



Coaching Pundit's Corner



Using History to Bring Clarity to Coaching Certification (part 1)

Coaching Certification, frankly, is a messy subject. Traditionally certification used to be a clear method of credentialing and legitimizing a profession. Today, however, it is also a marketing tool, a branding tool, and a source of a lot of confusion. This series will be part history lesson. In so doing I hope to bring clarity to the confusion around certification, so bare with me. Sadly, in order to have any discussion on this subject it is hard to avoid the alphabet soup. I have included a cheat sheet.

First of all we need to distinguish who is doing the certifying. Governing bodies certify coaches. Schools certify coaches too. In reality any program can issue a certificate and state you are certified.

Lets look at the governing / credentialing organizations. The four largest of these are the ICF, WABC, ECI and IAC. These organizations could be thought of like the AMA for medicine or the APA for psychology. Instead of one, however, we have at least four. They each set standards for credentials, ethics, and membership for the coaching industry. This creates confusion.

There have been attempts to alleviate the confusion. For a long time coach training schools all acted independently, and the majority still do. However in 1999 a coalition was formed called ACTO. ACTO member schools include CTI, CoachU, Hudson, ACT, SUN, and New Ventures West, Newfield, Adler and several others. Students and graduates of the ACTO schools represent the majority of the ICF membership. In the same year ICF & ACTO created the ACTP standard for coach training. The ACTP standard has become the benchmark for ICF certification. *(Note: There are literally hundreds of schools that do not adhere to this standard.)*

For most ACTP schools, their ACTP qualified program is the "certified graduate" program that their school offers. CPCC (certified professional co-active coach) is such an example. CTI's CPCC designation is both a credential as well as a brand. CPCC means that you are a certified graduate of CTI and have gone through the certification program which is CTI's ACTP accredited program. Coach Inc.'s (CoachU & CCUI) approach integrates ACTP material throughout their coursework. Be careful when someone says they are "certified" or a "graduate" since they don't mean the same things everywhere. When someone says they are CoachU graduate but not certified, they actually have had more training (175+hrs) than CTI grads (100+hrs). When the CTI student completes CTI's certification program their experience levels out.

I am not saying one is better than the other. What I am saying is most of this talk about certification and graduation is about branding and marketing. All the ACTP schools cover the same core material each with its own style. Who certifies the certifiers? What are they actually measuring? What if the core concept is wrong? What about those other non ACTP schools? These topics and more will be explored next month.

Alphabet Soup Cheatsheet

Governing Bodies:

ICF [International Coach Federation](#) (1996)
WABC - [Worldwide Association of Business Coaches](#) founded in 1997

IAC [International Assoc of Coaches](#) (2002)

ECI [European Coaching Institute](#)

PCMA - [Professional Coaches & Mentors Association](#)

AC - [Association of Coaches UK](#)

(For a detailed list check out [Peer Resources'](#) extensive list)

ACTO - [Association of Coach Training Organizations](#) (CTI, Coach Inc, Newfield, Hudson, TopHuman, SUN, ACT, etc)

ACTP - Accredited Coach Training Program standards created by ICF&ACTO in 1999

Schools:

ACTP Programs

CTI - [The Coach Training Institute](#)

CoachU - [Coach U](#) (owned by Coach Inc.)

CCUI - [Corporate Coach U International](#) (created by CoachWorks owned by Coach Inc.)

Hudson, ACT, SUN, Newfield, Adler, TopHuman, etc. are all ACTP coach training schools.

Non-ACTP Programs

Coachville - coaching community created by Thomas Leonard now run by Dave Buck.
GSC - Graduate School of Coaching, schools created from Coachville - not ACTP though probably the largest coaching school in the western world.

- Most University programs

Currently there are more than 200 such programs - for an extensive and yet not exhaustive list see [Peer Resources](#)

Matthew Rochte - Seasoned Coaches' Coach & Coaching Pundit.

Matthew is a 15year coaching veteran cross trained through CoachU, CCUI, CTI, and others. <http://www.matthewrochte.com>

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