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# FabJob Guide to Become a Career Coach



JENNIFER FISHBERG

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 The Path of the Career Coach

It takes vision to imagine a different, more satisfying career for yourself, and courage to begin taking active steps toward that goal—so congratulations! By purchasing this guide, the *FabJob Guide to Become a Career Coach*, you have just taken the first important step toward a career doing something you love. As a career coach, you will have the unique opportunity to pursue your own rewarding dream career by helping other people discover theirs.

If you're among the millions of people who have ever experienced that "Sunday night feeling" in the pit of your stomach as you contemplate the work week ahead, chances are you know what it feels like to be in the wrong job. Or maybe you are already the person to whom friends and family turn when they need guidance on how to handle an interview, or help writing a resume. Everyday situations such as these have been the spark for many a successful career coaching practice.

In this guide you will learn what career coaches do to help people move from that feeling of dissatisfaction to action, why there is a growing market for career coaches, and how you can learn the skills you will need to begin your coaching practice. Many of the tools you will learn as you explore the following pages will also be of use to you as you guide your clients on their own career journey. So let's get started!

## 1.1.1 What is a Career Coach?

Career coaches are professional helpers. They come from a variety of different work backgrounds, and assist people of all ages with career related issues and services. They are focused on the “here and now” rather than delving into more complex issues as a counselor might. But exactly how do they go about doing that? How do career coaches interact with clients on a day to day basis?

Diane Hudson Burns, Director of the Professional Association of Resume Writers & Career Coaches Certified Professional Career Coach Program, provides the following definition:

“The career coach guides a client in expressing his [or her] career dreams, desires, and goals. The career coach builds a relationship with a client and serves as an accountability partner as the client moves towards a new career path. Career coaches train, listen, inspire, lead, prompt, encourage, tutor, query, and act as the Career Search Strategy Development Director for the client. Career coaches are sounding boards, taskmasters, mentors, and Chief Motivational Officers.

Clients need guidance in clarifying their purpose for seeking employment or to improve performance, and career coaches partner with clients to identify the career purpose and achieve career results. Career coaches collaborate with clients and brainstorm to develop career ideas—they do not directly offer advice. There are times, however, when the career coach may ask permission to offer advice or engage the client in specific training, i.e., interview training or image consulting. Career coaches meet clients where they are now—focusing on today and the future through goals and values development.”



## 1.1.2 How Career Coaching Differs from Career Counseling

How career coaching is different from career counseling is an area of much confusion both for beginning career coaches, and for those who are seeking a career services provider. If you have already begun doing your own Internet research, you have probably noticed that some people identify themselves as “career counselors”, while others use the terms “career coach” or “career consultant.” As if that’s not confusing enough, some people use all three! So what exactly is the difference?

At least in part, the answer to that question depends on whether you ask a coach or a counselor. Some counselors, who have generally spent extensive time and effort earning advanced degrees and grounding themselves in theory and therapeutic techniques, resent the “upstart” business of coaches who they consider “untrained”. Many coaches, conversely, will suggest that counselors who have spent so many years in academia are inexperienced in the ways of the corporate world and, as a result, less well equipped to deal with practical career-related matters.

So how do we make sense of all this? Education and work experience are both important factors in choosing someone to provide career guidance. As the field of career coaching has grown over the past decade, begun to regulate itself, and been proven effective, the divide between coaches and counselors has narrowed. Many counselors have now begun offering coaching services as well, recognizing the need for such services. However, in any given instance, the deciding factor should always be the needs of the individual client when deciding whether a career coach, a career counselor, a consultant, or some combination of all three is most appropriate. From what point is the client starting? Are they dealing with immediate, short-term goals, or deeper personal issues that may be affecting their career development?

Eileen Wolkstein, Ph.D., a New York City-based counselor and career coach in private practice, suggests that “coaching is about helping people do what they do better” while counseling addresses change related to helping people find their “authentic self”. Below, we examine the specific differences in what coaches, counselors, and consultants do, as well as the differences in educational requirements, licensure, and employment opportunities.

## Career Coaches

Most coaches and counselors agree that there is a great deal of overlap in terms of the type of services they each provide. However, there are some significant differences in education, regulation, approaches taken, and the types of employment available to each.

Unlike counselors, career coaches can have a varied background in terms of education and degrees held. DeCarlo, President of Career Directors International, a professional association for career coaches, estimates that about 5% of counselors are also coaches. "About 25-40% of coaches do have advanced degrees," she says, "which may have nothing, however, to do with coaching. Many have HR, Organizational Development, and MBAs."

