

choice

the magazine of professional coaching

The Power of Specializing

Carving out your
coaching niche

Nail Your Niche
With Laser Focus

Specialization Equals
Profitization

The Nonprofit Niche

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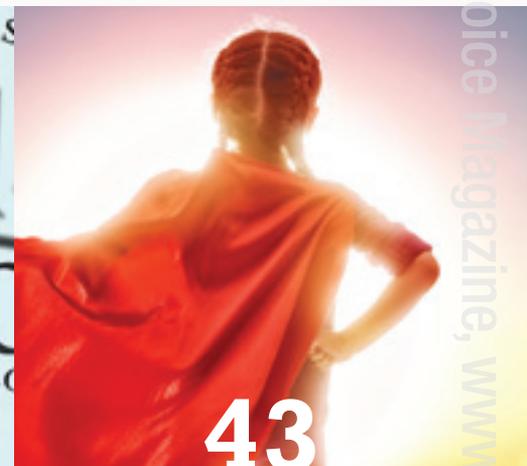
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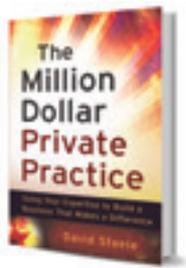


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It's always an interesting process to sit

and write this column, almost a year after we decided the theme, many months after we reached out to and worked with our writers, a few months after we read and chose our articles, and a couple of months before you get to see this issue.

The interesting part is thinking *way* back to when we choose the theme and why. What did we already know? What did we want to know? And what did we learn putting it all together, all the while thinking about how best to prepare you to read and learn from this issue.

Thinking back, the theme “The Power of Specializing: Why choosing a niche is important and profitable” was a long time coming. As we mature as a profession, it is important to make it easy for people to find and choose us. Terri Hase, in our lead feature article, gives a brilliant analogy about fishing that explains a lot about why this topic is so important. My explanation uses the legal system. If I need a business lawyer I know how to look for one. As a business owner, I will look for a business lawyer, not a family lawyer. Pretty simple, yet surprisingly, many coaches get stuck in the fear of not having enough clients if they don't offer to “coach everyone.”

Personally, I learned about the power of specializing early on in my coaching career and thank my dear friend Anne Hurtubise (with whom I shared leadership of the Toronto Chapter of ICF all those many years ago) who gave me the insight and tools to get clear on who I love to coach. And I do. I love to coach business owners (like me) who have more than five people working for them. Pretty clear and easy to fish for (you'll have to read Terri's article to fully understand).

I invite you to sit back and not just read, but really absorb the articles in this issue, gain clarity on whom you love to coach and why, determine your niche, and to take a chance on becoming specialized. I know from personal



Garry and one of our regular *choice* writers, Terry Hildebrandt, at a recent conference.

experience that it is more fulfilling both financially and spiritually than being a generalist.

Speaking of clarity, just after the previous issue, we sent out a survey in the hopes of gaining some knowledge as to what your wants and needs are and how *choice* can potentially help. A very special thank you to those who took the time to give us their valuable feedback. We will be reviewing the results and making changes to meet the requests of you, our loyal readers.

One final note as we go to press. We are saddened by the news that Sir John Whitmore, a pioneer in the coaching profession, passed away. We were fortunate to have met Sir John and were honored to publish an article he submitted to *choice* Magazine many years ago sharing his coaching wisdom. He was a true leader who will be missed.

Garry Schleifer, PCC, CMC
CEO & Publisher



When I started my career as a daily

newspaper reporter (too many years ago to admit), there was a hierarchy in the newsroom. Lowest on the totem pole were the “general assignment” reporters – the Jacks and Jills of all trades who took on any story the editor threw at them. Much higher on the ladder were the “beat” reporters – those who were able to focus on one area, such as education, politics, etc. As a junior reporter covering everything from children’s piano recitals to fatal car accidents, murders and the newest singles club in town, I dreamed of the day I would have earned my stripes and proven my worth enough to nab one of the coveted beats.

With many more senior reporters above me and with the impatience of youth, I decided to carve out my own beat. Without officially being a beat reporter, I had a beat of my own making, and I threw myself into it with gusto.

Focus, in any profession, is preferable to wearing many hats and dividing your time, effort and expertise over a broad spectrum. The coaching profession is no exception.

In this issue, we look at the power of specialization in building your coaching business.

In our opening feature, Dr. Lee Baucom and Terri Hase illustrate how finding your niche allows you to create your ideal coaching practice. Next up, Kim Redman outlines how specialization leads to profitization, followed by Pegotty Cooper and Jean LaCour explaining why specialty coaching is an idea whose time has come. Next up, Melinda Cohan reveals how to nail your niche to grow your coaching business. Kate Michels breaks down why the non-profit niche is a profitable market for coaching, and in our final feature, Terry Hildebrandt explores the niche of coaching supervision.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *choice* and come away with a clear vision of your coaching “beat” – and if it doesn’t exist yet, create it!

Janet Lees, B.Journ.

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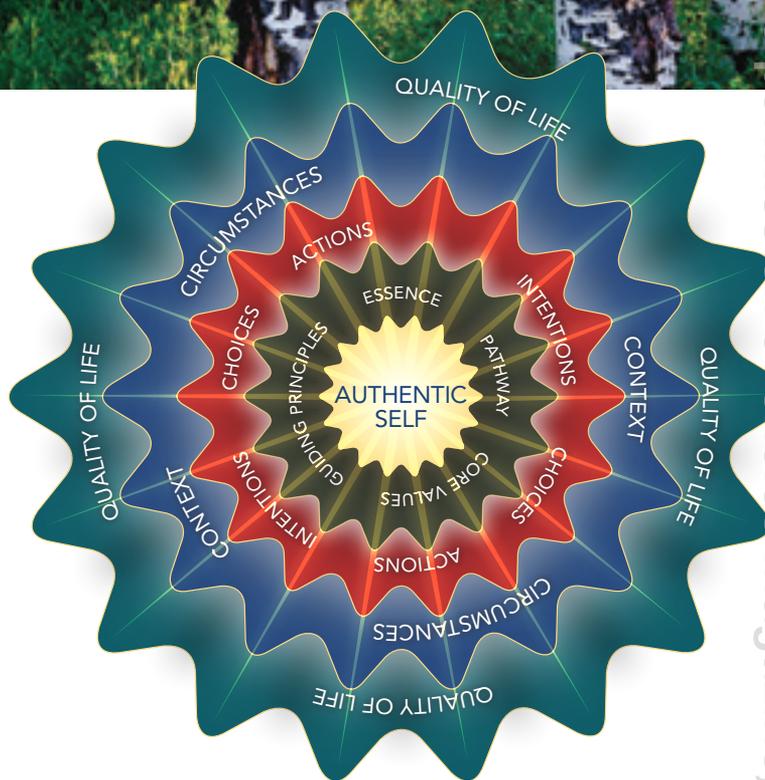
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columns



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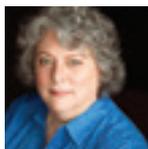
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features

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Own Your Niche

Leveraging your talents to build a successful coaching practice

No life coach could possibly be more enthusiastic than I am about the importance of having a niche. I built my business – and have helped scores of other coaches do the same – using this one simple concept.

I had two other businesses before I became a life coach, and having a niche in those also worked wonders. Your success as a coach requires that you follow good business practices. Identifying and serving a niche is one of the best.

I have chosen to review a book for this issue, *The Million Dollar Private Practice*, by David Steele, that not only talks about having a niche but has the best exercise I know for identifying your niche and moving into action with it.

Also, as its tagline – “Using Your Expertise to Build a Business that Makes a Difference” – suggests, this book is aimed specifically at heart-based business owners. Between its covers, you will find a host of examples, insights, powerful questions and tools with which you can build a solid foundation to stand on as you grow your coaching business.

Steele is the CEO of the Relationship Coaching Institute, so he knows personally the challenges coaches can face while building their business. And though the title of this book sounds a bit grandiose, he has written very practical guidelines and step-by-step processes to help coaches in all stages of business.

The book starts out with a bang of a question: “Is a Million Dollar Practice Right for You?” Do you have a passion to help people but no desire to be an entrepreneur? To help you answer that question, Steele lays out the seven qualities shared by Million Dollar Practitioners and the seven stages in the development of a million-dollar practice.

He follows this with examples of success stories and chapter-ending questions that bring it home to you.

The second chapter helps you identify your message and purpose for being in business – the “why” of it all. Steele is a talented coach and knows the importance of starting by identifying your mission and message.

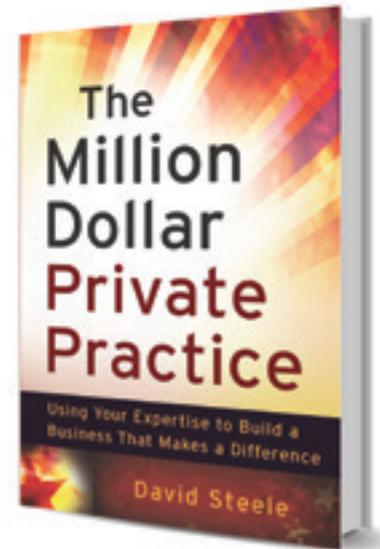
Then we come to the keystone chapter and my favorite topic, “Owning Your Niche.” This chapter contains the niche exercise I love. Steele begins with a clear definition and distinctions between what a niche is and is not, along with the benefits of having one.

He then walks you through 11 strategies for choosing a niche that is perfect for you (strategies such as “The Quick Start, The Pipeline & The Attraction”) and seven steps to owning that niche. Once you

You will find a host of examples, insights, powerful questions and tools with which you can build a solid foundation to stand on as you build your coaching business.

own it, you are on your way.

The nugget in this chapter is his “Platinum Rule of Marketing”. Steele contends that following this one rule could shift the way you do business and will benefit your clients immensely. The Platinum Rule contends that instead of focusing on what YOU would want (as the Golden Rule would have you do), it is essential for you to ask your clients and potential clients what THEY want and how they would most like it delivered.



Do they want a live retreat, easy to understand exercises, an online group experience or, perhaps, something you haven’t ever considered?

Using this rule, you might find out that what is most valuable to your clients is something you take for granted. It is easy for us coaches to live in a self-help bubble and forget that those who are looking for our help have a very different perspective on us and our offerings.

The Platinum Rule tells us to “ask, ask and ask again... then deliver what your clients tell you they really want.”

When you find the niche that lights your fire and you ask its members what they need (and listen to the answers), you will be standing on a foundation from which any action you take will make your coaching practice feel like a million bucks.

Following the guidance found in the rest of this book will have you not only feeling like a million, but will go a long way to helping make the income you seek. ●



The Gestalt Center for Coaching is proud to announce that **A Gestalt Coaching Primer: The Path Toward Awareness IQ** is now available for those who wish to learn about the power and relevance of Gestalt coaching for today's complex learning challenges.

Dorothy E. Siminovitch, PhD, MCC, has published **A Gestalt Coaching Primer: The Path Toward Awareness IQ**, where Gestalt theory and practice are connected to a broad range of exciting research and insights from other fields. Coaches, consultants, and leaders, whether novice or seasoned, are given a useful framework of Gestalt coaching's capacity to make a difference in their clients' personal and professional lives. Dorothy is an international coach and consultant, and a founder and evolver of Gestalt coaching. She is co-founder, Director of Training, and senior faculty at the Gestalt Center for Coaching.

A Gestalt Coaching Primer can be purchased through Amazon and at <https://www.createspace.com/6970987>. Training workshops are detailed at <http://gestaltcenterforcoaching.com>.



