

Seal provides calm to small-business owners

Dan Collins, The Examiner

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BALTIMORE -

She's a diminutive, silver-haired 50-something woman, quick to smile, a calming presence. You'd never expect she was a Jedi.

Pasadena resident Sharon Keys Seal is a professional certified coach, or PCC, specializing in helping small-business owners and entrepreneurs "solve a variety of problems that include how to build a business, how to develop leadership skills, how to deal with a difficult boss, how to communicate better with teams and how to generate more profit," she said.

Seal moves people to find their own inner strengths, to encourage the "gifts and greatness in myself and others," she said.

Sharon's clients include professionals in such fields as health care, finance, advertising, and consulting. "One day I might be working with a factory foreman, and the next day with a rocket scientist," she said.

"Coaching gives me the intellectual challenges that I desire in my work. Each client is different, with a new set of challenges," Seal said. Like client Ann Rasenberger, 51, of Ellicott City, who says she's "gotten the treatment" from Sharon for "five years this month."

Like most of Sharon's clients, Ann deals with Sharon by phone; in her case, three 45-minute calls per month, \$200 per hour (fees vary depending on the client's needs, scope of work, duration, and format of coaching selected).

Rasenberger, an attorney, had decided she wanted to go into nonprofit work and so applied for a position with Catholic Charities.

"Sharon helped me through the interview process, salary negotiations ... she helped me decide what my goals were as a manager and a leader supervising 300 employees. She helped me with every aspect of the job, whether it was practicing a speech with her, developing my vision for the programs I ran, dealing with challenging employees, and to develop new skills as an entrepreneur.

"She helped me become aware of what I was projecting on to my employees. I had anxiety and frustration — why are these people not getting along, why isn't this person doing what I asked her to do three months ago?"

Rasenberger notes that Seal showed her how to "project calm even if I didn't feel calm inside, and [helped her] steer clear of political landmines."

When Rasenberger decided to start her own consulting firm, "Sharon helped me deal with stress and look at my resources" and helped her maintain the other aspects of her life, like "my spiritual life, social life, exercise habits — she works a lot on balance. She's a great person to vent to, a terrific sounding board, and sometimes that's what you need because it's very intimidating starting up a

new business.”

Sharon practices what she preaches as she continues to encourage her clients to learn — about themselves, their employees, their business.

“I earn continuing education credits every year for my PCC designation. Right now, I’m taking a 6-month course in marketing. And I’ve been accepted into Georgetown University’s Leadership Coaching Program this fall,” she said.

Ultimately, like any good Jedi, Sharon is a people person, an important coaching skill.

“I love helping people tap into their full potential at work. I support them in understanding how their values play out in their work and how to leverage their strengths so that they become successful,” she said.

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