DeCarlo suggests two basic factors that differentiate career coaches from career counselors:

"The clearest distinctions that are usually made between the career coach and career counselor include: (1) Counselors frequently work with individuals struggling with decisions and indecisiveness regarding their futures and careers – those who might have needs beyond those, a results-focused 'get-the-job-now' coach can fulfill; and (2) Counselors, unlike coaches, must be degreed and licensed to claim the title. In the counselor vs. coach realm, I would suggest you think 'resolving issues vs. attaining goals' and 'dealing with emotions vs. leveraging motivation'."

Dr. Colleen Georges of Colleen's Career Creations, who is both a counselor and a career coach in private practice, adds the following distinctions:

"Career coaches typically work with the client to set specific goals, develop actions plans and steps to reach those goals, and hold the client accountable for carrying out these steps. As is the nature of counseling, a career counselor is... likely to spend more time exploring how the client's psychology is impacting his/her career decision-making. Additionally, career counselors typically work face-to-face with clients, whereas career coaches frequently work over the phone and by email."

So in summary, career coaches:

- Focus on the “here and now,” not the past
- Deal with “goals” rather than “issues”
- Are more likely to use a structured system or program consisting of measurable steps and action plans
- Do not usually give advice, but may be more directive than a counselor
- Do not need a formal background in psychology or counseling
- Do not require an advanced degree
- Have an understanding of organizational dynamics and the business world

## Career Counselors

In career counseling, the goals may not be as readily apparent as they are in coaching, and may in fact take several sessions to uncover. In addition, since career counseling has less of a stigma associated with it than personal counseling, clients who seek career counseling may in fact have other underlying issues that the counselor needs to be attuned to.

The American Counseling Association defines the practice of professional counseling as:

*“The application of mental health, psychological, or human development principles through cognitive, affective, behavioral or systematic intervention strategies, that address wellness, personal growth, or career development, as well as pathology.”*

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics’ *Occupational Outlook Handbook* further specifies that career counselors (also sometimes called vocational counselors) “explore and evaluate the client’s education, training, work history, interests, skills, and personality traits.”

Career counselors also:

- Utilize and have formal training in the use of aptitude tests or other assessments

- Assist individuals in developing job search skills
- May have a more open-ended or longer term time frame in working with clients
- Provide support in times of job-related stress, such as job loss or transition
- Have a background in psychology and extensive knowledge of theory
- Must hold a master's degree and complete a requisite number of supervised hours to obtain licensure

The specific services provided by career counselors may be dependent on the population they work with, as well as the setting in which they work. Career counselors may be employed, for example, in a college setting providing career guidance to students, or may work for a nonprofit organization. Others may work in private practice.

More information and statistics about the counseling profession, and career/vocational counseling specifically, can be found on the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* at the Bureau of Labor Statistics website.

## Career Consultants

Many career coaches and counselors also provide consulting services. These are typically short-term projects that usually involve performing a very specific professional service. As a consultant, you are being paid to be an “expert” and to offer your professional opinion, as opposed to the “partner” relationship inherent in coaching.

“Consulting might be for very limited scope, one-time-only type of work, such as writing a resume. Coaching implies more of an extended relationship (typically 3-4 months) in which multiple issues are addressed,” explains career coach Sharon DeLay.

Career consulting work may be done for an individual, as in the example above, or for a corporate client (e.g. providing a one-time training seminar on topics such as leadership development, time management, or communication skills). Career coaches in private practice may also contract with a larger outplacement firm that hires

independent consultants on an as-needed basis to supplement their full-time staff.

“Consultants determine new directions and help individuals or corporate structures implement new products or services. They identify problem areas, ineffectiveness, broken channels of communication, and they develop suggestions and guidance to fix problems and improve communications,” adds Diane Hudson Burns of PARW/CC.

In summary, career consultants:

- Provide one-time or short-term services
- Offer advice and expertise
- May work for individual or corporate clients
- Work in private practice or for an outplacement firm

## Other Related Professions

Career coaches may offer additional services and use other titles depending on the extent of their practice and their own background and training. For example, some career coaches also offer life coaching, executive coaching, corporate training, retirement coaching, or time management coaching. While there may be some overlap, the focus of this guide is specifically on career coaching as it relates to helping individuals who are either entering the workforce or changing careers. If you are interested in learning more about other types of coaching, please refer to the *FabJob Guide to Become a Life Coach*.

