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Team Player

Mary Ann Masur coaches business people by listening to them.

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Associate Editor

It all depends on the client. Sometimes, Mary Ann Masur works one-on-one with an entrepreneur who owns his or her own business and wants to clarify the goals. Other times, she may lead a workshop in team building for the sales team of a company.

Ms. Masur is a certified professional co-active coach (CPCC), certified by the International Coach Association. Unlike consultants who diagnose a problem and come up with an answer, Ms. Masur serves as a neutral listener who helps the client discover the answer to his or her problem and then find ways to implement it.

If it sounds slightly vague, that's because the coaching business is so individualized. But while still only a few years old, it is growing rapidly. Now there are coaches who specialize in different areas, from

those who advise entertainment figures to coaches who help people change careers. There are even "dating" coaches.

"There is a specialty for every aspect of life," said Ms. Masur, whose own specialty is businesses, from solo practitioners and owners of small businesses to companies and non-profit organizations.

In 2001, she took her own 20 years in business and started Synergy Consultants, which she runs out of her home in Rodgers Forge.

A New Orleans native, Ms. Masur grew up in Temple Sinai, a Reform congregation in that city. "I was very active in the Southern Federation of Temple Youth," recalls Ms. Masur, 44, who is single and attends services at a variety of *shuls* in Baltimore.

In New Orleans, Ms. Masur sold cargo space on steamships. She moved to Baltimore after that company opened an

office here. A few years later, Ms. Masur segued into commercial real estate. She spent the next 18 years working for the American Trading and Production Corp., where she was leasing manager for property in Baltimore and Wilmington, Del.

Ms. Masur says Synergy combines her business experience and her personal interests. Before she founded Synergy, Ms. Masur volunteered on several non-profits. For example, she is a past president of the Junior League and has worked on Book Bash for Literacy Works. Much of her efforts were aimed at creating effective teams, particularly when working with volunteers, and implementing leadership.

So when Ms. Masur started Synergy, her initial clients were often the non-profit organizations and their boards that she had worked with previously. Early clients were a diverse group, from the Baltimore Chamber Orchestra to the Ronald McDonald House in Wilmington.

"That expanded into coaching for people, although I still do programs for organizations," she said.

In her work with individual clients,



Mary Ann Masur: "There is a specialty for every aspect of life."

Ms. Masur finds a common thread. Often, the client is a small business owner, the CEO of a business or someone on the business' team who wants to create a better team, to have a better focus and to implement their vision for the business. Solo entrepreneurs, in the jargon, people who are on their own, want to grow their business but balance that drive with their personal lives.

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