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Thumballs™

By Marcy Nelson-Garrison,
MA, LP, CPCC

No matter what type of group work you do, bringing in an element of play can have surprising results. Play can increase participation, create a more relaxed atmosphere, ignite conversation and help the learning “stick.”

Thumballs™ are a perfect choice for adding a bit of play. Toss the Thumball™ to a participant and invite them to respond to the prompt under their thumb. You can then have everyone answer that question or toss the ball to another participant who answers the prompt they land on. In an easy, fun way, you have just amped up the energy in the room and created a stress free environment.

Trainers’s Warehouse offers a number

of topic specific Thumballs™. I was drawn to the the Stress Management Thumball™ and the Team Dynamics Thumball™.

The Stress Management Thumball™ is a good fit for life and health coaches with prompts like: “When stressed, do you prefer company or solitude?” “When I am stressed I _____,” and “How would you use two extra hours per day?” The Team Dynamics Thumball™ is perfect for those working with teams. Prompts include: “How might we show appreciation of good work done?”, “When was the last time we had constructive conflict?” and “What’s most challenging about being on a team?” Each Thumball™ offers 30 prompts.

I highly recommend adding Thumballs™ to your tool kit! Use them as icebreakers, as opening exercises, to facilitate discussions and more.



No matter what type of group work you do, bringing in an element of play can have surprising results.



Canva

By Terry L. Green

Every now and then I discover a new website, tool, app or some kind of technical doohickey I can't live without. Well, I've done it again, and I must tell you I am completely in love!

It's called Canva, and it has given this very uncreative person a way to express creativity in a way I never

imagined. Blog post graphics, graphic quotes, graphic tweets, social media platform covers, you name it: Canva does it all. Quickly. Easily. No muss, no fuss!

The options for what you can do and create are endless. And best of all, Canva is free! The free Canva account provides everything you need to create awesome graphics. But for those of you

who want a more branded experience, you can always upgrade to Canva for Work. Canva for Work is \$9.95 per month when paid annually or \$12.95 per user per month when paid monthly.

Canva for Work lets you save your custom templates, brand colors, logo and brand fonts. You can also keep



your images organized with photo folders, add team members, and best of all ... resize images quickly and easily with the Magic Resize option! If you're a coach who likes to create images on your own, or one who works with a team, check it out. You might fall in love with it too!

Leader's Edge Development Cards

By Marcy Nelson-Garrison, MA, LP, CPCC



So much more is being asked of our leaders today. Alongside the demands to increase profit and productivity, leaders are expected to build authentic relationships, empower employees and teams, build a culture of trust and more. Fully stepping into the type of leader you or your client want to be will require focused attention and very likely some skill building.

Leader's Edge Development Cards are designed specifically to help leaders hone the skills needed in today's world. Each card points to a specific aspect of the leadership role, and the accompanying booklet offers education and action steps. I drew this card randomly: "Weakest Link." It references the old adage that you are only as strong as your weakest link. It offers concrete steps to have the difficult conversation and help your employee or team member get back on track.

The range of topics runs the gamut from interaction with individuals and leadership styles to creating a culture. Examples include: Challenge Someone, Encourage Wellness, Active Listening, Creative Solutions Contest, Pizza Party, Delegate or Act Bold.

As you grow leadership skills, intention is key. Leader's Edge Development Cards will keep you fresh, introduce new skills, provide creative ideas and remind you to pay attention to the things you know but are often too busy to remember.

The Hemingway Editor

By Terry L. Green

Most coaches do a LOT of writing. Blog posts, newsletter articles, social media posts, web copy, you name it. Each of us has our own voice and unique

way of saying things, but how much of what we write does our audience understand?

Studies show it's easier for adult readers to read and comprehend copy written at the 4th to 6th grade reading level. How do you even know what grade level your writing is?

Each of us has our own voice and unique way of saying things.

There's an app for that! The Hemingway Editor: a Proofreading Tool for Writers.

Hemingway is a free online app, or desktop tool priced at \$20 USD, available for both the PC and Mac. The editor highlights common problems in the text, and color-codes them so they are easy to identify. It's simple to use, too. Type your content right into the app. Or copy your text from your favorite word processor and paste it into the Hemingway text editor. Click on EDIT view and it will show you all the areas that need improvement. Make your corrections in the app or edit the original text in your word processor.

Edit and watch as your grade level drops, indicating that your text is more understandable to more people. FYI, this review is at the 5th grade reading level!

Team Building In-A-Box

By Marcy Nelson-Garrison, MA, LP, CPCC

If your mission is to help teams work together effectively to achieve successful outcomes, you know that it can't happen without good communication and identifying the best ways for team members to work together.

Training on communication skills and work styles can often be dull, but it doesn't have to be! Team Building In-A-Box offers a fresh and creative approach. It's an awesome ready-to-go program, based on DISC, that will allow you to guide a team through a fun and powerful activity that dramatically improves communication and strengthens relationships.

The package comes with everything you

need to deliver a two-hour training for 10 participants. You get a facilitator's guide, 10 communication style self-assessments based on DISC, worksheets and a team communication style poster. Here's where it gets interesting: it also comes with a deck of cards, sticky dots and Meebles game playing pieces.

This training has a wonderful game-like component that makes it interactive and fun. Team Building In-A-Box provides an enjoyable, easy and powerful ready-to-go offer that you can present to a new corporate or business client.

You will also have a fresh new approach to offer your current clients. Add your skills to the mix and you can easily expand it into a half-day or full-day training.

This is ideal for all you team coaches!



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How do I narrow my niche?

the situation

“I’ve heard many opinions pro and con about specializing in one’s coaching business. I’ve been coaching for several years and coach various kinds of people, but feel I’ve spread my marketing efforts and my coaching too wide. What can I do to decide my area(s) of expertise, coach like-minded people, and create a marketing plan to match my efforts?”

the experts weigh in

By Craig Carr, PCC, CPCC

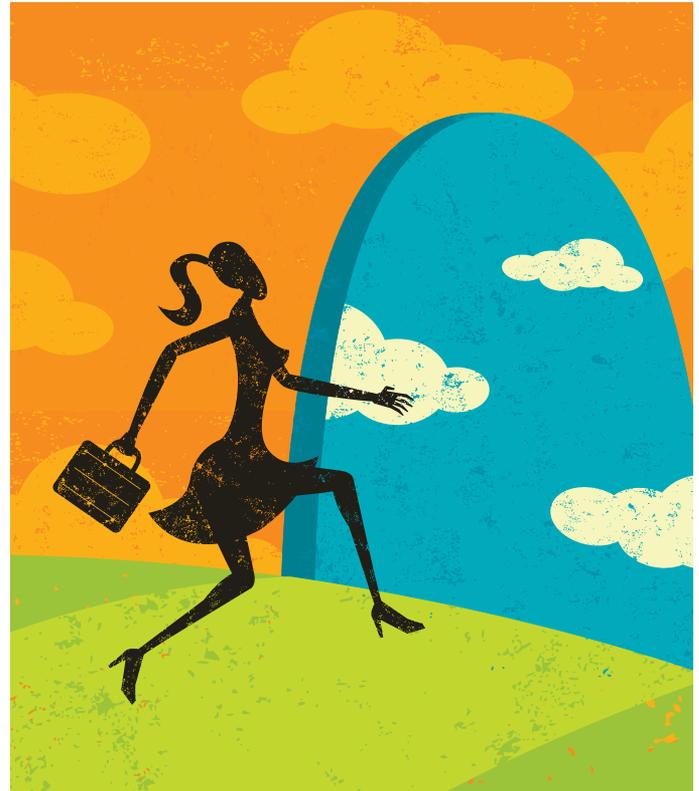
We are getting more and more “sticky situation” questions having to do with staying in business; never mind the actual coaching conundrums we get into with clients! This is a complex arena with many layers to consider so, as I often do, I’ll start by deconstructing your question a bit.

First, “specialization” is a big word. For example, you could specialize in having a wide net if that’s what you want. As a marketer for your business, however, you are going to have to find the language that reflects your authenticity as a generalist and how that is relevant to your prospective client. I’ll maintain that it’s possible, but it is probably harder to pull off than the much-touted niche approach. Second, I don’t have a good grip on the advantages of not specializing; I just know that if you can make a case for not niching down, good for you! I once knew a fellow who was a good handyman and he put “generalist” on his card. That’s all it said, and it worked for him!

That said, the first thing is to wholeheartedly decide that you want to change direction and claim an area of “expertise.” What direction is that? Of all the territory you’ve covered with your widely spread efforts, what has turned you on the most? There is also a case to be made for asking, “What has scared me the most?” as that may be the place where there is aliveness and excitement for you.

In other words, don’t just do this because the money looks better “over there” and you think it will keep you in business. Do it because you are on your path of growth and discovery and you remember that’s the main reason you are in this career in the first place. There are too many stories to ignore: There are countless people in every industry who have trusted their passion to “follow their bliss” and claim it has led them to celebrate greater fulfillment than they could have imagined. All those slogans and clichés exist for a reason!

Now, once you have a glow of direction my next piece of advice may sound glib, obvious, or rude: hire a coach! Find someone who has successfully marketed themselves in your



area of interest and who cares about coach/mentoring your success. Sit down and figure out what you can afford to invest in a coach and stretch yourself another 15-20 percent. The key words are what you have probably said to many clients who have hired you: “It’s an investment!”

One last thing: to narrow your focus, you must double your intensity. By that I mean in committing to a finely articulated identity you must *trust that there are more clients the narrower you focus, not less*. In my experience, this is one of the biggest mindset hurdles an entrepreneur building their expert niche must overcome.

By Suzi Pomerantz, MT, MCC

You are wise to consider specializing from a marketing perspective. It's much more efficient and sustainable for your business growth when you are steeped in the language, issues and realities of your niche clientele. You can speak directly to their pain points, you can better relate to their perspective, and you can create marketing materials that will make your ideal clients think, "Wow! This is someone who really gets it. This is a coach who gets *my* reality and can help me get greater results!"

However, you've already been coaching for several years and you already coach various kinds of people. You've discovered that casting a wide marketing net yields a wide variety of clients. But your question causes me to generate more questions. Why do you want to decide your areas of expertise? Why do you want to coach like-minded people? Why do you want to limit yourself and your marketing in that way? To what end? What are you hoping that will do for you? What problem are you trying to solve that makes you think deciding your areas of expertise will be the answer?

As I tell my students in the Niche Marketing course I teach at the College of Executive Coaching, your business development system includes simultaneous and concerted action in the three key domains of marketing, networking and sales, and

must be customized to you. That means it is designed in alignment with your personality, strengths, passion, values, and the kind of results you want. Your areas of expertise are likely already decided. What are your clients coming to you for? Your niche marketing needn't be limited by (or contrived to fit into) a determined set of expertise areas. Your niche might, for example, be an industry, or a type of client, or a kind of challenge you can help them to resolve.

Before you decide how to specialize or what niche to pursue, perhaps step back and look at what you are already attracting. What types of clients are coming to you already? What are they seeking? Is there a pattern in the type of work you are doing or the type of client you work with best? Is there a pattern or theme in the results you help them to produce? Where do you feel you are most utilizing your top strengths and passions? Can you build your marketing around what energizes you and your existing clients? Can you align your networking, marketing and sales with your natural ability to provide value for your clients? Can you take a coach approach to how you do your marketing? What will be most comfortable for you?

You really don't have to specialize, unless you are feeling energetic whiplash from working with diverse clients across diverse industries. Try creating your own authentic business development approach and giving yourself permission to do what works best for you.

Your niche marketing needn't be limited by a determined set of expertise areas.



