

The state of coaching in 2021

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Coaching is a growth industry and while Covid has caused severe disruptions, practitioners and clients have mostly been able to pivot to online environments and keep going. This is important because individuals, families and organisations have needed all the support they could get over the last year. Under the global pandemic cloud, we've grappled with fundamental changes to our family lives, threats to livelihoods and significant adjustments to working life. These are just the kinds of challenges to get through with the help of a coach, especially as we have also had to keep our attention on progressing towards our personal and work goals.



It's also been a time when many people have wondered if coaching could be a career or an additional income stream for them. Newcomers to the coaching industry can join the Twitter Talk hosted by [SACAP \(The South African College of Applied Psychology\)](#) on 16 March 2021 for insights into the trends that are shaping coaching as we move into the second year of the pandemic. Mentor-coach and SACAP educator Tinus van der Merwe is optimistic when it comes supply and demand in the global coaching industry. He says, "The ICF (International Coaching Federation) currently estimates that there are around 78,000 professional coaches (with an average of 12 clients per professional coach) in a world population of 7.8 billion. There are more than 600 ICF-accredited coach training programmes, and others accredited by other professional coaching institutions such as COMENSA (Coaches and Mentors of South Africa). My view is that we need more properly credentialed, trained coaches in South Africa to meet a growing need."

Globally, the coaching industry remains unregulated. There are well-established professional bodies such as the ICF and COMENSA that define codes of practice and oversee accredited coach education. However, nothing stops anyone from declaring themselves a coach and delivering 'coaching' services. Executive Coach and Coach Supervisor Sharon Jansen says, "The industry currently relies on the professional standards that the coaches themselves adhere to. I believe that those who are following a vocation, will seek out the regulatory bodies and do the research in terms of what they want behind their names. Qualifications and credentials certainly do matter. The coaching market is well developed, and there are many experienced buyers of coaching services who know exactly what they are looking for when it comes to a return on their investments. Ultimately, buyers will have the last say. For new coaches looking to establish successful practices, their accredited coach studies and the ways that they uphold the professional standards are vital stepping stones to progressing in the industry."

For aspiring coaches who want to train online, this raises the flag on searching out the education programmes that are accredited by recognised bodies. There are many coach training programmes offering 'certificates' at the end of the course, but this doesn't mean they are accredited by professional coaching institutions, and you have to expect that prospective clients are going to know the difference.

Virtual Coaching is going from strength to strength

Coaching across online platforms was already on the rise before Covid-19 brought about widespread 'working from everywhere' and the need for just about everyone to meet virtually. While in-person coaching is once again possible under more relaxed regulations, the online experience is having some permanent impacts on coaching practices. Jansen says, "Moving to working online has been favourable for professional coaches who are then able to compete in international markets. Coaches can offer coaching to clients anywhere in the world. This does present some challenges such as time zones, but it allows more flexibility in the working day. I am likely to have online days and face-to-face days, and my clients will choose. Virtual coaching demands that coaches must be nimble and flexible both in their contracting and availability."

The prevalence of virtual coaching is another factor that emphasises the importance of quality coaching education. New coaches must be able to master the dynamics of the coaching relationship, rooted in structured coaching conversations, playing out in the virtual space where non-verbal cues can be harder to read.

SACAP's upcoming Twitter Talk on the State of Coaching in SA will explore these trends and others with coach experts and educators shedding light on the potential of coaching as a career, what it means to be a coach and how to get started in the best way.

SACAP has translated Covid-19 learnings like this as they have shaped their 2021 coaching education programmes according to best practice blended learning models. Their fully accredited Coach Practitioner Programme, Advanced Coach Practitioner Programme and Postgraduate Diploma in Coaching all blend in-person on campus components with evening classes held via their Online Live platform. The flexibility of online learning, with its opportunities for self-directed learning, are combined with carefully targeted in-person education so that working professionals can develop quality coaching skills and benefit from meaningful face-to-face interaction with their educators.

If you are interested in becoming a coach, please visit: <https://www.sacap.edu.za/study-coaching-at-sacap/>.

All three of the [coaching programmes](#) offered by SACAP are accredited by the International Coaching Federation (ICF) and approved by COMENSA. The ICF, which was founded in the USA in 1995, is the world's largest coaching organisation connecting practitioners and educators in a professional community that today, spans more than 100 countries. SACAP's two-year Postgraduate Diploma in Coaching (PGDC) is a comprehensive NQF 8 level qualification, equivalent to an Honours degree, while their Coach Practitioner Programme is five months and the Advanced Coach Practitioner Programme is six months long. These learning programmes respectively provide foundational and in-depth theory as well as extensive practical skills.

SACAP also offers a [Coaching in the Workplace](#) 12-week online short course, with international accreditation. Participants completing SACAP's short online Coaching in the Workplace gain 30 hours of International Coaching Federation (ICF) Accredited Coach Specific Training (ACSTH) hours that can count towards the minimum number of coach training hours needed to become accredited by the ICF as an Associate Certified Coach.

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