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Know Your Clients.
Grow Your Business.



3 Common Mistakes That Stop Coaches From Getting Clients

The coaching industry has exploded in the last few years. A recent study by the International Coaching Federation found there are approximately 47,500 professional coaches worldwide. As of 2012, total annual revenue from the professional coaching industry worldwide was nearly \$2 billion dollars.

Yet, only a handful of these coaches are actually enjoying the level of success they know they are capable of achieving and fewer still are confident of their ability to continue working as a professional coach. According to **Choice**, the magazine of professional coaching, only 10 to 20 percent of coaches earn a six figure salary. With the median salary for life coaches in the United States at only \$30,000 to \$40,000 per year, this means that there are a lot of coaches who are making far less than \$30,000!

Most coaching programs do a fine job of teaching their students how to be a great coach, but spend precious little time teaching their students how to take that knowledge out into the world and earn a great living as a coach.

The schools often promote the benefits of a coaching lifestyle, mention that the field of life, business, and executive coaching is becoming more and more valued by individuals and big business alike, and enumerate all the ways a coach can be of benefit in our modern world.

What they don't spend a lot of time teaching is the real world issue that all coaches face: how to find those clients who need and want a life coach.

New coaches are often left to figure this out for themselves and struggle daily with mastering the business side of coaching.

Perhaps you are struggling to understand what it takes to attract clients, communicate your value, set yourself apart, and build your reputation in the market quickly and effectively.

If you've never been taught what's required to achieve real success in this professional services marketplace, you are definitely at a disadvantage.

To begin making sense of just what it takes to successfully market yourself as a life, business or executive coach, let's take a look at three of the most common mistakes coaches make that keep them from getting clients.

Mistake #1 - Failing to identify their ideal client

Many coaches are unsure of which market they want to serve and start out thinking that they want to help "everyone." When asked "Who do you coach?" a new or inexperienced coach can often be heard to reply "Oh, I can help anyone." Unfortunately, they fail to understand that just as no product or service business can appeal to everyone, no coach can help or appeal to everyone.

Let's use McDonald's as an example. McDonald's advertises that they have served "over 100 billion hamburgers" yet they can't say that they serve those hamburgers to everyone. That's because their ideal client isn't "everyone." Actually, the ideal McDonald's client is someone who is hungry for something to eat, that (1) is quick, (2) is inexpensive, and (3) tastes "not bad." If you are an ideal McDonald's client, you go to McDonald's for a quick lunch when you are short on time or on a Saturday when you are out with the kids. You probably wouldn't want to go to McDonald's to celebrate

a special occasion such as an anniversary or your birthday, unless you're six years old.

Consider another example. If you wanted to work for someone as an employee, you would have to choose the job you wanted, be confident about your qualifications to do that job, as well as choose the company that you wanted to work for to perform those duties. Identifying your ideal client is exactly the same principle.

If you want to be successful as a coach, it's important to understand that in order to truly help and serve your clients, you need to choose the precise group of people that you are qualified to help and who need and want your help. You may also have heard of this as defining your niche or choosing your target market.

The secret to success as a coach is to identify and locate your ideal client; connect and communicate with them in a meaningful way; help the person understand that you know who they are and what they want; and convey in a meaningful way that you are the most qualified to provide solutions to their problems and that you can and will help them achieve their goals.

It really comes down to deciding who you are as a coach, who you want to serve, where you want to be and claiming that spot for yourself.

Mistake #2 - Thinking like a coach instead of a problem solver.

Lately, there has been a lot of attention paid to coaching in the media and while a lot of people are aware of coaching, very few people wake up in the morning thinking "Gee, I wonder where I can find a good coach" or "If only I had a coach, I would be a lot happier."

On the contrary, people wake up in the morning thinking “I’ve either got to lose some weight or buy some new clothes because I’m sick of having to squeeze into these pants.” Or, “I’ve got to quit smoking (and some day I will) because the doctor has said these things are going to kill me” or “Why does everyone else have someone in their lives who really loves them. Where is my special someone?”