By Victoria Trabosh, CDC®, CEC

Over the years, I've worked with coaches to define their coaching practice. The biggest concern I encounter is, "What will I coach about?" When I began, I tried to get very 'niche-y'. I found that often executives who were stepparents did not use the same behaviors at home that they used at work. Their stepkids thought they were idiots (or worse). In 1981 I became a stepparent to four kids when I was 24 years old (they were 12,14,16,18). I realized that the reason I was successful was because I used the same behaviors at home that I used at work. As a parent I knew I had to have high standards, strong boundaries, use humor, admit when I was wrong and never forget I was in charge. Boom! Stepcoach Inc. was born.

I was in Hawaii at a Marketing Roundtable in 2003 and when someone asked, "What is your new business?" I explained with great delight my concept and when I had finished, one of the people listening to me said, in all seriousness, "So you coach step aerobics?" Yeah ... not so much.

My intention was to narrow my market, get creative and niche myself good! But I wasn't clear enough about exactly what I was offering. So as I began my business in July 2003,

I'd ask friends and colleagues, "Who do you know that would like to work with an executive coach to realize their next level of success?" Very authentically, I began to attract business people who wanted to work on leadership and communication issues. These are naturally the areas I excel in and over the last 14 years have built a substantial business. While I can also spread myself thin, I find the best work to do for my clients usually is around the issues of leadership and communication.

Finding your niche is usually not as difficult as you might think. Complete these sentences for yourself:

1. Over the past two years, the majority of my income has come from the following type of coaching:
2. The coaching that leaves me most fulfilled is:
3. An area that interests me and into which I'm willing to go deeper to bring greater value to my clients is:

Therein will lie your niche, your greatest income generating business and your potential for expanding beyond what you do now to what you'll do next. ●

Are you grappling with a sticky situation?

You don't have to go it alone. Let our senior coaches give you some different perspectives to consider. Email your situation to: submissions@choice-online.com and put "sticky situations" in the subject line.

Use Your Words

The art of talking about what you do

By Kristen Beirels, ACC



How do you talk about coaching? What do you say or write to explain the benefits and results you've gotten with your clients? More importantly, how are you choosing your words?

So often in our industry, we are looking for help to create “sticky” copy or string together words that will get SEO attention or better yet, convert people from prospects to clients. We gather information, we study how others do it and we put something together that is as perfect as we can get it. Then we expect that clients will come flooding into our coaching business.

For the coaches who have mastered the techniques and/or have a great copywriter, this works and they get all the clients they can handle. If you're one of those successful coaches, then you may want to skip the rest of this article. However, if you've been trying to get the right words into

your marketing and clients haven't come flooding to you, then read on.

People Don't Buy the Definition of Coaching

There is a right way to talk about coaching. In the early days of coaching no one knew what it was and coaches had to explain what the word meant. Having a consistent definition is a good thing. The more people see the same thing over and over again, the more they understand it, believe it and trust it. It's one of the many things that got the industry off the ground.

Over the years, the perception of coaching has changed. It's gone mainstream. Ask just about anyone and they will say they know what coaching is. Ask them to define it and then things get a little hairy (unless they've had a coach before). If you give them the standard definition of coaching, they still don't understand it and they don't know if they need it.

I hate to burst your bubble, but I'm going to burst your bubble. Most of the time, coaching isn't something you can explain to someone who hasn't experienced it. Clients who want coaching don't buy perfect copy, great SEO or words that are masterfully crafted to get them to say "yes." They don't buy pie in the sky promises, pictures that show what they're feeling and they especially don't buy into someone telling them exactly what they need to do right now.

Coaching Clients Buy into a Relationship With You

So, how do you define that? You don't. There's nothing to define or even words to create. You have to demonstrate what a coaching relationship with you would be like, in every piece of marketing you put out into the world. There are no perfect words that are going to make clients flood in. There are only your words, your language, your personality, your way of building relationships that's going to make clients flood in. How much easier would

Most of the time, coaching isn't something you can explain to someone who hasn't experienced it.

marketing be if all you had to do was to be yourself and write.

So, how do you do that and get clients? Here are five steps to help you start talking in your own language.

1. Don't Sell!

For crying out loud, stop torturing yourself with "sales language" and start using your own language. Even on a sales call, it's not about sales. It's about figuring out what they need and how you can help, then sharing that with them. It's about being of service.

2. Identify the Challenge

What is the core challenge you solve? The one hurdle that each and every one of your clients has had to get over before they could make the change they needed to make? The consistent root of the problem.

I'm not saying to go out and convince people they have this problem. Instead, relate to them where they are first. Point out the problems they know they have and then show them the cause. Help them see how the core challenge you solve contributes to their problems.

Open their eyes to what they can't see from their perspective. Show them what you see. Share why you care about their problems and help them understand where they need to look to solve them.

3. Play the "What if" Game

I took a bunch of acting classes back in my 20s and in almost every one there was a version of the "what if" game. It's where you put yourself in a situation and imagine what it would be like, if ...

I want you to imagine that you are sitting next to a potential client with the core challenge you solve. Imagine that they are in a bubble. The bubble represents the reality that they live in where that challenge is unknown to them but is keeping them inside the bubble.

You are aware that outside is the reality of moving through their challenge and creating a whole new reality to live in. Of course, they are safe in that bubble and bursting it could be really scary, so you can't burst it right this moment. However, you can help them start to shift their thinking and see new possibilities.

What questions might you ask? What piece of information might you be able to give them? What resources can you give to help them wake up and see that the bubble is there? What would you say to start that process?

4. Write, Write, Write

Write down all of your ideas and thoughts that come from the "what if" game. Then choose a few to play with as you network, do free sessions and meet people in other settings. Be a coach and help them find their own answers as to what they want to change.

5. Use Your Words

I've heard parents of two-year-olds say this. Instead of mumbling or using gibberish, they want to hear actual sentences that explain what the child wants. Getting your clients to open up and explain what they want is key to the coaching paradigm, but don't forget to also ask yourself, what do you want? Share what you want for your client. Use your words to share with them what you know is possible after they take this first tiny little step.

Being a coach, you know it's never about the task; it's always about mindset. Adjust your mindset to invite clients into a relationship with you, instead of choosing the most attractive words. By using *your* words and caring for them, you show them what it looks like to have a relationship with you. If you want to spruce up your writing, bring in a copywriter. Just be sure to instruct them to make sure your voice remains in the copy. ●

Engaged & Reflective

Quality requires artful wrestling between the two

Quality as a coach is a continuous learning journey. It is always a wrestling match between being engaged with clients and being reflective on our engagement. We must choose both; however, the question is, in what ratio? And how does that adjust over time in order to enjoy high quality in our work? My most empowering learning about coaching quality has occurred through a study of ethical maturity¹ with the brilliant Dr. Michael Carroll, and I am deeply grateful for his wisdom and contribution to this important element of our professional field.

Ethical maturity is essential for sustaining coaching quality. The scope of ethical maturity is far and wide, well beyond determining whether a specific action is or is not ethical. The power to be ethical is within us and is unique for each person. That power is as dynamic as the ever-changing context for our work, our clients and our environment. Similar to creating conscious awareness, ethical maturity is never a habit and must be a purposeful practice to achieve in each moment if we are to consistently deliver quality in our coaching relationships.

If how you're engaging now as coach isn't working as effectively as you want, then notice perhaps an internal tendency to hold onto what you know.

(Suspending our attachment to our knowing is also an act of artful wrestling!) If we think about that in the competency framework of the International Coach Federation (ICF), we know that the more artful behaviors at the MCC level are about trusting a field of exchange based upon not knowing.

Of course, clients engage with coaches because they are seeking something. They want a particular outcome. They want a different experience of life in whatever context they bring, personal or professional. Ultimately if they consciously knew the answer, they would already be making the change.



The partnership by definition is focusing in the arena of what is not yet known consciously, allowing something to emerge through our dialogue. This is what is meant by creating awareness so that new choices may be considered and pursued.

How do we as practitioners begin to recognize where we stop short of asking the question that would open up the field of conversation? What compels us to be attached to a perspective, point of view, practice or process that we just happen to know is perfect for our client? In that moment, we have violated the basis of our connection with that client.

We say to clients, "Come to coaching. You are responsible for your outcomes.

I'm here to facilitate your learning and your new choices to move forward." Yet we bring our own content to the coaching relationship, which undermines the self-trust that we've worked so tenaciously to build in order to create a safe environment for our clients.

Increasing our ethical maturity through our capacity to be with people and situations different from us is fundamental to coaching quality. When we discover what stimulates our actions with different people in different contexts, we begin to notice that all too often we are behaving from habit. Unfortunately, when we are in relationship with others, habit gets in our way. We miss what might be happening in front of us more spontaneously.

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In addition, our client interactions risk being incomplete because we cannot fully perceive the client when our habit is operating. We're caught up and distracted by our way of making assumptions and analyzing our experience.

I began my artful wrestling in earnest while becoming accredited as a coaching supervisor through the Coaching Supervision Academy.

Ethical maturity is never a habit and must be a purposeful practice to achieve in each moment if we are to consistently deliver quality in our coaching relationships.

While I was very familiar with the principles of supervision as applied to the coach education process, what I now realize is that as our professional practice grows, the complexity of our bias, preference and attachment to knowledge inhibit our ability to see ourselves clearly. This continues to feel paradoxical to me. Being an advanced practitioner with more than 10,000 hours of experience implies that I must "know" what I am doing. That I do know is exactly the dilemma that challenges me to be consciously purposeful.

If you're hearing this as criticism, check yourself here for a moment. How might that emotional response be stimulated by being attached to your own perspective? Several pillars have evolved for me through relationship with coach practitioners who are seeking quality in their work and confidence in their ethical maturity. I will share the first two in this article.

Boundaries & Borders

What are the personal relationship boundaries that are important to you with your clients? How do you establish the border that tells you when either you or your client have stepped over that boundary? Being able to name these

very specifically and be transparent with our clients is a demonstration of ethical maturity. Boundaries and borders is one category of exploration to help us find out what our interior ethical stance is in a given relationship and context.

"No individual is self-sufficient. The individual can only exist in an environmental field. The individual is inevitably at every moment a part of some field. His or her behavior is a function of the total field which includes both him or her and the environment." This quote from Fritz Perls, one of the founding fathers of Gestalt therapy captures the complexity of boundaries and borders.

Some of the questions I ask myself and my clients, out loud and transparently, include: What's happening to me internally while I'm engaged with this client? What does the client recognize is happening for them while they are engaged with me? What is the broader context influencing our partnership? What is the environment in which our work is constructed? Consistent reflection on these questions strengthens ethical maturity over time.

Relationships are always going to have ruptures in them. It's almost by definition because we are inviting our client to let go of a standard and likely a comfortable and familiar way of living. The client says they want to grow as a leader. They want to generate a more positive impact. The way they have been operating isn't the way to move forward. Something else is wanted. It's necessary for us to remember we're creating safety so that clients choose to break attachments and allow for experimentation and risk taking. If we're afraid to challenge, we're going to end up in an environment with our client taking risks that we're not willing to engage.

Discussing and affirming our boundaries and borders up front are useful so that we are open about how we're going to navigate emotional challenge when we hit that moment when either of us say silently inside, "Ugh, I don't know if I can ask this/say this/do this."

It is valuable and useful to declare how we will navigate these moments in the relationship. Being transparent with our boundaries and borders allows the

connection to affirm our trust and to navigate toward hope and the possibility of alternative insight and/or outcomes.

Buffers & Blinders

Buffers are things that we adopted as behaviors, and perhaps belief systems, too, since those are highly related. When we get anxious – when we are feeling insecure or inadequate in some way – we have our go-to strategy for protection. These behaviors are mechanisms to compensate for unconscious and usually false fears from our history that are not relevant in the present moment. That's what a buffer is. It's our self-protection strategy in relationship with others.

