

Local coaching business thinks globally

On the job ... with global business coach Barrie Zucal

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Going worldwide: Barrie Zucal's passion for different cultures and traveling around the world spurred her to establish a global network of professionals who teach business leaders how to deal with cultural diversity in the workplace.

Zucal established Global Coaches Network in her Waldorf home in 2004. Possessing experience as a global traveler helped the Pennsylvania native take flight with the business, she said.

"I'm extremely happy doing this," she said. "I can structure my time, and the opportunity for learning is just tremendous. It's a joy for me to learn from people of other cultures. This business is a perfect opportunity to do that."

The business has taken off with a vengeance, she said.

"It's really growing rapidly," she said. "It's very exciting."

Coping with culture shock: Global Coaches Network offers a variety of services to its clients, including courses on leadership enhancement in a global work force, personal leadership among different cultures and assisting spouses and families abroad about how to live in a different culture.

Often, executives of global companies pull up stakes and go home when spouses are unhappy with an international assignment, Zucal said.

"Living and working in a place far from home is a real shock to one's system," she said. "It's a culture shock for both employees and their families. Our coaches help the employees get used to the culture as soon as possible so they can work effectively sooner."

"Often, assignments don't work out because a spouse is not happy," she added. "They want to go home. Global organizations lose millions of dollars because of that."

Coaches also teach global leaders how to deal with cultural hierarchy in the workplace, Zucal said.

"We teach companies to hold all the staff accountable for being culturally competitive," she said. "We work with the whole staff."

A global enterprise cannot survive if the leaders and employees of the organization cannot work through the difficulties that doing business with different cultures is sure to create, Zucal said.



Staff Photo by Gary Smith
Barrie Zucal helps international executives worldwide with her Charles County-based Global Coaches Network.

“All coaching is about helping people move forward rapidly,” she said. “We teach companies how to assume a leadership role in a competitive way so they can engage with people who are very different than them.”

Global Coaches Network has an alliance of 45 coaches who hail from many corners of the world, including the United States, Canada, Mexico, South America, Europe, India, China and Hong Kong. Many of the coaches started a second career when they signed on with the company, Zucal said.

“They call themselves the gray-headed coaching network,” she said, laughing. “To do this job you have to have a certain level of maturity. I have a very experienced group of coaches. Whenever an organization has a need [that] we can provide, we’ve got somebody there who we can use.”

Zucal has a master’s degree in family studies from the University of Maryland, and in her “spare” time she offers counseling to multiracial and multicultural couples.

“It’s a small practice, but I really do like it,” she said.

Home rules: Zucal offered some advice to prospective entrepreneurs who are thinking about starting a home business: Set up a special place for a home office, and establish firm business hours for yourself.

“Don’t let your kids or friends invade your office,” she advised. “People think that you’re not really working when you work at home.

“People should also always get dressed before going into the office,” she added. “Get out of the nightgown or pajamas before heading into your office.”

It’s also important for home business owners to set up something in the office that will inspire them daily, Zucal said. Isolation often becomes a problem if there is no one else in the workplace, she added.

“I’ve got a world map in my waiting room,” she said. “It reminds me that I’m not the only one in the room.”

Her husband, Tom Zucal, a marketing manager for General Electric, is very supportive, Barrie Zucal said.

“Sometimes, I really need his support,” she said. “They are times when you’re growing a business when it can get pretty discouraging.”

Global Coaches Network’s rapid growth and success are sometimes mind-boggling, Zucal said.

“Some days I’m just in awe,” she said. “It seems like the business has got a momentum of its own. Sometimes, I feel like this is way more than I could accomplish.”

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