People spend their days thinking about their problems and trying to figure out (usually without much success) how to solve those problems. People don’t buy coaching. ***They buy solutions to their problems!***

A coach who wants to be effective at connecting with their ideal clients needs to be able to go beyond the basic coaching definition and answer questions such as:

Are you a coach... or are you the fitness expert who can help Nancy lose the weight that she has been struggling to lose for the last two years?

Are you a coach... or are you the qualified professional who can help David quit smoking once and for all?

Are you a coach... or are you the relationship expert who can help Martin or Marie find their one true love?

People are looking for solutions to their problems in life and they want help to achieve their goals and your marketing has to address this fact.

If you are approaching your marketing with the mindset of a coach instead of approaching it with the mindset of a problem solver it’s going to take you a lot longer to find your ideal clients.

Mistake #3 - Using the “Free Coaching Session” or “Complimentary Consultation” to coach instead of using that time to get to know the prospective client.

Often times, during an initial meeting with a prospective client, coaches become so eager to show their prospect what a great coach they are, or to illustrate how it would feel to work with the coach, that they make the mistake of actually coaching the prospect during the “Free Coaching Session” or “Complimentary Consultation.” This is a mistake for several reasons.

The first reason is that, in this preliminary session, the coach will not have had adequate time to completely assess the need(s) of the prospective client. This can create a situation where the coach may spend the entire session coaching around a topic that is actually a smoke screen for the real issue. This can happen innocently enough, but the outcome is the same. The result will be that the coach is not as effective as he or she could be, will fail to sign the person as a client, and the prospective client will walk away feeling cheated or thinking (and worse, telling others) that the coach is not as competent as originally thought.

The second reason can be equally devastating. In this scenario, the coach does accurately identify the issue the prospective client needs to deal with and does an outstanding job in their first session. This outcome can have what might be called a “pressure-cooker” effect. In other words, the coach has done such a good job during the first session that the pressure that had been building up and caused the client to seek help in the first place has been released. The coach has, unintentionally, defused the pain the prospective client was feeling. At this point, the person sub-consciously feels the problem has been “solved” and that he or she no longer has the need to be coached. The prospective client leaves the session feeling much better saying that he or she will “think about” hiring the coach, and

what ultimately happens is that the decision is delayed until the next free coaching session comes along. And the cycle continues.

Now, a free coaching session or complimentary consultation is a terrific tool, but it should be used to get to know the person you may wind up coaching.

This initial conversation or interview should be spent gathering information to find out about the prospect: what they want in life, what are their goals, what kinds of difficulties are they having, what has already been tried, what has or hasn't worked for them.

Equally important for you the coach, is that this is the time for you to assess whether or not the prospect is going to be a good match with you and your programs. If not, the prospective client won't get the results they are expecting – and you won't enjoy working with them.

That's why it's critical to find out beforehand whether or not this person is your preferred kind of client – your identified **Ideal Client** – before you decide to work with them. Coaching can be time-consuming and emotionally draining in the best of circumstances. Taking on a client who is not a good fit and that you don't enjoy working with is unfair to both you and the client and serves neither of you.

No matter what kind of business you have, identifying your ideal client is crucial to your success.

This is especially true for professional services businesses such as coaching. Knowing who you want to work with and knowing how to find these clients will make growing your business that much easier and will ensure that your success comes that much quicker.

One of the most consistently noted characteristics of successful people is “they know what they don't know and seek out help in that area.” If you are struggling with getting your coaching practice to the level you want it to be and are unsure what to do next, we can help educate you about the right way to market your business and get you to the point where selling becomes fun for you.

My “Ideal Client,” the person I most enjoy working with, is a life coach who is intelligent, service-oriented, ambitious, and motivated to grow his or her business. If this sounds like you or if you simply have questions about how our program works, please [contact us](#) for a free consultation. We would love to hear from you!