

BUSINESS

Career coaches help with new directions

BY MEREDITH MacLEOD

Getting your work done day to day while trying to manage a life outside the office can leave little room for big-picture thinking.

So Carina Fato, a business development account manager, decided to go to a career coach to find some vision.

She looked to Paul Copcutt, a Dundas career coach who works with professional and executive women on the concept of personal branding. That means consciously examining every aspect of the way you present yourself,

from how you dress and address colleagues to what kind of pen you use and how comfortable the visitors' chairs are in your office.

It used to be that women took their career cues from relatives, friends, teachers and people they happened to meet during their working life. Mentorship and advice came informally, maybe even silently, with the impressionable learning from those leading by example.

But now career development is a growing field of practice. Workers in a vast number of sectors, from those at

the bottom rungs to those in the executive suites, pay \$300 to \$1,000 a month to get objective, professional guidance from career coaches. Women are especially embracing the trend, says Copcutt who owns Square Peg Solution. Part of it is that women still have to go that extra mile to be noticed, but it's more than that.

"Women are prepared to put the work in to get good results. A lot of guys, if it's an A to Z process, want to get to Z without doing B to Y," he says.

Charmaine Sherlock, owner of The Compass Group, a Hamilton career de-

velopment business, wants to see mentorship begin in the teen years.

That's why she signed as a participant in a one-day workshop, pairing high school girls with working women. The event, called Women as Career Coaches, is today and hosted by the Halton Industry Education Council.

It might seem that coaching implies working on weaknesses but Marilyn Neufeld, a career coach and owner of Strategic Choice, says the true foundation is focusing on strengths.

"People are quick to identify what they don't do well because they hear it

a lot. People have much more trouble identifying what they're good at."

While there is a lot of buzz about career coaching, it's "old wine in new bottles," says Catherine Connolly, a human resources professor in the DeGroote School of Business at McMaster. The fact that the field is unregulated concerns her. "Anyone can hang up a shingle and call themselves a career coach.

"A good coach is objective. He or she will tell you things your friends won't." mmacleod@thespec.com
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We asked local working women about who inspired, mentored or offered them career-changing advice. Here are excerpts from their answers. To see them in full, visit thespec.com/mentorprofiles



KAZ NOVAK, THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

Jane Devito, environmental planner, Conservation Halton

I had some early inspirations in my geography path, including a passionate high school geography teacher and a professor at the University of Waterloo who showed me the human side of geography. Luckily, I found the conservation authority by accident because caring for the environment but also protecting life and property is what I really enjoy.

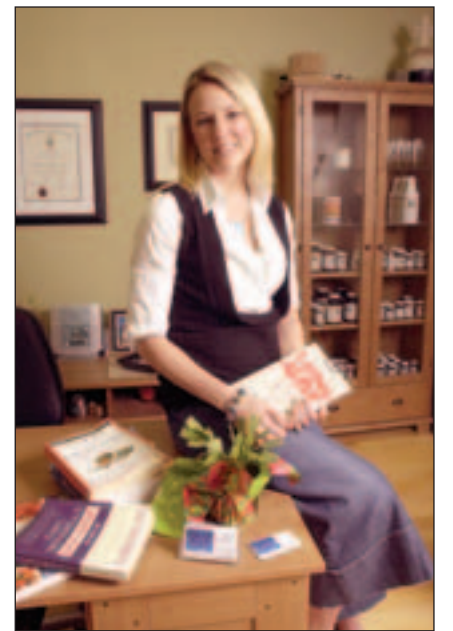
Early on, I worked for a director, Eric Lemp, and a general manager, Mac Coutts, and met a colleague, David Cressman, who listened to what I had to say, gave me confidence and great advice and led by example. I wouldn't have advanced as a woman as quickly as I did back then without the guidance of those three gentlemen and friends.



CATHIE COWARD, THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

Wendy Young, music teacher, Orchard Park Secondary School, Stoney Creek

I have always felt that I became a teacher because of my mother. She was a stay-at-home mom and so we spent much time together in my formative years. She was always teaching me things — the names of colours, how to knit, how to take out a library book — and even though this was all before I started school, she taught me to love learning. She had unlimited patience for this process. She never made me feel that there was a rush to get to the end result and I always felt that I could be successful because she had faith in me. Later, I thought that it couldn't get much better than making a living by helping others to feel good about themselves while learning. After 26 years, this holds true for lessons about my subject as well as life lessons.