This guide will also include some information on consulting as it relates to career coaching. However, if you are primarily interested in consulting work, you can find additional information in the *FabJob Guide to Become a Business Consultant*.

Information on degree programs in counseling psychology is provided in Chapter 3 for those readers interested in pursuing this path. However, the majority of information in this guide relates to the profession of career coaching, not career counseling

## 1.1.3 Who Utilizes Career Coaching Services?

Career coaches provide services to people of varying ages and backgrounds who are employed, or seek employment in, diverse fields from art and education to finance and engineering. Typical career coaching seekers include:

### Individuals

- Recent graduates entering the workforce
- Career-changers who are dissatisfied with their current field
- Job-seekers who are unemployed and seeking work in the same field
- Entrepreneurs interested in starting their own business

### Organizations

- Corporations seeking outplacement or training programs for employees
- Outplacement companies seeking coaches to teach workshops or provide other transition services for their corporate clients
- Nonprofits or government agencies assisting disadvantaged populations (such as the homeless, individuals in addiction recovery programs or with developmental disabilities) in entering the workforce

## 1.2 The Career Coaching Industry

### 1.2.1 The Evolution of Career Coaching

Consider for a moment the importance that work plays in people's lives today, and the many popular images of work life that we see regularly in the media. Why are people drawn to TV shows like "The Office"? Cubicle-dwelling employees everywhere can quote lines from the movie "Office Space" and have *Dilbert* comics pinned to their gray fabric walls. These images of work, and they are often negative images despite the humorous take on them, are popular because they are so

easily identifiable and create a sense of shared experience. If you haven't personally had a job or a boss like those you see represented, you know someone who does.

The fact is, work takes up a lot of our time, like it or not. And in Western culture, work is often not only a source of income and prestige, but also a large part of how people define themselves. One of the first questions you probably ask when you meet someone new is "What do you do?" Yet considering the important role it plays in our lives, many people spend very little time making informed, conscious choices about their career. If you asked those same people how they got into their current professions, you would likely get many different explanations, often having nothing to do with things like research, planning, or self-exploration.

## **A Brief History of Career Development Theory**

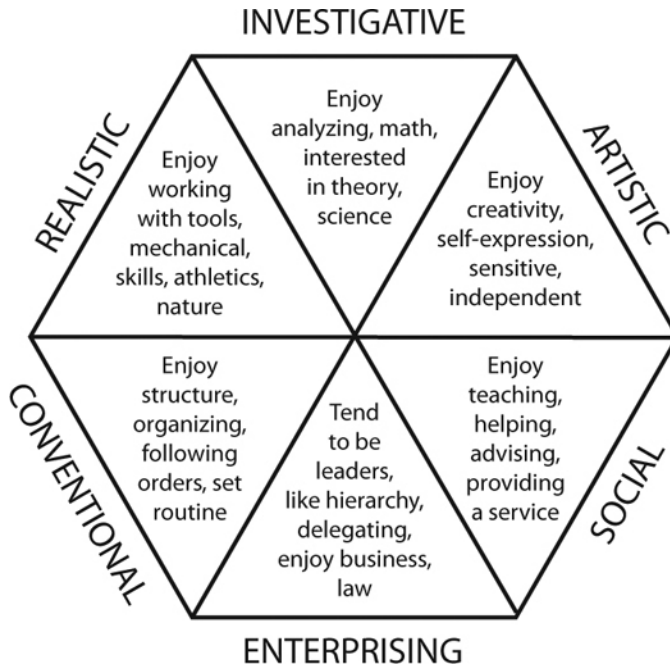
The idea of "choosing" a vocation or career is a relatively new concept. Prior to the 20th century, factors such as interests and abilities didn't play any role in the work people did. Employment was simply about availability, access, and income. People typically went into whatever trade their family was in, whether or not they had an interest or talent for it. With the rise of industrialization in the early 20th century, new types of employment began to emerge, but many people did not have the education or other tools necessary to adapt to these changes.

Today, more people are afforded the opportunity to learn about their career options, and to take stock of their own interests, abilities, and values as part of the occupational choice process. This change came about, in part, because of the influential work of several theorists who applied scientific principles to create new models of career choice.

