

Health Coaching Market Growth a Function of Tough Economy, Says Hummingbird Coaching Services

Approach can help employers encourage healthy balanced lifestyles in a challenging economy

CINCINNATI – June 10, 2009 – Health coaching has come into the mainstream as employers nationwide strive to trim expenses on health benefits by keeping employees healthy.

While not far from its status as an ancillary or even fringe approach, health and lifestyle coaching is an increasingly common part of many employers' health benefits programs.

Even U.S. News & World Report has validated the market, covering health coaching as a growing business strategy by employers in their quest for behavior change among employees. In a recent article, the magazine interviewed Sean Slovenski of Hummingbird Coaching Services, who co-founded the company with psychologists Drs. Neal and Donna Mayerson, pioneers in Positive Psychology and a coaching methodology that emphasizes long-term behavior change.

“The coaching industry is still the Wild West,” said Slovenski to the magazine's reporters, referring to new businesses and products flooding the market that are offered by groups with little or no background in health coaching.

There is also no standardization in the coaching model, psychological foundation, or coach certification, added Slovenski. Established health organizations also have added coaching to their list of services. Insurers, EAPs, and disease management companies have reassigned or renamed employees to accommodate the trend, yet sometimes without providing any specialized training.

“Health coach” is an imprecise term, ranging from degreed counselors to self-directed online health portals, and encompassing a range of professionals – disease management nurses, call center nurses, health educators, utilization/care management nurses, even fitness trainers.

“While common wisdom may suggest the need for coaches with content expertise – a nutritionist addressing weight management issues, for instance – we've found that the key is coaches who are experts in behavior change,” said Slovenski. He explained that coaches proficient in behavior change strategies can access content expertise as needed. Coaches with content expertise yet without expertise in behavior change are prone to fall into mere education and advice-giving.

Company co-founder and Chief Coaching Officer, Dr. Donna Mayerson, added that an increasing number of the company's customers are looking at life coaching services. Employees with high cholesterol may eat poorly, yet their poor eating might be the

results of stress, which in turn might be due to a relationship or financial issue. “Life coaching can deal with the individual’s health issues by allowing them and the coach to resolve the underlying issue,” said Mayerson.

About Hummingbird Coaching Services

Hummingbird Coaching Services has provided one-on-one health coaching since 1997. Through its innovative technology platform and coaching programs, Hummingbird provides health, parenting and life coaching that drive real behavior change for individuals. For more information about Hummingbird Coaching, visit www.hummingbirdcoaching.com.

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