Blinders are clever. These are the invisible ways of thinking, meaning we do not notice the thinking and act from habit without being able to see ourselves and our impact. What are the situations and types of people – maybe personalities or learning styles – that you already know trigger you to pull back, step away or withhold speaking as your automatic response? When we start to feel these impulses, we choose to not be in relationship and in doing this, avoid facing the situation. Often, we do this for a very good reason. However, we miss an opportunity to be more aware of a habitual judgment that keeps us separate from others. When we start to feel these emotional triggers, it is an

The power to be ethical is within us and is unique for each person.

opportunity to see blinders and to be more curious to understand what's being activated inside of us. What is it that has us be attracted in one place and repelled in another place?

The discovery of these buffers and blinders is liberating, and sometimes a little tough, tight, or tender to examine. I remember early on in my coaching career that I realized that I had a bunch of judgments about how people ought to be effective leaders. I didn't know these

blindness were operating. I began to discover the blinders by reflecting on my sessions through recordings and transcripts. I noticed that sometimes I would step out of coach and drop into being consultant. If I had contracted for consulting this shift in orientation is fine, not fine without that being obvious for me and the client. Why? My bringing knowledge in a relationship that is dedicated to *evoking awareness and choice within the client* undermines our foundation of trust with and on behalf of our clients.

When we inspect, and reflect with some discipline, when a situation or person pricks us, when it tickles our attention, when we see the spark that says there might be fire, that's when we go and get our bucket of water. Rather than running from the fire we use that opportunity to say to the client, "Wow, I can feel the impact of this. This is what's happening for me and I want to pause and check in and find out what's happening for you." That's ethical maturity. We trust the relationship. When our action is based in a sense of duty, we have to do the right thing or we have to do the appropriate thing, we've disempowered the client. We are not the ones to make that assessment.

When you feel that sense of duty, that's the time to take a deep breath and pause and ask the question, "What's happening for you, client, right now? What are you experiencing with this choice in front of you? What is the way you'll make a decision that's respectful of your values and belief system?"

Knowing our own internal systems of values and beliefs that are the basis of our action is a dynamic learning opportunity. The learning is never finished and the good news is that the work can happen all the time, independent of the time that we're with our clients. Boundaries, borders, buffers and blinders are revealed through our inspection and reflection on our coaching interactions. Choose a beginner's mind for artful wrestling with your coaching choices and notice your sense of quality soar. ●

Notes

¹Carroll and Shaw, *Ethical Maturity in the Helping Professions*, J. Kinglsey, 2012.

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The Power of Specializing

Carving out your coaching niche

What is niche coaching and why is it important?
What are the benefits of a niche coaching business? Does niche coaching differ from life coaching, and in what ways?
How do you find the right client niche that fits you? Is special training required?
How do you package, price and market your niche client programs?
Join us as we look at the power of specialization in building your business and making a greater impact.

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By Dr. Lee Baucom, PhD
& Terri Hase, PCC, MMC

My boat was not quite ready to leave, so I was wandering the dock. It was about 98 degrees fahrenheit and sunny; particularly hot on a brightly painted pier. At the end of the dock, a sleek bay cruiser had just pulled in, fishing tackle still in disarray. The passengers looked both hot and disappointed.

“Catch anything?” I ventured.

The man I took to be the father of the pack looked up, even while the captain was moving around to bring some order to the mess, and said, “I don’t think there is a single fish in that ocean. We went all over the place.”

“Huh,” I responded, “what kind of bait did you use?”

The man responded, “Live, lures ... you name it, we threw it in. Barely a bite.”

He and his boys climbed up onto the dock and dejectedly walked toward their car. The captain stayed aboard, reset the gear, and didn’t utter a word.

I strolled back to my boat and climbed on. And off we went, headed for an afternoon of fishing. I was hoping to do better than what I had just witnessed.

After about a half hour of motoring, the captain anchored in, his first mate giving us some instructions: “We are moored over a man-made structure. Lots of sea bass down there. We can see them on the fish finder. Today, we will be bottom-fishing with some live bait.” He continued on for several minutes before we got started.

Perhaps two minutes into the fishing, the first fish was brought aboard. By the end, we all had stringers, mostly of sea bass, but also a few sea trout, a couple of floun-

der, and some spots. All in all, a very productive day.

You may be wondering what this has to do with coaching. No, it isn’t about the first mate being a great coach. But it does show the difference between being a coach and coaching in a niche.

According to the handy-dandy online dictionary, when used as an adjective, niche means, “denoting or relating to products, services, or interests that appeal to a small, specialized section of the population.”

You can have niche products and/or you can be addressing a niche market. In other words, specialized products or a specialized population. Here’s the key: successful coaches have successfully marketed themselves to a niche population. Very successful coaches also provide specialized services to that specialized population.

For example, you may be the coach to computer programmers. Your niche market is the programmer. But what if you offered an app that allowed you to provide real-time coaching services, through the app, to those same computer programmers? Niche population and niche services; a targeted method meets a targeted population.

Back to my fishing story, the first boat seemed to miss the niche completely. Evidently, the captain thought the entire ocean was ready for fishing. And indeed, there are fish throughout the ocean. In theory, the whole ocean is a great place to fish, but sometimes it is best to go where there is a concentration.

Second mistake: using any bait at all, trying to catch anything possible. In the end, chasing any fish any-

where with anything provided found no fish anywhere. And the boat came back empty-handed. Some bait works better for some fish, but fails on other fish. Even if the fish is sitting right there, the wrong bait may do nothing to catch it.

My captain headed after one type of fish, knowing it would be in one type of location, and we only used one type of bait. He knew his fish niche, including the preferred habitat and bait. And we came back with dinner caught.

Lesson learned: the best fisher-person knows that the whole ocean is not the target. You use particular tackle in a particular location for a particular fish. You might just catch something unexpected. But you are more likely to catch what you are going for.

A number of years ago, before “niche” became the hot concept, I was talking with a coach at a conference. I asked her

When you find your niche, you narrow how you connect with your clients, how you coach them, and how you create your ideal practice.

about her coaching specialty. Her response was a confused look and a “What do you mean?” I tried again, “Who do you like to coach? Who do you coach well? Who is your ideal client?”

Still, I got a blank look, which slowly moved to disdain. For the next 15 minutes, the coach told me that her clients were “all of the human race! We all need coaching. I don’t limit myself to a specific population. I will coach everyone, and everyone can benefit from my coaching.”

After she finished her explanation, I agreed that coaching could absolutely lead to world peace, and congratulated her on her grand aims. Then, I asked, “How big is your practice? How many clients do you have?”

Suddenly, she turned a bit sheepish, responding, “Paying or free?” Since not many of us can survive on the free clients, I asked, “Paying?”

“Well,” she responded, “I have about eight free clients each week ... but I am having a hard time getting paying clients.”

I have no doubt that this woman was an excellent coach. And she had a big heart with a big mission. Only two things stood in the way of her changing the world: she lacked cli-

ents and income. I would argue that the biggest challenge for her was choosing a niche.

By nature, our profession is full of big-hearted people wanting to make a big difference, both in the lives of our clients and in the world. We want to make an impact. Sometimes that gets in the way of narrowing down to where each of us can make the biggest difference, most effectively and efficiently.

Which brings us back to the concept of niche marketing. When you find your niche, you narrow how you connect with your clients, how you coach them, and how you create your ideal practice.

Just like the perfect “fishing hole,” like-minded people tend to gather in spots, either physically or virtually. If you want to coach real estate agents, they tend to be at meetings together, read the same newsletters, attend the same events, and share common pain points. You find the right people at the right place, ready to get the right help.

Those who fit into some niches may not be physically in the same place, but these days, you have the advantage of a virtual world in which to find them and coach them. If you want to coach newly divorced people, they may be geographically spread out. But they find the same social media spots and forums. And they have the same coaching needs.

In other words, once you know whom you want to coach (no, not everyone on the planet), then you only have to find them and attract them. Marketing is much easier when you are marketing to a niche. Niche marketing is both cheaper and more efficient, leaving you more time to coach since you are spending less time chasing clients.

What is your “niche profile?” Let me suggest considering five areas as you choose your niche:

Passion

Ask yourself these questions:

- What do you love?
- Who do you most love coaching?
- What gets you excited?
- What successes make it worthwhile?

When I was writing my dissertation, I had to choose between several topics. A wise professor told me, “Pick something you don’t mind living with for the next couple of years.” The same is true for your niche. Once the ball is rolling, you might serve the same community the rest of your career.

Note: Your passions may change over time. You may find yourself switching from one niche to another. But do remember that you start near zero whenever you make a change. You can gain significant notoriety in one area and

be completely unknown in another.

Big Point: Choose your niche from an area that excites you AND where there is potential for clients (see below).

Very successful coaches also provide specialized services to that specialized population.

Profile

Think about your favorite client.

- What is the profile for that favorite client?
- Age?
- Gender?
- Beliefs?
- Blocks?
- Interests?

Even within a niche, you may find yourself attracted more (and able to be more effective) to a certain group. Want to be a relationship coach? Great. Want to focus on long-term relationships? Great. Want to further focus on same-sex couples? Great. Find you are most successful with 35- to 45-year-olds who have adopted children? You have now created a pretty tight profile.

Note: Given technology, even a tight niche is likely to have a large enough population that you can never run out of clients.

Big Point: Many of the most successful coaches find their micro-niche – a subset of a larger group – that fits their ideal client profile. And there is nothing keeping them from taking on clients who lie outside of the ideal profile. It just gives a rough yardstick.

Practice

A major part of building a coaching practice is deciding your practice format. Want to travel around the world, coaching virtually? Don't choose a niche that would only want local and direct coaching. Want to coach only Aussies trying to master grilling, while you live in Kansas? You'd better enjoy late-night hours.

In other words, when choosing a niche, consider your ideal practice structure.

Process

Different niches need and want different delivery styles and services. Some niches would love group coaching. Others would be very resistant. Some will want to meet in-person or in a mastermind format. Others would only want virtual coaching. Consider your ideal coaching process and make sure it matches your niche.

Pricing

A final consideration is the capacity for income. There is no magic number for your expected income. You don't have to be a "seven-figure coach," or even a "six-figure coach." Shoot, you may be happy to be a "four-figure coach." But you had better at least consider this in your niche decision.

I note it last because it belongs last. But I do note it. As a mentor of mine constantly advised us, "Where there is no money, there is no mission." If you can't support your own life, you will soon be looking elsewhere for support.

The question is simply, how will you afford your lifestyle, as you choose it, given the niche you want to serve? Find a way to make that fit (and remember that payment is not necessarily from the client). If you aren't supported, you can't support.

The question is simply, how will you afford your lifestyle, as you choose it, given the niche you want to serve?

In the end, you are likely using the exact same coaching skills, regardless of niche. How you go about it, though, is determined by the niche you choose. That day on the dock, there were many boats going after different fish. Some were going for the big sport fish. Others were going after dinner. The difference is less about how you fish (basic concept: get the bait in front of the fish, get the fish to bite, reel it in), and more about knowing what type of fish you are pursuing, where they might be, and what they are likely to want to eat.

What is your niche? Where will you change the world, starting in a smaller world of like-minded people? How will you serve them well?



FEATURE

Specialization = Profitization

A narrower focus leads to greater affluence – and influence

By Kim Redman, PhD

Iwant to help everyone.” “Everyone needs me.” “I can help everyone equally.”

Not true. Not fair to your client. And poverty-inducing for you. This may sound harsh, but it just makes sense that no one is good at *everything*. A laser beam has more power because of its focus. The more narrow your focus, the greater your impact can be. This also applies to coaching, in the form of niche coaching.