## **John Holland's Theory of Types (RIASEC)**

John Holland, an American psychologist and former professor of sociology at Johns Hopkins University, developed a widely adapted theory of career choice based on the idea that both individuals and work environments can be fit into one or more of six basic types: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional. The now widely used "Holland's Hexagon" shows the six types in relation to each other. According to Holland, if an individual's personality

## Holland's Hexagon



matches their work environment (called “congruence”), they will likely be the most satisfied with their job and obtain the highest level of achievement.

It is important to have a basic knowledge of this theory as a career coach, particularly if you plan to utilize assessments such as Holland’s Self-Directed Search, or the Strong Interest Inventory, which is based on Holland’s work.

You can find more information on Holland’s theory, and a more detailed explanation of the six types and the work environments for which they may be best suited on the Career Key website.

## Other Influential Theorists

It is beyond the scope of this guide to provide a thorough review of career development theory, and, as stated previously, career coaches do not typically have the theoretical background required of career counselors. However, if you are interested in learning more, a few



additional names to look for as you conduct your independent research include:

### **Frank Parsons: The Father of Vocational Guidance**

Frank Parsons (1854-1908) was a Boston attorney and social activist who dedicated the early part of his career to improving educational opportunities for immigrants and work conditions in factories. Parsons was a “career changer” himself – in his early life he was employed as an engineer and a teacher. Later he began to focus his efforts on helping individuals make more informed choices about vocation. He is known for developing the first system of career guidance that was based on scientific theory, and was also the first to use counseling psychology to assist people in making career decisions.

In 1909, Parsons’ book, titled *Choosing a Vocation*, was posthumously published, and earned him the distinction of being considered the founder of the modern vocational guidance movement. In it, he encouraged people to use the following framework in applying rational thought to career choice:

- 1) An understanding of self (including abilities, resources, interests, and limitations)
- 2) Knowledge of various types of work (including requirements, prospects, and working conditions)
- 3) “True reasoning” (the relationship between items 1 and 2)

While career development theory and the world of work have both evolved over the years, Parsons’ basic concept of making informed choices based on self-awareness, knowledge of occupations, and finding the right fit between the two is still the foundation for career counselors and career coaches today.

### **Donald Super**

Super’s most well known contribution to career development theory was his life span theory, which asserts that career development is not

static but rather is an ongoing process that evolves over time with an individual's self-concept.

## **Linda Gottfredson**

Gottfredson's theory of circumscription (the progressive process of eliminating potential occupations from one's "social space") and compromise (the expanding of potential career options) incorporates the concept of gender roles and women's career development issues.

## **John Krumboltz**

Krumboltz's Social Learning Theory of Career Choice incorporates personal and observational learning based on an individual's experiences and interactions as an important factor in career choice.

## **1.2.2 The Growing Need for Career Coaches**

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistic biennial 'Current Population Survey' study:

*In January 2012, median employee tenure (the point at which half of all workers had more tenure and half had less tenure) for men was 4.7 years, little changed from January 2010. For women, median tenure in January 2012 was 4.6 years, up from 4.2 years in January 2010. Among men, 30 percent of wage and salary workers had 10 years or more of tenure with their current employer; among women, the figure was 28 percent. These figures strongly suggest an environment of serial employment, with a majority of workers changing jobs on a more or less regular basis.*

## **Women in the Workplace**

In some respects, women have made great strides in the workplace in recent years, but still lag behind their male counterparts in terms of equal pay and equal opportunity. Women comprised 47% of the U.S. workforce in 2013, and accounted for 51% of high-paying management and professional occupations, according to the U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau. These are promising figures. However, the three most common occupations for women are (in 2010) still the 'traditional' female work roles of secretaries/administrative assistants (96.1 percent women), nurses (91.1 percent women), and elementary/middle schoolteachers (81.8% women). And despite the recent adoption

of the Fair Pay Act (January 2009) in the U.S., which expands on protections provided by the Equal Pay Act of 1963, the Bureau of Labor Statistics states: “Women who worked full time in wage and salary jobs had median usual weekly earnings of \$684 in 2011. This represented 82 percent of men’s median weekly earnings (\$832).”

## Job Satisfaction

In November 2011, *Forbes* reported on a major survey undertaken by HR firm Mercer that “in the U.S. the percentage of workers who said they wanted to leave and get a new job rose nine percentage points, from 23% in 2005 to about one in three, or 32%, in 2010.” And in 2013, the Conference Board Job Satisfaction Survey reported that “for the seventh straight year, less than half of U.S. workers are satisfied with their jobs.”

