

King helps clients aspire to what they want to be

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Bernell King lives for the "A-ha!" moments.

"The most rewarding moment is when my clients get it -- when they come to an actualization of who they are, and they make the shift to move forward," says King. "It's when the light goes on -- the A-ha moment."

King, a personal and business coach, witnessed one recently by a client who "realized she couldn't be everything to everybody."

"That realization freed her," King says. "It allowed her to move forward, and she's been doing that ever since."

It is especially gratifying for King because she experienced a similar transformation in 2000, shortly after she became the first female to earn a Clemson University degree in language and international trade with a concentration in Japanese.

Several weeks of job-searching left the usually-positive King feeling low.

"I couldn't find a job," recalls King, who was told that her degree was too non-traditional for some jobs and that she was overqualified for others. It didn't help that King "had no idea what I wanted to do."

That changed on a sleepless night of self-discovery in August.

"In the shower, I started getting some wonderful ideas. I started writing it down at 11 o'clock at night, laying in bed and using a flashlight," says King, who was trying not to disturb roommates.

"My mind kept going and the ideas kept coming, and I wrote until 6 o'clock, then I got up and went straight to a computer and started researching things.

"Everything I wrote that night, I'm living it today," says King. "It was an inspiration of the Lord."

The inspiration tapped into something King had known since elementary school, when she once informed her St. Anthony of Padua principal that she wanted to be a teacher.

Although she was later drawn to international trade and language as her college majors, King realized that she finds great rewards in the process of teaching. The result is Visions International,

where King is a one-man gang of help for those making career transitions -- especially those who must cross cultural lines to do it.

As a professional coach, she helps others find their visions for their professional and personal lives.

"I like to say that I couldn't find a job, so I created a job," says King, who prepared herself for the role by hiring a mentor. Her background in international trade was valuable, "but at the time I didn't know anything about coaching or helping people in professional life."

A graduate of Coach U., Inc., and a student in the International Coach Federation, King has a client base that ranges in ages from 28 to 55. After an assessment interview, her clients usually meet with her in one-on-one, 45-minute sessions weekly. The program takes at least three months, and usually 6-12.

King is also certified as a Technical Assistance Provider by the Small Business Administration for its Community Express Loan Program, a role which enables her to lead frequent workshops for entrepreneurs.

Many of her clients are Japanese-speaking, a development that began when King was a student at J.L. Mann High School. With prodding from a teacher, King began taking courses in Japanese there and continued them through her college career at Clemson -- once earning a three-month scholarship to study in Japan. That came when she was selected as the only scholarship recipient in a nationwide contest that enabled her to spend that time with a Japanese family.

"It was their first time receiving an American into their home, so it was new to all of us," King says, "and they embraced me as their own." Three years after that 1999 visit to Japan, the host family came to the United States to visit King.

That exposure to the Japanese culture led to a teaching position with the Japanese Language Institute, a Clemson University partnership with the Japanese government that helps Japanese engineering students learn the English language and American culture.

That helped King get a vision for her career.

"During one session, a student said, 'you're such a good teacher -- you care about our heart,'" King recalls. "That's one of the things that led me in the direction of coaching."

King, who was recently selected by Greenville Magazine as one of its 2007 "Best and Brightest Under 35," is also active as an instructor at the Water of Life Christian Church on Laurens Road where she teaches personal finance.

In the volunteer and the professional work, King's coaching takes the same approach. "At the root of everything, I'm a teacher. But it goes beyond textbook. It's about caring for the individual and helping them aspire to what they want to be," says King, whose Web site (www.visionmadereal.com) explains much about her program.

As a coach, King says she does a lot of listening and rarely offers suggestions, instead working on themes that help the client realize their strengths and weaknesses. "Everyone has a passion. I help clients discover who they are," King says. "I help them discover their passion and ask them to tell me how they're going to do it."