CATHIE COWARD, THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

Joanne Malar, former Olympic swimmer, holistic nutritionist, Hamilton

I was inspired to pursue a career in holistic health because of my own health issues. After seven years of health symptoms, medications and "nothing working," a holistic nutritionist helped me to return to balance and health naturally within three months. Her name is Silvana DeSantis (Oakville). She became my mentor and friend.

During my fourth Olympic pursuit, I began my journey to become a holistic nutritionist myself, for my own knowledge and to help others.

Michelle Sartor, executive editor, Pearson Education Canada, Ancaster

My grandmother inspired me to be independent. Spending time with positive, successful people is very important particularly when they believe in you. My parents taught me to always try my best and strive to be the best. This advice translates to work ethic and delivering the highest standard.

In 2003, I started working with a corporate coach. For the first time, I understood myself and made better choices. Not necessarily easier choices — better choices that moved me in the direction I wanted to go.

Bev Ruffo, owner of Blueiris, consultants for non-profits; former school teacher, Hamilton

I've been inspired by a huge number of volunteers, as well as leadership people in the not-for-profit world. Probably the most influential and supportive person was Judi Farrell, who is currently CEO of Lupus Canada. She's been responsible for encouraging me and paved the way for my first paid position in non-profits. Hard to say where I'd be without her support.

Sue Edwards, president of Development by Design, leadership and coaching, Burlington

My mom was my first source of inspiration as well as mentor. She has always been a continuous learner and showed me that learning is fun and enriching.

At Imperial Oil, where I started my career, three of my male bosses were excellent mentors for me. They took me under their wing, helped me to recognize my gifts and made me feel like I had something special to contribute.

Nancy Cifani, assistant to Gary Graham, Gowling Lafleur Henderson LLP, Hamilton

Founder and managing partner of Gowlings Hamilton, Gary Graham has always led with a brilliant business mind, fairness, integrity and an unwavering appreciation and respect for family.

With her intelligence, work ethic, support and sense of humour, Janis Cain has made the past 22 years a gratifying experience.

I have learned (and still am learning) so much from Gary and Janis.

Julia Thompson, communications officer, DeGroote School of Business, McMaster University

There were two women, Jayne Johnston and Shelly Easton at McMaster's PR office during my internship there, who introduced me to all the different aspects of PR and let me discover what I was passionate about. Even though I was young and new, they didn't hesitate to bring me in on projects and thanks to them I had a lot of opportunities that have helped me get where I am today.

Sophia Aggelonitis, owner of Sauces by Sophia, president Hamilton Chamber of Commerce

One inspiration is Mr. Robin Ghosh of Salerno Dairy Products. When I started my company, he was the only manufacturer who took a chance on producing my product. When I asked him, he said, "You know all large companies start out small and I believe that everyone with a dream deserves a chance. The rest is up to you." I have never forgotten that. I was so close to giving up. He gave me hope."

Michelle Everets, meeting planner, Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science, Hamilton

Joan Balinson of About Town and Meeting Planners was my mentor and inspiration. Joan is a strong woman who encouraged me to excel and never give up. If I end up with half the skills and information that Joan has, I will consider myself very lucky. I still look for her guidance on decisions and information.

Angela Ferguson, principal, Student Success Initiative, Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board

My main inspiration has been my drive to make this world a better place for adolescents because they are our future. So, I guess it is every student who has propelled me to be where I am. I try to learn on a daily basis and I believe everyone I work with and come into contact with has something to teach me.

Tracey Taylor-O'Reilly, director, Centre for Continuing Education, McMaster University

The process I went through with my

career coach to develop a vivid picture of what an ideal day would be was extremely valuable.

Although this exercise focused beyond career, it also helped me to identify all the key elements of what I was looking for in a new job and employer.

It helped me identify the types of activities that I was passionate about doing.

Sandra Summerhayes, owner of professional training and development company, Wainfleet

I have been inspired by many people throughout my career but I think the person who inspired me the most was a former manager I had when I worked for the federal government whose name is Linda Johnson.

She took a real interest in me and encouraged my training and development. She is still one of my mentors today.