A study by the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research released in November 2013 revealed that while 9 in 10 workers who are age 50 or older say they are very or somewhat satisfied with their job, nearly 40 percent of younger workers reported dissatisfaction with their jobs, noting that “earlier in life, people are uncertain what career path they want to take and may be stuck in jobs they despise.”

## Health

In addition, significant data from many sources has been accumulated over the years showing the impact of a high-stress, low-satisfaction job on health. A stressful job situation has been linked to everything from the common cold to depression and heart disease (studies by National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, *British Medical Journal*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, et al).

This is not just an American problem. The World Health Organization has termed job stress a worldwide epidemic. Work-related stress also costs companies billions of dollars due to increased absenteeism, increased medical insurance claims, and higher turnover.

High stress levels, anxiety, and depression are also an increasing problem for the growing number of unemployed. *The Anguish of Unemployment*, a research study published in September of 2009 by the Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University

suggests a growing sense of despair and hopelessness among workers who have been unemployed over the past 12 months. Of the 894 individuals surveyed who are still unemployed and looking for work, 77% have felt stressed, 68% indicated that they feel or have felt depressed, 65% have felt anxious, and 61% have felt helpless.

## Economic Factors

Following months of unemployment figures in excess of 9% (from April 2009 to September 2011) in the United States, the economy continues to stagnate:

- In spring 2014, Gallup polls reported the U.S. Payroll to Population employment rate (representing the percentage of the U.S. adult population aged 18 and older that is employed full time by an employer for at least 30 hours per week) was 42.7%, essentially unchanged from spring 2010's 42.4%.
- Additionally, Gallup's reported U.S. underemployment rate (which combines the percentage of adults in the workforce who are unemployed with the percentage of those who are working part time but looking for full-time work) is a dismaying 17% in spring 2014, down only slightly from 19% in spring 2011.
- The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported in spring 2014 that discouraged workers (persons not currently looking for work because they believe no jobs are available for them) totaled 783,000, up nearly 6% from the (dismal) spring of 2009's 740,000.

According to the Heldrich Center's *The Anguish of Unemployment* report (conducted in summer 2009, shortly before unemployment rates reached historic double digits), of the 1,202 people surveyed (those who had been unemployed at some time during the previous 12 months):

- 61% felt that the economy would take a year or more to recover
- 47% indicated that they felt there was "no chance" that they could return to their previous job
- 47% are "pessimistic" or "very pessimistic" about finding a new job in the near future
- 76% have thought seriously about changing careers in order to find employment

## Impact on Career Coaching

So what do all these dire statistics mean for the future of career coaching? Obviously, more people than ever are in need of career services from transition assistance to resume writing, and the good news for those interested in becoming career coaches is that there are always more potential clients out there than there are coaches. Enabling people to find and keep satisfying jobs where they can continue to grow and thrive clearly, from the figures above, addresses an increasing need in our society which is only heightened by the recent economic downturn. Choosing a career will continue to be one of the major decisions of a person's lifetime. It has a huge impact on an individual's finances, their sense of self, and their overall health and happiness.

Additionally, according to a research study conducted among HR professionals by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 96% of respondents agreed that hiring a career coach delivers tangible benefits both for individuals and organizations, suggesting a growing acceptance of the career coaching profession and its value.

Career coach Dr. Barbara Gronskey of Delaware Valley Career Solutions offers the following thoughts on the future growth of the career coaching field:

“There are over 30,000 occupations out there, which keep evolving as the economy and technology change. As a result, people are often confused and overwhelmed about all the options they can explore. Since everyone needs to work, it is my belief that career coaching represents a field with long-term potential.”

## 1.3 Benefits of Being a Career Coach

We have already briefly touched on the rewarding nature of career coaching as a helping profession, but being a career coach offers many additional benefits. These include a flexible schedule, the ability to work from home with clients all across the country, constant learning opportunities, and a variety of potential income sources.

### Helping Others

Most career coaches are drawn to the field because they have a sincere desire to help people. Career coaching can be extremely satisfying in

this regard since you can see the immediate and measurable results of your work with clients. It is a tangible way of making a difference in the quality of people's day to day lives.

*"The most rewarding aspect of career coaching is easily the satisfaction you receive from helping someone recognize their worth and pursue goals and dreams that will make them happy. Those of us who do this kind of work love to help people. When a client begins to see their value as a person and professional, partially as a result of your work together, it is one of the best feelings you can have."*

— Dr. Colleen Georges,  
Colleen's Career Creations

## Flexibility and Independence

Career coaches working in their own practice have a great deal of freedom. They can work full- or part-time during any hours they choose. They can eliminate the tiresome daily commute from their routine by working from home, enabling more time to be spent doing the things they love.