I love coaches. I love their spirit, their compassionate hearts, their desire to serve. It frustrates me that most coaches don't have the affluence to have the compassionate influence that they seek. So how do we get YOU the coach into more affluence? We need to integrate some business basics into our coaching paradigm. Traditionally, coaches are great at wanting to assist people, and often don't realize that as

coaches we *all* need additional business skills.

Even if you have worked in businesses before, niche coaching introduces a new concept: you ARE the product. In niche coaching your journey, your experience and your wisdom are actually the products, and your services are the representation of those products. Since clients can't take you home, they will take your service home instead. Specialization via niche coaching allows us to have a greater degree of influence. More affluence means that you have the ability to consistently create a bigger impact. Creating a bigger impact means that your clients get their results sooner, and you grow your expertise in the process.

How do we create a bigger impact? It's simple. Specialize. Get so focused on your ideal client that you could spot them in a crowded room.



Everything Means Nothing

It is a business truth that confused minds can't sell and confused minds won't buy. The axiom when we work within the Expert Model™ is that niche coaching is actually more authentic, creates more awareness for the client, and is more serviceable both for you as the coach and for your clients. It's often simpler and more fun, too. You have taken an authentic journey to get from where you were to where you are now. Your life counts. Your journey created some real life wisdom. Wisdom is authentic and permeates our energy field, allowing for deeper connections and real insights.

Most of us dismiss our own journeys as having little value. As a thought leader in the human potential movement, this confuses me. Even universities give credit for life experience. When we train coaches within the Expert Model™, I

have consistently found that a byproduct of exploring the depth of our own journeys and authentic truths is a greater sense of self-love, confidence, and a willingness to authentically share with others. We develop an appreciation for our own often hard-won wisdom.

Target Population

Niche coaching also allows us to easily find our target populations, or t-pop, because your ideal client will be an earlier version of YOU. They will reflect the you that you

In niche coaching, your website, your business card and your program names will all speak to solving the pain points of your ideal client.

were before you accumulated all of these tools and all of this wisdom. Your ideal client will be within a 10-year age range, at a specific socio-economic level, will usually be a specific gender, and will have very similar “pain points” or glass ceilings in their lives.

Understanding pain points is important because marketing for niche coaching vs. traditional coaching is very different. In niche coaching, your website, your business card and your program names will all speak to solving the pain points of your ideal client. I'll give you an example from my target marketing:

“Are you leading your community, personally or professionally, and tired all the time? Is work-life balance a myth? Are you frustrated with empowering everyone else but you? Do you secretly want to quit, or wonder if it's all worth it? Do you want to empower others or change the world, but it's overwhelming? Then come explore Goddess Coaching, and Unleash Your Inner Goddess™.”

Nailing the Pain Points

The above statements will speak to a very specific woman. The pain points you use in your marketing should allow peo-

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ple to self-sort themselves into or out of your niche coaching. I love to include a short webinar (under 10 minutes) or a free PDF – “Five Things to Empower Your Inner Goddess” – to further allow this self-selection to happen.

Niche coaching is also more fun, in my opinion, because you are not selling to clients; you are sorting ideal clients. Coaches hate selling, and this allows for a different perspective when you are assessing new clients. There are only so many viable hours in a week, and part of making a bigger impact is working with the clients that truly resonate with you.

One of the biggest questions I am asked is how to go about nailing these pain points so that you can be precise in your marketing. My answer: interview clients. I like to give my new coaches the task of going to a coffee shop with two fliers and asking random people which flyer they prefer. This gives you an amazing opportunity to dialog with clients without any stigma of selling.

If they are target clients, invite them to an introductory evening – complimentary, of course, and worth X dollars (never use the word free because it translates to worthless in our linguistics!). In this introductory evening, you can chat about the solutions to some of these pain points. The point of the evening is to generate curiosity and excitement, and inspire potential clients to take action for themselves ... with you and your coaching programs providing their solutions, of course. Niche coaching allows this to happen authentically.

Additional Training

Niche coaching also gives us a filter for which business skills we need to add to our tool belt.

I am often asked if additional training is required for niche coaching, and the answer is that it truly depends on your specialization. Having said that,

the answer is often yes. If you have a specialty like PTSD, then yes, you would require specialized training, like a Mastery course in Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP), including Time Line Therapy® and Hypnosis.

The pain points you use in your marketing should allow people to self-sort themselves into or out of your niche coaching.

While it is possible to get around needing additional skills by affiliating with others in inter-dependence who have specialty skills, it is good advice to suggest that each coach obtain these skills themselves. This allows the coach more control over their business development, and over the creation of specialty coaching packages that are designed to meet the unique needs of their target population.

Niche coaching may require a little more imagination in the beginning, but it is a very lucrative approach to increasing your impact. I always recommend that you speak to a niche coach who is already highly successful in your area of specialization and get some mentorship tips. After all, inter-dependence is always the fastest way to break the glass ceiling.

Niche coaching also lends itself to packages: short, mid-term and long-term work, as well as individual and group work. Niche coaching will allow the coach to explore the greatest range of options, with the biggest output options available in coaching today.



Specialty Coaching

An idea whose time has come

By Pegotty Cooper, MBA, CDC
& Jean LaCour, PhD, CPRC

Among those professionals who have been serving people grappling with life's situations in the 21st century, specialty coaching is an idea whose time has come! These professionals have embraced coaching as a new paradigm, a better tool, and a radically new approach to serve those individuals who struggle with personal challenges, the impact of which often reach far beyond themselves and may also impact the lives of family members for generations or cost billions of dollars in lost productivity annually.

The International Coach Federation (ICF) confirms what we all know: "Professional coaching can have a huge impact on people's lives through the benefits of fresh perspectives on personal challenges, greater personal effectiveness, and increased confidence."¹

"There is only one thing stronger than all the armies of the world, and that is an idea whose time has come."

- Victor Hugo

New Approaches

New coaching specialties often arise when a non-coach professional involved in serving clients in a particular industry notices that service gaps are not being adequately addressed to meet their clients' needs. In exploring new options, this professional might discover the value and potential impact of serving clients within the powerful framework of coaching.

This professional starts introducing coaching methods into their practice and finds their clients are making great strides in areas where they were previously stuck. In sharing their results with other colleagues, this professional often reports enviable results as well as increased satisfaction in their work.

This new awareness about the impact of coaching applied in an existing area of helping

can evolve from curiosity and desire for a few new tools into specialty training programs which promote best practices, standards and certifications. Most industries also typically have a long-standing method with special language, protocols, ethics, a scope of practice,

Specialty coaching can combine with other areas such as wellness, corporate, career and with demographics like age, gender or culture.

plus regulations on interacting with other professionals. Understanding the boundaries between the specialty coach and other professionals is an important element so that specialty coaching can find its place from which to build collaborative relationships.

This is a well-recognized pattern of evolution in most industries. New approaches to solving old problems can lead to breakthrough results.

Pragmatic Roles

Specialty coaches often begin with a more pragmatic emphasis. But the end goal is the more aspirational outcomes noted in the ICF Global Coaching Client Study. Pragmatic roles often include Educator, Thinking Partner, Resource, and Champion.

As Educator – In specialty coaching you are helping clients work within a

specific set of challenges or goals. To help clients get better outcomes in the process, you may have to help them see the bigger picture and educate them about options or pitfalls of going through the process or system. We are coaches, not advisors.

As Thinking Partner – Clients impacted by their situation are often operating from their reptilian brain. They need a voice of reason and a reminder about where they are going when they get overwhelmed; in other words, a Thinking Partner. We help them to think through options including how to maintain relationships with important support people and track the steps in their process.

As Resource – Specialty coaches help clients relate to other vital people. We identify and screen professionals as referrals who have specific roles in the process. We also curate resources like books, blogs, support networks, etc., which can inspire and inform.

As Champion – Our clients need a person who is “in their corner” helping them to explore how to make happen what they want to have happen, celebrating wins big and small, and helping them gain clarity, confidence, and courage for the journey.

Who is well suited for becoming a specialty coach? Some examples include established coaches who want to grow their practice and their impact by adding a specialty, human service professionals with specific expertise in an area such as a family mediator, social worker or therapist who desire to serve their clients with new skills, and those with “lived experience” in the specialty area who are ready to serve others in the non-clinical role of a professional coach.

Niches exist within specialty coaching based on a mix of skills, passions and expertise, combined with a specific segment of the market you can relate to and understand. Specialty coaching can

combine with other areas such as wellness, corporate, career and with demographics like age, gender or culture.

Our commitment to divorce coaching and recovery coaching as specialties arose from our individual journeys – we saw gaps in serving our clients. We believe people can experience heroic transformations despite the difficulties these two life challenges present in the 21st century.

Divorce Coaching

In America, there are 876,000 divorces a year.² According to a landmark study³, we are creating a culture of divorce that has an immediate impact on children, and even greater impact later when they form their own serious relationships. Bringing the transformational power of coaching to these circumstances can reverse this current situation, which could impact the family as the primary means of instilling values and ethics in our next generation.

The American Bar Association defines divorce coaching as a process “to help them [clients] make the best possible decisions for their future, based on

New approaches to solving old problems can lead to breakthrough results.

their particular interests, needs, and concerns.”⁴ Decisions are often made when the client is in an intense emotional state. Other professionals with whom the di-

voice client engages are generally ill equipped to deal with this thinking and try to convince or coerce the client into making different choices.

Critical decision points provide an excellent focus for client coaching and also high-value marketing opportunities. Being overwhelmed with getting

The pain points you use in your marketing should allow people to self-sort themselves into or out of your niche coaching.

organized for divorce, for example, is an excellent focus for a package of sessions designed to support the client in getting organized so they can move forward in the divorce process. In divorce coaching there are dozens of such opportunities, depending on the needs of your ideal (niche) clients.

Recovery Coaching

There are 60 million people in the U.S. who are identified as abusing substances; an additional 24 million people self-identify as being “in recovery.”⁵

The missing piece in both prevention and recovery has been a client-centered process for people to move past ineffective ways of coping, learned helplessness, and a “damaged” identity to recognizing their own strengths, resiliency and purpose. Coaching is that missing piece.

The aim of Professional Recovery Coaches is to help their clients to thrive in the Sobriety Zone by empowering them to connect to their “authentic selves” with a focus on physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual wholeness.

Recovery Coaching provides help and accountability to professionals, executives, students, families, and men and women who want to “cut back” on harmful use of drugs or alcohol, reduce stress, enhance healthy performance, rebuild their confidence in sobriety, or better respond to a loved one’s relapse.

Professional coaches, using prevention and recovery tools, assist their clients in renewing choice and preventing the losses associated with addiction; they offer a fresh approach for those in recovery to reconnect to their own deeper satisfaction and renewed possibilities.

Some may perceive that specialty coaching has diverted from the purity of coaching. The reality is that specialty coaches are masters of pragmatic care. This is based upon the aspirational belief that people can still *empower themselves* to become the best they can be despite modern challenges like addiction or divorce.

The idea of coaching is still yielding tremendous potential for human lives – and it continues to evolve in the service of realizing one’s personal and professional potential.

Notes

¹ “Benefits of Using a Coach.” ICF website <http://coachfederation.org/need/landing.cfm?ItemNumber=747>

² CDC National Center for Health Statistics National Marriage and Divorce Rate Trends: <http://1.usa.gov/1dMPvI2>

³ *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce: A 25 Year Landmark Study.* Judith Wasserstein, Julia M. Lewis and Sandra Blakeslee. 2000.

⁴ American Bar Association. http://www.americanbar.org/groups/dispute_resolution/resources/DisputeResolutionProcesses/divorce_coaching.html

⁵ Lawford, Christopher Kennedy (2014). *Recover to Live: Kick Any Habit, Manage Any Addiction.* Dallas, TX: BenBella Books, Inc.

