

## Moving Up With Some Help From An Executive Coach

By Kevin Voigt

Edited From The Wall Street Journal Online ( Nov 14<sup>th</sup>, 2005 )

Just how big the business of executive coaching has become in Asia is hard to pin down. But the swelling ranks of coaches gives some idea. According to the International Coach Federation, a global coaching accreditation organization that's independent from coaching schools, there are currently 9,000 coach members in 33 countries -- double the number just three years ago. The number of ICF-accredited coaches in the Asian-Pacific region has more than tripled to 858.

Coaching is expanding quickly in Asia "simply because the leadership development need is so large," says Simon Keeley, a director of the Asian leadership practice at human resources consultants Hewitt Associates in Hong Kong.

Many executives try to manage their own career path as they look after teams that run across borders and cultural issues.

"Traditionally, that leadership journey took place over 10 or 15 years - now you need to accelerate that path as quickly as possible," he says.

### Climbing Mountains

After seeing mountaineer-cum-motivational-speaker David Lim give a talk, H.D. Gupta turned to him for help.

Mr. Gupta, managing director of Goldkist International Pte. Ltd., a 60-employee company that imports and exports mobile phones in Singapore, India and Nepal, looked at hiring Mr. Lim as a way to "bounce ideas off someone else."

Mr. Lim, achieved fame in 1998 leading the first Singapore expedition to climb Mt. Everest, then being paralyzed from the neck down for half a year with Guillain-Barré syndrome, where the body's immune system attacks the nervous system. Although still suffering from paralysis in one leg and one arm, he successfully began climbing again -- and found greater success as a motivational speaker and executive coach.

"Mountain climbing is all about leadership, it's all about goal setting," says the 41-year-old of his business, Everest Motivation Team, whose past clients include computer company Hewlett-Packard Co., and pharmaceutical concern Novartis. Mr. Lim doesn't actually lead his clients up mountains, but rather uses his experiences as a metaphor for climbing problems at work.

"Coaching is about asking (your clients) the right questions, and in mountaineering there is a huge amount of self-coaching -- knowing the direct question to give at a certain moment, knowing how to set small goals and have a broad sense of perspective."

During 12 sessions over four months last year, Mr. Lim and Mr. Gupta mapped out three goals to work on. Two were professional: to make over a company retail center in Singapore and develop a new service aimed at the global roaming market for cellphones. One goal was personal: to be a better father to his two children.

"I tried to do one thing every day that brought me to those goals," says Mr. Gupta, a 41-year-old New Delhi native who has lived in Singapore since 1993. He also worked on his rapport with his employees: "Instead of trying to catch people doing things wrong as we normally do, I tried to catch people when they were doing things right." While many of his goals are on track, Mr. Gupta still has to keep applying himself.

"To be honest with you, my relations with my son are on a positive track -- as for my daughter, we still have problems," he says. It's another lesson he learned from having been coached: "You can do the same things with two people and get two different results."