Depending on their background, some career coaches choose to work with a partner, perhaps someone whose strengths complement their own (e.g. someone who specializes in assessments if this is not something you are interested in). Others prefer working alone and not having to be accountable to anyone else. Approximately 75-80% of career coaches have their own practice, according to Laura DeCarlo, President of Career Directors International. However, many also contract with outplacement firms or look for other opportunities to supplement their income and experience. "Coaches are definitely entrepreneurial types who tend to capitalize on business savvy both with their clients and with themselves," DeCarlo adds.

As a career coach, you also have the freedom to choose a niche that you have a particular interest in. The options are unlimited.

## Challenge and Variety

Because the world of work is constantly changing, with new opportunities being created every day, career coaches have the unique challenge of keeping up to date on emerging trends. This includes not

only knowledge of occupations, but also of new technologies that can be utilized to assist their clients in the job search process.

In terms of running your own business, there is the added task of keeping up with new marketing techniques and getting the word about your services out to potential clients. For those who are easily bored with the same old day-to-day routine, career coaching offers variety and continued opportunity for learning.

## **Income Potential**

Even though money is not the primary motivator for most people who go into career coaching, there is certainly a great deal of income potential. Career coaches have the opportunity to generate income from a number of different sources depending on their specialization, background, and unique skills.

Most career coaches have their own private practice so have the freedom to set their own fees, which may range anywhere from \$50 to \$500 an hour. Career coaches who provide consulting services to senior-level executives or who work with large corporations typically earn more than those who work with individuals who are at entry- or mid-level in their careers, or who work with smaller local companies or nonprofits. However, offering teleclasses, webinars, and other programs can generate a stream of income in addition to your regular coaching fees if you take initiative and are creative.

Many career coaches also provide consulting services for corporations or large outplacement providers on a part-time contract basis in order to supplement income. With more and more companies offering outplacement in the current economy, this can be a great benefit for a beginning coach building a private practice.

## **Low Start-up Costs**

One of the big fears people tend to have about starting their own business involves the excessive start-up costs. Office space, staff, inventory, supplies, expensive marketing campaigns...these are just a few of the costly headaches that many new business owners have to deal with. A major benefit of starting a career coaching practice is that many of these typical expenses do not apply.

## 1.4 Inside This Guide

*The FabJob Guide to Become a Career Coach* will take you step-by-step through the process of learning how to coach, how to start your business, finding career coaching resources to meet your educational and practical needs, and learning techniques for building a successful career coaching practice. Advice from practicing coaches and other career service experts is included throughout. The guide is arranged as follows:

Chapter 2, “What a Career Coach Does,” explains different niches for career coaches and how to choose the right one for you. Once you’ve decided who you want to work with, this chapter also details how to establish a positive coach/client relationship, as well as some helpful techniques and exercises you can use with your clients.

Once you understand what a career coach does, Chapter 3, “How to Learn Career Coaching,” will help you discover the many opportunities, both formal and informal, that exist for learning and practicing the skills you’ll need to be a great career coach. For those who are currently employed in other fields, Chapter 3 also suggests ways you can start to develop your coaching skills in your current profession.

Starting a new business venture can be exciting, but it can also be overwhelming if you aren’t informed about the process. Chapter 4, “Starting Your Own Business,” will provide you with guidelines and all the resources you need to start your career coaching practice, from the legal formalities of business formation and ethical obligations of a career coach, to how to choose a business name and set your fees. This chapter also provides a sample contract you can use with clients.

You don’t need a degree in marketing or a big publicity budget to attract business. Chapter 5, “Getting Clients,” gives advice on choosing your target market and offers many free and low cost options for promoting your career coaching business. You will also learn how to market your business to corporate clients.

Finally, Chapter 6 offers words of wisdom from successful career coaches to help you achieve success in your own business. When you have finished this guide, you will have a clear vision of what your future as a career coach might be like, and the practical steps it will take



to get there. You will be armed with the information you need to start taking those first steps toward a rewarding career helping others find the fulfilling occupation of their dreams, just as you're doing.

**You have reached the end of the free sample of the *FabJob Guide to Become a Career Coach*. To order and download the complete guide go to <https://fabjob.com/program/become-career-coach/>.**