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Laser Focus

How to nail your niche so you can grow your coaching business

By Melinda Cohan

You've heard it a million times before: "choose a niche." It's common – and solid – advice. I know it can be annoying to hear. But the fact remains that when I changed my perspective, I began leveraging the power of the niche, growing my business and making a bigger impact.

Why? Choosing a niche allows you to fine-tune your marketing, to make it laser focused and effective. It enables you to support your clients on a deeper level.

But ... so many new coaches misinterpret this advice and believe that choosing a niche means they're confined to supporting a certain type of person; that they're forever limited in how they can use their coaching gifts. Further, it may seem like choosing a niche forever limits your revenue. I know; I've experienced this mindset, myself.

As a result, many new coaches decide not to select a niche, believing their passion is bigger than that. (Incidentally, this is a hobbyist's mindset, which doesn't work once you've moved up to the next rung of the ladder on the entrepreneurial scale.)

The root of this problem is in how people define "niche."

So often, coaches mistakenly come up with a client avatar and call it a niche (for example, if you're a relationship coach, you may believe your niche is 30-year-old men on the brink of divorce, who earn a certain amount and have 3.2 children).

If that's not a niche, then what is?

The dictionary defines "niche" as a specialized but profitable corner of the market. To take it one step further, we consider a niche to be a set of challenges a common group of people face ... and the results they desire.



When it comes to nailing your niche, first you must identify a specific set of challenges your coaching can overcome, and specific results it can achieve. Then you must find the most common collection of people who face these challenges and desire these results.

From this perspective, you can focus on a select group to make your marketing laser focused, but you can still attract different types of people from many areas.

For example, my company helps people overcome these challenges: not making money, struggling to get clients, and feeling overwhelmed. The results they most want: to get more clients, earn more money, and make a huge impact. When we look at all the people in this niche, we zero in on coaches. Our marketing is geared toward coaches, but we also attract many

others in this niche, including nutritionists, personal trainers, consultants, massage therapists and more.

Let's go back to the relationship coach example. It's your passion to support people in relationships. But your niche is not the men, or the women, or even the couple. Your niche focuses on the top three challenges those men, women, and/or couples face when they're in relationships ... and the top three results they desire. Make sense?

What's really awesome about defining a niche in this way is that it *actually frees you up to work with more types of people*. You're not tied down to marketing to men *or* women *or* couples.

When it comes to your niche,
you must identify a specific
set of challenges your
coaching can overcome, and
specific results it can achieve.

Instead, your marketing focuses on all the people experiencing the top challenges and desiring the top results you previously identified. In other words, you may actually have the chance to work with men, women *and* couples!

Here's where it gets even better: when you can clearly articulate your niche according to challenges and desired results, you can create more effective marketing copy for your website, sales pages, program descriptions, email campaigns and more.

Because you've dialed in on those challenges and desired results, you can use the same language your ideal clients use. This conveys the message that you understand what they're facing and can help them. Your marketing becomes laser focused. And when your marketing is laser focused, it attracts, engages, and converts potential clients.

So, yes, nailing your niche is a must! It's a key foundation to your marketing success, no matter which marketing strategy you use (and, as a huge benefit, it will help you avoid failed marketing attempts that cost you time, money, and energy!).

How confident are you that you're able to deliver what you've promised in your marketing? That you're able to help your clients solve their challenges and achieve the results they most desire? Nailing your niche can give you that confidence.



FEATURE

The Power of Specializing

Why choosing a niche is important and profitable

By Susanne Mueller, MA

My niche is my forte, my strength, my passion to share with and contribute to the world. In my opinion as a coach, we should all be specialists in something distinct. If everybody is focusing on the same topic, the competition is much larger; as a coach we are not as impactful, and it is boring.

We go to a doctor who is specialized in ear, nose and throat or sports medicine. We trust specialists because they are the experts in their fields. When we are searching online, we are very specific. We check ratings and credentials of professionals or we check product information and customer reviews. All clients are very mindful and careful when spending hard-earned money. We listen to our friends or family what they are recommending. I want to work with the best and be treated by the best. Why would I settle for less?

When I talk to clients who are at a turning point in their career, or millennials who are ready to plunge into their first

career, I have three questions for them:

1. What are you good at?
2. What do you like to do?
3. What do you love to do?

Often, I can see what they are thinking: the answers to all three questions are the same. This could be the case, but it might not.

What are you good at?

I am good at organizing, planning, and networking. I am good with focusing on the high-level aspects organizing an international leadership event. In the end, all looks easy and works seamlessly. I know I can do it. I am good at it.

What do you like to do?

While I am good at planning and organizing those events, the bigger question is, do I really like to do it? To be totally honest, not so much. I like the planning on an intellectual

level where I can be the leader in bringing interesting people together, networking, and having a clear vision for the event. When it then comes to the nitty-gritty planning for the event where we need to organize logistics like coffee, lunch, markers and flipcharts, I get bored and I don't like it. Can I do it? Absolutely, yes. If that is the only job in the world I can do, then I will do it to pay my rent.

What do you love to do?

This is where I see myself light up and I can elaborate what I love to do. I love to connect with people and connect them with others. I am very good at it and I love it. This is how it should be. Obviously, this is the ideal situation and it might not always happen. We can give our best, we can learn from the best, and we can create our dream job, career, or next venture.

The process begins with being honest with yourself and identifying the niche you are passionate about.

How can you then find your niche?

The process begins with being honest with yourself and identifying the niche you are passionate about. Using the Venn diagram below, you can find clarity when putting your three key passions onto paper or with the use of a computer. We have transferrable skills that come alive when we are entirely passionate about something. By seeing where your three key passions intersect, you can find your niche.

When I did this exercise myself, I started with a long list of what I love, then I color coded it, compartmentalized it and narrowed it down to three passions: running, teaching and coaching. This does not happen overnight; I mulled over those three words many times. How can I bring all that into a different career?

While working in corporate America, I envisioned that I wanted to offer retreats. I started to offer weekend retreats in Montauk, New York, focusing on career change and life transformations. In the middle of the day, we went outside for a silent walk on the beach. In the afternoon, we put together a vision board.

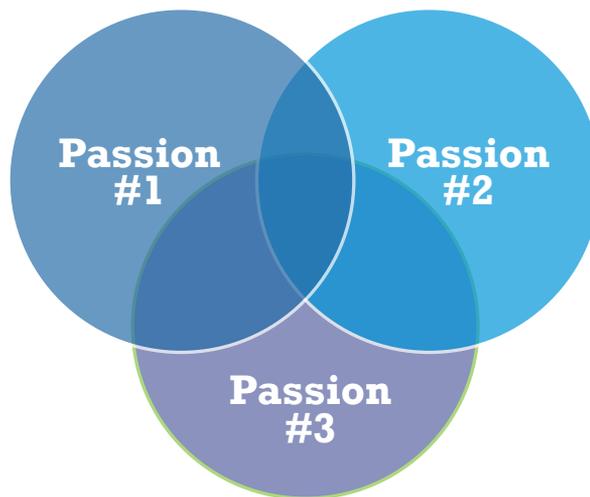
Visualization is important to find that niche. I provided a

pile of magazines to cut out together with a big board. We created our big vision, with soft music playing in the background to shift each participant into a different level of consciousness. Participants opened up, listened to their inner voices, dreamed, and ultimately put all of their passions onto that big board. After one good hour, I wanted to see the creative results. The hour flew by and nobody was ready to present their vision for their niche yet. Sometimes, we set a deadline to finalize, even when dreaming. Passions, dreams and niches came out naturally.

Once you have clarity about your three key passions, how do you implement them into a niche? We don't have a magic wand to make it all happen in one day. There are many options to "test the waters," such as volunteering, shadowing, and participating in courses or training.

With my passion for running, I was able to coach a running group for the New York Road Runners in New York. Being a running coach taught me to be authentic, to be human, to have a sense of humor, to adapt to new situations, and to become a leader, a role model, and an inspiration for beginner runners. On an intellectual level, later, I started to teach in the New York University Coaching Certification program.

In hindsight, it all looks easy once the dream is fulfilled. But in reality it is a lot of work and namely networking and relationship building on a never-ending – but fun – journey.



Today, I am an executive coach with an athlete's mind. I can put all my passion into one bag and offer my ample experience. This niche is very specialized as it has a great focus on achieving more, getting out of one's comfort zone and developing a winning mindset. I set my clients up for success like the gold medalists in the Olympics.



FEATURE

The Nonprofit Niche

A profitable market for coaches

By Kate Michels, MCC, NLP

This can be an unforgettable experience for entrepreneurs who wish to make a positive change in the world ...” This one-liner by Linda Ray referring to nonprofit organizations shows me that there is more alignment between coaching and nonprofits than I previously recognized.

Who does it sound like? Why, almost every person who finds themselves entering into the coaching profession, of course, from myself to many of the coaches I have trained and trained with.

I remember my first day in coach training school when the instructor shared the tag line, “change the world, one conversation at a time.” I knew as soon as I heard this phrase that I had finally found the profession I fit into.

The number one complaint I hear from coaches who hear the calling and enter into this profession with a strong drive to change the world is the inability to have their passion match with their ability to make a profit. They know what they want to do and how they want to serve humanity; they just don’t know how to market this niche in a profitable way. Often this is due to the fact that those they want to coach, those who need coaching the most – the clients who are in the place of wanting or needing to make the biggest changes – are also in the place of not having the funds available to match their desire to pay.

When I first started my coaching business, the number one thing I heard from prospective clients was, “Wow, I could really use you but I don’t have the money right now” or, “After I find the funds I will certainly work with you.” Many of those people have followed up, come back and done some coaching

with me. I know that they recognized the benefits of having a coach truly support them in making the changes that would last, yet they really didn’t have the ability to invest in anything, including themselves. Coaching is an investment in ourselves that spreads out from there. The work we do as coaches is beneficial for individuals, families, corporations, communities and humanity. It is very profitable, yet many coaches find themselves struggling to make a profit.

choice Magazine stands as a representation on a regular basis that the coaching profession is a place to succeed financially, and as a successful professional coach of 12 years now, I stand as an example that it is possible to answer your calling, be passionate, serve humanity and to also make a good living.

I also recognize that there may be a path that exists which could truly benefit many coaches and also many clients. That path is nonprofit and there are many ways to take advantage of the nonprofit concept. The simple one is to offer your coaching service out to the nonprofits that are in alignment with your message and your niche.

One of my Core Alignment Specialists knew her niche and her calling was coaching women in abusive relationships to step into their core value and make more resourceful choices for themselves. So she approached the organizations in her area that matched her mission and offered her services.

Next thing you know, she is on their staff as the head coach and is being paid a substantial salary. This coach has her own office and meets women daily who are seeking her services.

Isn’t that what we as professional coaches are looking for: a way to meet our perfect client profile often and easily? There



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compensation and one-time bonuses.” Clearly there is opportunity in the nonprofit sector.

With big visions come big missions. How big is your niche and how far do you want to take it?

The niche you are developing could also put you in a perfect place to *form* the next nonprofit that will change the world. Your organization will be in direct alignment with your message, vision and mission, and will support a specific sector from the nonprofit position. Maybe you feel called to support the homeless, adults with ADHD, divorcees, single parents, pregnant women, teens, children ... the list goes on and on as far as your passion leads and your creativity allows.

What is a nonprofit? In the United States, nonprofit organizations are formed by filing bylaws or articles of incorporation or both in the state in which they expect to operate. The act of incorporation creates a legal entity, enabling the organization to be treated as a distinct body (corporation) by law and to enter into business dealings, form contracts, and own property as individuals or for-profit corporations.

