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The Professional Path to Perfection

Lifestyle coaching – it's a \$100 billion a year industry and the Americans have been doing it for years. Now South Africa's movers and shakers are also calling in the professionals for advice
by Kerry Phillips; photography Michael Edwards of e-image, Richard Keppel-Smith of Shine Photographers

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"As a personal organiser, I help people simplify and de-stress their complicated lives. My speciality is paper management – organising homes and offices, filing systems, reconciliation of bank accounts and medical aids, paying personal accounts, storage solutions and finalising deceased's estates. Paper is a nightmare for most people, and they can end up looking in three or four different places for one document. But I do other things too, whatever it takes to make your life easier, from travel arrangements to helping a client move house, as well as shopping, errands and repairs.

"I have one client, for example, for whom I work 30 hours a month on a retainer basis. She's an attorney with very little time to worry about mundane chores, so I pay all her accounts, do her banking, supervise the domestic staff, do the shopping, buy fresh flowers for the house every week, take her clothes to the dry-cleaner and so on. When she's having a dinner party at home, I'll set the table, organise the wine and sort out the menu with a caterer so all she has to do when she gets home is get changed and enjoy the evening.

"Some clients, on the other hand, only require my services on a once-off basis, or just a few sessions to get their lives in order. Fergus was in a total panic when he phoned me in January and asked for help. Although his house is small, it was very chaotic, with boxes piled high under the stairs, full of papers dating back five years or more. It took about five hours to get everything sorted into manageable piles of what should be filed and what should be thrown out, but Fergus's sense of relief was indescribable when we'd finished."

Cost: First consultation no charge; thereafter an hourly rate of R250.

The wardrobe consultant

It was South Africa's sunny skies that lured fashion stylist and consultant Olivia Davidson and her family to Cape Town in 2003, something for which fashion lovers countrywide will be eternally grateful. Born in France, Olivia worked at Chanel as a student, where she cut her teeth in the world of fashion. In 1987, she moved from Paris to London. Here she ran a boutique specialising in clothes sourced at the Paris and Milan fashion shows.

"The way we dress is so important because first impressions make the world of difference,"

says Olivia. "You are judged on your appearance, and if you don't look the part you are going to be pushed aside."

Olivia begins with a consultation at her client's home, going through their wardrobe and discussing their lifestyle. Often clients panic before Olivia's visit and throw out most of their old clothes, something that makes her task more difficult and which she encourages them not to do.

Following the initial consultation, Olivia will source the items she's earmarked as necessary for a new look and she will also accompany clients to boutiques, taking care to visit her favourites, Philosophy, Marion and Lindie and Jenni Button. "I also love Joburg designer Fred Eboka, who creates awesome pieces, vibrant, original and using beautiful detail. I went to his fashion show last year and rarely have I been so impressed. He's a wonderful and rare talent who, I'm sure, will soon be snapped up by one of the European fashion houses."

Olivia visits London twice a year – late March and late September – and clients can

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make appointments with her in London where she will escort them on shopping trips.

While she loves what she does, Olivia says her work is made more difficult by the lack of choice in South Africa. "Here, a high percentage of the workforce is male so shops tend to cater more to men and there is not much choice for women, especially in Cape Town," she laments. "There is still a gap in the market where professional women are concerned."

Olivia's style is warm and friendly, but she is forthright and honest. "But I'm never rude, despite being French!" she laughs.

Cost: R1 200 for initial consultation, thereafter R795 on a half-day basis, excluding air travel.

The life coach

Mark Fraser-Grant is a life coach and executive business coach at The Creative Consciousness International (CCI) Coaching Academy, which was started in 2002 and has offices in both Johannesburg and Cape Town. "I've done many courses in coaching in South Africa and the one that resonated with me the most was the consciousness coaching model, which focuses on your attitude to a particular event. You empower yourself instead of waiting for circumstances to provide whatever you want," explains Mark. "The most successful people

aren't necessarily the most talented; it's about their approach to things. They take action.

"We can very quickly get lost in our lives and caught up in the collective consciousness that states we can't do something as opposed to why we can do things. Consciousness coaching is a shift from thinking that things are impossible to believing that things are immensely possible."

Mark's coaching method is also outcome-focused. "Through coaching, I ensure that my client achieves success, whatever they believe success to be. And once someone achieves something once, they realise they can achieve it again, so they become empowered and start moving forward from there," he says.

"Generally speaking, it's a powerful experience when people start realising that things are working for them, whether it's having a happy relationship with their partner or starting a new business, and they can start applying it in more than one area of their life."

Before Mark starts coaching a new client, he talks to them to ensure they are aware of exactly what coaching is. "Coaching is not

counselling, therapy or psychology – I define very clearly what coaching is and check with the client whether that's what he requires. I also lay down some terms and conditions. For example, if someone is having psychological treatment, I won't coach them. Then the client and I discuss exactly what he wants to achieve and what his expectations are."

Mark has found that corporate coaching is fast becoming popular in South Africa, particularly with multinational companies like BP, who follow international trends and apply them locally. "That is great, both for the coaches and clients, as it gives people greater access to coaches and creates a larger arena for coaches in which to work."

Each session is one hour a week or fortnight, but if you opt for what Mark calls the High Performance Coaching Model, he is accessible 24/7 via email or phone, for example, to give a motivational pep talk before a presentation.

Cost: Life coaches charge about R500 a session; executive coaches charge between R1 000 and R2 500 per session and a minimum of 10 sessions is recommended.

The financial coach

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