

Consulting firm helps businesses succeed by training future leaders

- By Jonathan Devin
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Photo by [Mike Maple](#)

Bill Burtch, owner of Harmony Coaching & Consulting, offers management consulting and one-on-one coaching.

For Bill Burtch, the Great Recession wasn't the one that began at the end of 2007, but the 2001 recession when businesses figured out what was really important for survival. Namely, said Burtch, owner of Harmony Coaching & Consulting, they learned slashing their training creates a shortfall in leadership later on.

"What I find different about the (earlier) recession was that with businesses there was a wholesale cut of training and development and, in some cases, in use of outside resources," Burtch said.

"Over the last couple years, businesses are being more strategic. They're focusing those investments in individuals and teams."

In that sense, the latest recession, which officially ended in mid-2009, has meant good business for Burtch who offers management consulting and one-on-one coaching aimed at developing effective leadership.

On Feb. 28 and 29, Burtch will lead a two-day seminar called "The Coaching Clinic" at the Fogelman Executive Center at the University of Memphis. Its purpose is to help managers and leaders incorporate coaching into their management styles, find better ways of communication, and become good team facilitators. "Rather than being the solver of problems, it helps managers become better facilitators of problems getting solved," he said.

Burtch decided to start his own coaching and consulting business haphazardly after working in human resources and operations for Promus Hotel Corp. He stayed on for a year after the company was acquired by Hilton, but decided it wasn't the best fit.

"I didn't necessarily leave wanting to start my own business," Burtch said. "It hadn't always been a dream of mine." But then he was offered occasional consulting gigs and something clicked. "My reputation started to develop," Burtch said. "It probably took about seven years before the wheel started moving on its own."

Now he works with about 10 to 15 coaching clients at any one time and about five to 10 organizations for consulting. Sometimes companies hire him to do both at once. Typically he works with coaching clients for a minimum of six months because it can take that long for him to become fully integrated into the business' corporate culture and to help its managers adapt their behaviors. Some clients have had relationships with him over several years.

John Daniel, chief human resources officer for First Tennessee Bank, started working with Burtch in 2001 while still working for another regional bank. He brought Burtch's services with him to First Tennessee in 2006. "First Tennessee has had a lot of cutbacks as the company responded to the financial crisis," Daniel said. "We've cut out some training, but we just critically believe that the future of the company is based on great leadership, so when it comes to coaching we're still committed to it." Burtch helped develop and implement their Emerging Leaders program -- a rigorous 10-month leadership training program for employees. He also does one-on-one coaching with high-potential employees.

"The reason a guy like Bill works for us is because it's a variable thing," Daniel said. "Instead of having a staff of leadership development people, we call him. The guy gets things done. You only have to tell him what you want once. He knows our culture, because he's so well integrated into the management of the company. We think of him as a partner."

Burtch holds a BSBA in human resource management and industrial labor relations from Bowling Green State University in his native Ohio. He is licensed to lead The Coaching Clinic and other leadership models and is a graduate of Coach U, an 18-month training certificate. He is also certified by the International Coach Federation.

Asked why more businesses don't want to handle their own leadership development in-house, Burtch said time is money.

"Teams will evolve and become more effective over time, but there are things I can do to jump start the process and avoid the growing pains," Burtch said. "People don't have the time right now for things to evolve naturally."

Harmony Coaching & Consulting

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