These are typically community-serving organizations that are focused on providing services to the community in general, either globally or locally; organizations delivering human services programs or projects, aid and development programs, medical research, education and health services, and so on.

As Linda Ray explains, “Instead of turning profits, nonprofit organizations use their funds to promote a cause and advance their programs. Nonprofits receive funding through donations and grants. Depending on the kind of nonprofit you run, your funds may come from a variety of sources.”

Forming and building a nonprofit takes effort, of course. However, the jobs that matter the most to us are well worth the time. Personally, I want to see coaching involved in every area of life, so I would love to see nonprofit coaching organizations popping up everywhere.

Chron.com has a wealth of information available on how to create your own nonprofit and how to raise the funds for your own nonprofit organization. Your coaching story could easily be the next TED concept. Not only do I think that most coaches are ready for “an unforgettable experience for entrepreneurs who wish to make a positive change in the world;” I think that most of their clients are as well.

Let’s take coaching and all our unique niches and fill the world with nonprofit organizations that care about people more than profit. This will truly be beneficial for us all.

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Wikipedia
www.Chron.com, “Good Ways to Make Money as a Nonprofit Organization,” by Linda Ray

are organizations out there that are looking for someone just like you – someone with your niche – to come along and support them as they support others. There are nonprofits that have clients who are just waiting for someone to show up and meet them where they are.

People have limiting beliefs about nonprofits, the biggest of which is that nonprofit means there is no money. That is not what nonprofit means. Let’s not let lack of information distract us from the possibilities.

People have limiting beliefs about nonprofits, the biggest of which is that nonprofit means there is no money.

Profitability is there, as *Forbes Magazine* (Oct. 2016) shows with its annual “Largest U.S. Charitable Organizations” list, noting, “Of the 100 charities, 18 reported paying some employees more than \$1 million. The highest compensated chief executives were Delos M. Cosgrove, Cleveland Clinic Foundation, \$4,195,251. He was followed by Steven J. Corwin of New York-Presbyterian Hospital, \$4,591,728; Craig B. Thompson, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, \$2,844,637; and Emily K. Rafferty, Metropolitan Museum of Art, \$2,555,131. These figures can include benefits, deferred



The Niche of Coaching Supervision

Creating a reflective safe space for coaches

By Terry H. Hildebrandt, PhD, PCC

The business of supporting other professional coaches in their own development has long been a niche for coaches. This includes coach training programs, coach mentoring and coaching supervision. While coach training and mentoring are well established, coaching supervision is an emerging practice and business niche.

Peter Hawkins and Eve Turner conducted an Internet-based research project on coaching supervision in 2014 with 569 participant coaches and found that much has changed since their earlier research done in 2006. Most notably, they saw a rise in coaches receiving regular supervision, to 92 percent from 44 percent in the U.K. and 81 percent globally (Hawkins & Turner, 2017). Also, a greater percentage of organizations that hire external coaches are also expecting coaches to receive supervision.

However, North America still lags behind Europe and is roughly where the U.K. was in 2006. Nonetheless, U.S.-based, third-party coaching providers are beginning to see corporate clients ask about coaching supervision (Underhill, 2017). Also, more coaching supervisor training programs are being offered in the United States and Canada.

What is Coaching Supervision?

The International Coach Federation (ICF) defines coaching supervision as: “a collaborative learning practice to continually build the capacity of the coach through reflective dialogue and to benefit his or her clients and the overall system” (ICF, 2017b).

At its heart, coaching supervision is about creating a safe, confidential space for coaches to reflect on their own practice. Common topics discussed include: reviewing and analyzing a client’s system to gain insight and additional options for best serving the client; dealing with issues of ethics, professionalism and contracting; celebrating success; ongoing personal and professional development; and restoration.

How is Supervision Different from Coaching & Mentoring?

While there are certainly overlaps between coaching, mentoring and supervision, the ICF and other professional bodies make clear distinctions between these practices.

The ICF references Hawkins and Smith’s (2013) “three Cs” model of Competencies, Capability and Capacity to ex-

plain the different purposes of coach training, mentoring and supervision, which are all part of continuing professional development (ICF, 2017c).

Coach training and mentor coaching (for an ICF credential) are designed to build coaching core *competency* skills and the *capability* to use these skills in an effective way at the right time with clients. Coaching supervision focuses more on the *capability* and *capacity* of the coach, where capacity is about emotional and professional maturity.

In my own experience, coaching typically focuses on helping a coachee identify and achieve their goals. Coach mentoring focuses primarily on skill development and often includes the mentor coach listening to recorded coaching sessions and providing feedback on coaching skills to the mentee. In contrast, coaching supervision focuses on the entire system including the client, supervisee/coach, and the client's overall system.

The supervisor supports the coach in improving their effectiveness with their clients by providing a safe space for reflection and brainstorming on how to further develop the supervisee and the effectiveness of their coaching interventions. A professionally trained coaching supervisor can provide much-needed support for coaches who often work independently with their clients.

Having another experienced coach in the role of a supervisor to bounce ideas off of and to provide a safe space for reflection is a much-needed oasis from the day-to-day business of coaching.

Why is Coaching Supervision Important?

I see supervision becoming an essential best practice for coaches for the following reasons:

Some corporate clients are starting to ask if coaching firms are using coaching supervisors, which will likely become a key

competitive differentiator in the future.

- Coaching supervision improves the quality of coaches' work with their clients.

- Some coaching firms are including supervision as part of their corporate proposals, which could offer additional revenue streams.

- Coaches commonly pay for professional coaching supervision and hire their own supervisors. This could be a valuable service that experienced coaches with supervisor training could develop as a new market niche.

- The ICF includes coaching supervision (both giving and receiving) as one of the options for Continuing Coach Education (CCE) Hours (ICF, 2017a).

Hawkins and Turner found in their 2014 study that the primary motivations for coaches engaging with a supervisor were their personal commitment to good practice and its contribution to their continuing professional development.

A secondary factor was that some credentialing bodies require supervision to maintain a coaching credential. For example, the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) requires at least four hours of supervision a year and recommends one hour of supervision for every 35 hours of client coaching. Even though the ICF does not currently require supervision for coach credentialing, they do recommend it as a best practice for continuing professional development.

How Does Supervision Work?

In the last 10 years, many models have been developed to support supervision. These models draw from supervision best practices in other helping professions and include the Gestalt approach, systems theory, humanistic psychology, psychodynamic theory, analytical psychology and transactional analysis, to name a few (Bachkirova, Jackson, &

Clutterbuck, 2011).

Probably the most popular model is the Seven-Eyed Model created by Hawkins and Shohet (1989). This model examines the client-coach-supervisor system from seven different perspectives. These include:

1. The client's context,
2. The coach's interventions,
3. The relationship between the coach and the client,
4. The coach's self-awareness,
5. The relationship between the coach and supervisor, including parallel processes,
6. The supervisor's reactions and reflections, and
7. The wider context and system.

Using the Seven-Eyed Model, the supervisor and supervisee engage in rich dialogue and reflection, resulting in insights that can expose blind spots, deepen self-awareness and open possibilities for new client interventions. Supervision can be done in a one-on-one setting or in groups.

How to Launch a Coaching Supervision Business

I highly recommend that experienced coaches wishing to explore coaching supervision as a business first hire a professional supervisor for themselves to experience the benefits and the process of supervision.

Since coaching supervision has its own competencies and ethical standards, I also strongly suggest that coaches receive specialized training before supervising other coaches. The European Mentoring & Coaching Council (EMCC) has an accreditation process for coaching supervision training programs and lists credentialed training providers on its website (EMCC, 2017).

Experienced supervisors can also apply for individual accreditation as a coaching supervisor from the EMCC,



The Columbia Coaching Certification Program

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the Association for Coaching (AC), and the Association for Professional Executive Coaching and Supervision (APECS).

Summary

Coaching supervision is already an established practice in the UK and Europe. As the field of coaching continues to grow globally, clients and organizations that hire coaches will likely demand more rigorous quality standards from coaches and coaching firms.

Just as we are seeing more emphasis on coach certification, coaching supervision will likely be the next evolution of enhancing coaching quality. Supervision also provides coaches with the support to reflect upon their own practice and engage in continuing professional development in a confidential setting that is customized to their unique context and individual needs.

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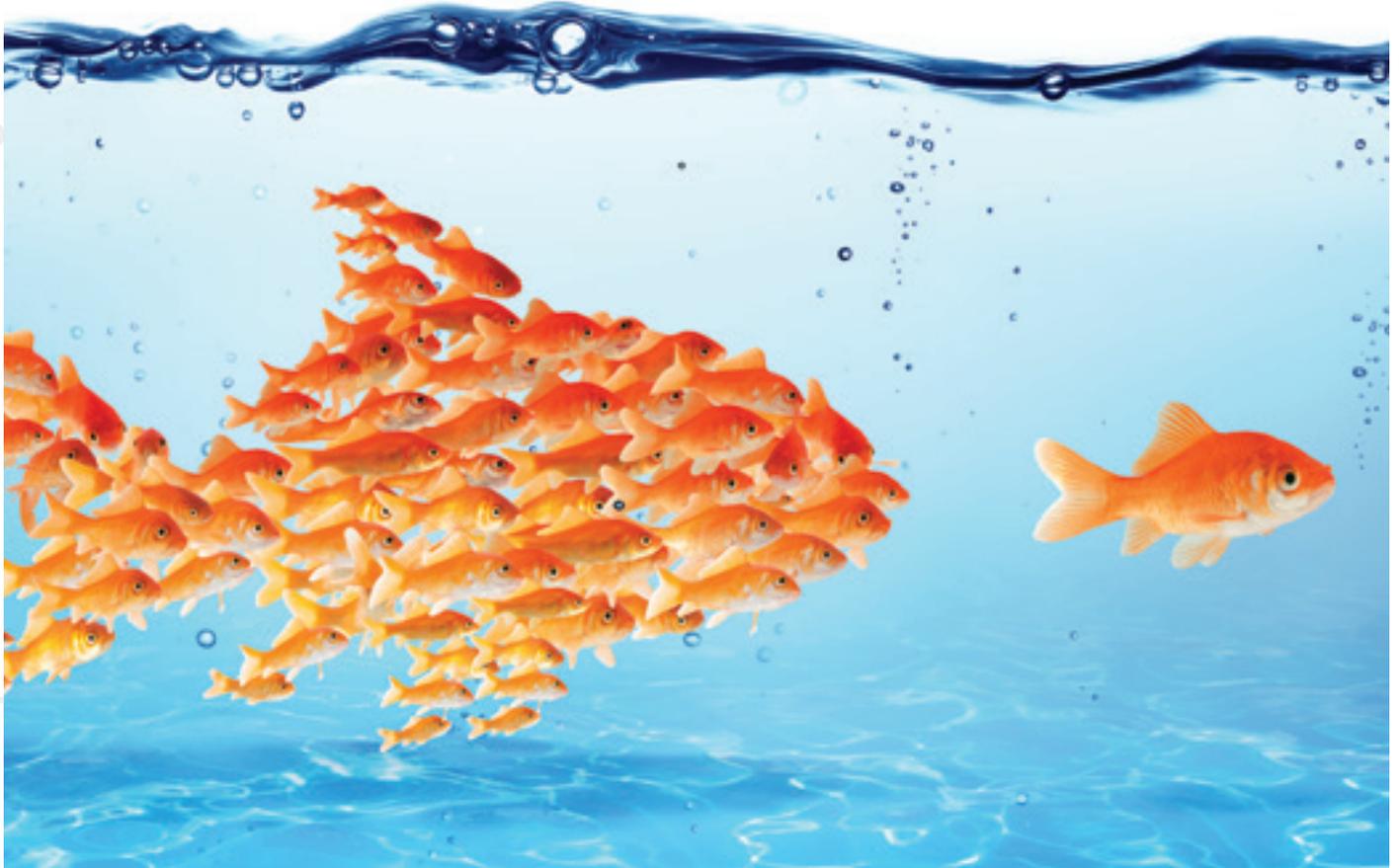
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Character

The foundation of leadership

By John Keyser, PCC



Character is vital to effective leadership. Our character signals so much about our leadership potential and helps determine whether people want to follow us. If they respect who we are – our values and our attitude – they will have a strong desire to be great members of our team.

