

The West Australian

Workplace Matters Markets

Growing number of WA companies turn to business coaches to cope with COVID-fuelled demand

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 Cameron Henry, managing director of Primero Engineering, and business coach Robert Bentley. Credit: Matt Jelonek/The West Australian



While many businesses have been hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic due to ongoing restrictions and labour shortages, others have thrived with increased online sales or demand for services.

To cope with the unforeseen demand, a number of companies have turned to non-traditional avenues such as business coaching for support with handling the influx of new customers.

Figures show the number of business coaches across the country rose 11 per cent from 2015 - 2019, according to the 2020 ICF Global Coaching Study.

Around 26 per cent more managers engaged the services of a business coach over the same period, the study found.

Over the past 18 months, WA-based business coaching company Acuity Group saw a 25 per cent increase in clients.

Acuity Group director and business coach Robert Bentley said businesses that were growing rapidly “needed a hand to manage their growth”.

Businesses had also sought out coaching to help navigate COVID-fuelled market challenges such as labour shortages, Mr Bentley said, which would continue when WA’s borders reopen.

“There’s a war on at the moment for skills, so that’s challenging from a market perspective, but from a typical business perspective ... we help (businesses) make better decisions,” he said.

Cameron Henry, director of Perth-based engineering group Primero, said Mr Bentley had helped the company select a business model and improve workplace culture.

While business coaches could help companies manage soaring demand, Family Business Australia chairman Jeff Ash pointed out the cost of hiring one made it difficult for smaller companies.

“They’re generally brutally expensive ... I am always a little bit shocked when I find out what they’re going for,” he said.

Mr Bentley said clients could pay anywhere from \$40,000 - \$60,000 for a business coach per year.

Mr Ash said some companies were also reluctant to seek advice, and it was important for business owners to be open to taking other opinions on board - particularly with market landscapes continuously changing due to the pandemic.

“Getting a coach requires the person seeking the coaching to actually be open to taking on board other advice that hasn’t come from themselves,” he said.

Mr Bentley warned companies should be wary of hiring a business coach without relevant experience.

“It’s still a cottage industry, but what I’ve noticed after 18 years is people are calling themselves business coaches when they’re really just a marketing or PR person,” he said.

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