship for survey participants was 12.8 months.
- ✓ 65 percent of coaching clients are female.
- ✓ Just over two thirds (68 percent) of individuals indicated that they had at least made back their initial investment. The median suggests that a client who achieves a financial benefit from coaching can typically expect an **ROI in the range of 344% or 3.44 times the amount spent.** The vast majority (86 percent) of those able to provide figures to calculate company ROI indicated that their company had at least made their investment back. In fact, almost one fifth (19%) indicated an ROI of at least 50 times the initial investment while a further 28 percent saw an ROI of 10 to 49 times the investment.
- ✓ In addition to ROI, the Final Report also discusses **ROE or return on expectations** of coaching clients as so much of what a client receives from coaching is about non-monetary enhancements.

The key areas contained within the Final Report.

- Introduction – background and methodology
- Respondent Profile – regional breakdown, type of respondents, etc.
- Client Perceptions of Coaching – prior perceptions of coaching, sources of influence, etc.
- Motivations for Seeking Coaching Services – alternatives to coaching, why coaching? etc.
- Coach Selection Process- who selects the coach, information sources consulted, etc.
- Characteristics of the Coaching Experience- use of written agreements, coaching session format, etc.
- Evaluation of the Coaching Experience- rating of coaching criteria, overall satisfaction, etc.
- Coaching Results- impacts of coaching, return on investment, return on expectations
- Conclusions

Results from the data collected have since been analyzed and compiled into written reports. **The 10-page Executive Summary of the client study is available at no charge to ICF members** (only \$15 USD for non-members). The summary provides an overview of the key study findings, as well as three key conclusions from the data collected. This is a must-have for anyone interested in coaching from the client’s perspective. Members can visit the report section of the ICF Research Portal to download a free copy. Non-members can download a copy by visiting the ICF Shopping Cart. **The Final Report of the client study is available for purchase from the ICF Shopping Cart.** This report is 85 pages long and also contains the Executive Summary. ICF members will receive a special discounted rate of \$75 USD (non-member price: \$275 USD). This report will contain all of the conclusions drawn from the study findings.

Translated versions of the Final Report will be available in French, German and Spanish for purchase from the ICF Shopping Cart shortly. www.coachfederation.org