From our character flow our thoughts, actions, words, decisions, and our attitude in general. If we are grounded with strong character, sound values, discipline and a desire to serve our team members, we likely will be a highly effec-

tive and respected leader.

Let's explore character, though I should say it could easily require volumes, literally thousands of pages. I simply hope to set a platform for reflection in the hope that it will be helpful as we coach leaders to become the best versions of themselves.

When thinking of character, people generally think first about integrity. I agree, integrity is essential to character, yet there are many other important qualities and values that a person of good character may possess. Character involves the

many traits that make us a good, authentic person who treats others with respect and kindness, helping them succeed.

Integrity means doing the right things; making decisions that are best for our team members and our company, not for our own convenience or benefit. It means being a stand-up person, who is quick to share credit, who takes responsibility when things don't go well rather than looking to blame another.

Humility is also vital. It helps us want to continue our own learning and growth and to help our team members, truly

Integrity means doing the right things; making decisions that are best for our team members and our company.

wanting them to learn, grow and be successful. *"If you're good, you don't have to tell anyone you are."* People will know it and will admire your modesty. I vividly remember when I first walked into an outstanding and upstanding CEO's office there was a quotation on her wall that immediately stood out: "There is no limit to how far you can advance if you do not look for personal credit." These two quotations illustrate the important principles of being humble and being about the team, not ourselves.

Character is about our values – what we see as being truly important. Remember the standard that *"Managers focus on numbers, leaders focus on people."* Someone recently said to me that they thought I should say that leaders focus on people and numbers, as results must be good and goals must be met or we will not keep our leadership positions. True, yet let's acknowledge that leaders understand that outstanding results come from their team members and are dedicated to helping their team members develop, feel good about themselves and be successful.

Discipline and self-management are crucial or we can fall far behind in one of our highest priorities: being with our people. There is great demand on leaders and their time; they have to learn to control the clock, and not let the clock control them, which unfortunately is the norm for a great many executives.

Studies reveal that senior executives spend 50 to 75 percent of their time in meetings. That is not maximizing productivity. Leaders need to be out with the people who are doing the work of their companies, in conversation with them, asking

meaningful questions, being fully present and listening to understand and learn.

If we are given the gift of leadership, we have the responsibility to help our team members. I love the term "servant leadership" and what it implies, that we are to serve our team members. This requires our humility, our care and the understanding that we are no better than our team members, that each of us has a role, an important role. Everyone is important.

Character involves being a good communicator, *"Saying what we mean and meaning what we say."* And being a patient and attentive listener.

Communication is so important, it is arguably the answer to most of the problems in our world today.

Emotional Intelligence is also key to our character, especially our self-awareness, awareness of the feelings of others, self-management (discipline), and relationship management. These are key indicators of our success in business and as a leader.

Leaders absolutely must have a positive attitude, and must stay positive, as attitude is infectious. Leaders must only speak positively about people to others. If we have a problem or a difficult message for a person, let's have the courage to come out from behind ourselves and speak directly with that person.

If a leader degrades or talks behind someone's back, respect is lost and negative energy begins to permeate the company.

In business, as in life, our relationships are everything. Empathy is essential in helping people sense that we truly care about them. We must view and treat everyone in our companies as our internal clients.

Other qualities which contribute to sound character include composure and staying calm under pressure, generos-

There is great demand on leaders and their time; they have to learn to control the clock, and not let the clock control them.

ity (especially to encourage, help and root for others), acting with grace, and compassion to genuinely care about others. Being likable certainly helps.

There is so much more that could be said. I hope this a platform for our reflection on character and the important elements of leadership, and that we will help our coaches themselves with their reflection on the gift they have, their leadership. ●

The Hero's Journey

The universal change journey for coaches

By Brian Gorman, CPC



As coaches, we work with our clients to help them find the answers that empower them to move from the present to their desired future. What we often don't recognize is that while their journeys may vary widely, there is an underlying pattern to the path that can assist us in our coaching role.

I have spent almost five decades engaged with change at the social, organizational and personal levels. The most important lesson I have learned is that there is a "universal change journey" based not on the catalyst for change or

the nature of the change, but on the underlying patterns of how we as human beings respond to disruption in our lives. Joseph Campbell refers to it as "The Hero's Journey."

In this article I want to share with you an overview of that journey through the lens of a coach. It is a journey we have each taken ourselves, and with our clients, many times. There are five key elements of that journey that allow you to help your client address the question, "*Who do I have to be and what do I have to pay attention to in order to significantly*

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impact

*increase my chances of successfully
achieving my intentions?"*

1. Be a Storyteller

We tell ourselves (and others) stories all the time. They reflect our aspirations, our inspirations, and our frustrations. They are shaped by our experiences, our hopes and our beliefs.

Effectively guide your clients as they craft their intent story. Neuroscience has taught us that a powerful story is experienced in the brain in the same way as actually living the events. Work with your clients to make their story powerful. Invite them to write from the future as though what they want has already happened. "When I get to Costa Rica..." does not have the same affect as "I did it. Here I am in my new home in Costa Rica!"

The story should touch as many of the client's senses as possible. It should come from their heart, as well as their brain. Encourage them to tell their story over and over to themselves; to embody it. Invite them to share their story with others who will be supporting them along the way.

2. Be Prepared

Before your clients plan how they are going to go from their current life to their intended life, they need to know what to plan for. What are their anchors, those things that are holding them in place? Which of these should they continue to hold onto? Which do they have to plan to let go of, or change their relationship to? Will they need new anchors?

If the client's intent is to live in Costa Rica, they may need to plan to hold onto family, but perhaps in different ways. They may need to let go of many of the social and professional networks that support them. They may need to develop a new Spanish language anchor. Perhaps they need to be more of a risk-taker, or less attached to their income.

What does the client have to change, and what will provide them with stability during the turbulence?

3. Be a Planner

As the client begins to identify the anchor changes they need to make, they can start planning. Invite them to plan for what they don't want to happen, as well as what they do. For example, if they don't want their adult children to feel they are being abandoned, plan for the conversations the client will have with the children, and when. Ensure the client is planning not only to put things in place, but also to achieve the intent they are seeking. All too often, we plan for what we need to do, but fail to plan for the changes we need to make in who we need to become.

4. Be Present on the Journey

Work with the client to stay present on their journey, to pass by those shiny objects that can pull them off course. Invite them to continue telling their story. Balancing the story with the journey with who they are and who they are becoming requires your coaching art and science. Invite them to grant themselves permission. It may be permission to revise the story; permission to make mistakes; permission to celebrate victories and lessons learned; or permission to rest along the way.

5. Be Your Desired Future

When the client achieves their intent, invite them to celebrate and also to reflect. What lessons have they learned that they can bring to their next change journey? What have they learned about themselves, and what have they learned about succeeding at change?

Whatever journey your client is on, you can strengthen the power of your coaching and the client's chances of success by applying the lessons of the universal change journey. ●

Zanshin Decision-Making

Finding your internal power

By Thomas Keydel, GCEC, MEd



Do you prefer making blink-style decisions? Or deliberative decisions?

Malcom Gladwell popularized the “blink” idea in his eponymous book. Most people understand that a blink decision is a spontaneous decision based on an intuitive understanding. In contrast, a deliberative decision organizes evidence and forecasts an impact before arriving at a decision.

The tug of war between deliberation and intuition is one reason people get stuck being indecisive. If you are comfortable with blink-style decisions, it can be difficult to work in a deliberative way, and if you are by nature more deliberative, immediate spontaneity can be difficult.

The point is, you need both, and you must be able to switch back and forth with ease and confidence.

Take, for example, the simple scenario of greeting relatives. You arrive at a family party, and your aunt, whom you

have not seen in years, is walking towards you. You are now trying to decide: will it be handshake? Or hug? Or peck on the cheek? So you lift your hand, lean in, and wobble your head a little while looking her in the eye and suddenly you are trying to do all three at the same time.

The problem with indecision is getting caught floundering just as time runs out. Where you wanted composure and authenticity, what you got was the unwelcome attention of behaving like a klutz.

Sound familiar? Intuition has a freedom that deliberation doesn't offer, and we must be open to it. Composure and authenticity come with the momentary confidence that connects with everything we know already. That's the essence of an intuitive style decision.

In contrast, take the example of shopping without a list. We've all done this. We get to the store and we're frantically

trying to remember what it is we are supposed to buy. This is like trying to pass a test when you never studied the material. No amount of guessing helps.

Intuition and memory might get you a few items, but you are going to feel stressed and indecisive the entire time.

Whenever deliberative “knowing” is more important than intuitive “knowing,” we feel time’s pressure; however, what we are wrestling with is the unwelcome vacancy of wanting something we don’t know how to create. We can’t make that list appear out of nowhere, so we disable both our deliberative and intuitive capacity. Very frustrating.

Zanshin Decision-Making

Why are these examples important? We are creatures of habit – we like using familiar patterns.

If we enjoy being deliberative, it can feel like a crutch. Too much outside corroboration can limit us unnecessarily. If we enjoy being intuitive, we may fail to use all of the information available. Too much confidence around everything we already know limits our chance for discovery.

There is a third way: a zanshin approach that improves

Intuition has a freedom that deliberation doesn't offer, and we must be open to it.

your ability to move between both intuitive and deliberative decision-making.

“Zanshin” is a state of awareness or relaxed alertness in Japanese marital arts (the literal translation of zanshin is “remaining mind”). Using zanshin, one maintains an alert mental attitude that is open and attentive throughout an action. The more zanshin a fighter’s approach, the more relaxed and focused his or her awareness will be.

Why introduce this idea to decision-making? Because people become indecisive reconciling intuition and deliberation, then they lose optimism for what they hope to accomplish.

Zanshin decision-making draws the best from intuition and deliberation while also creating an intermediary space for optimism.

Indecision Is Painful

Indecision is the bane of every decision-maker. To be grasping at straws just as time runs out is frustrating, stress-inducing

and embarrassing.

Keep in mind: the easiest way to avoid *any* decision is to withdraw; to release your contact with others, disown your investment, and make no decision.

But beware! Compartmentalizing your vulnerability can make you *feel* safer; however, you do not build a lasting sense of trust.

That’s why we separate and withdraw, feeling less secure and more incomplete.

Zanshin Is About Movement

Martial artists learn a variety of fighting stances as part of their discipline. Each stance takes advantage of certain conditions that are likely to appear while sparring with a partner.

I confess I have not studied martial arts, but I have studied decision-making and negotiation, and moving energetically and easily with a focused attention is an important skill.

Often we are fooled into believing that decisions are fixed and final, whereas, in reality, our decisions are simply a long chain of evaluations we make. Every moment we take up a new stance by moving through what we are evaluating.

So if zanshin is about movement, how does that work?

The zanshin approach requires you to shift the focus of your decision between three decision-making forces (or agencies). The more easily you do this, the more optimism you create. What are these forces?

- Personal Agency
- Impersonal Agency
- Divine Agency

The quickest way to understand these forces is to compare the stance each agency requires.

- With *Personal Agency*, your stance is inward. The good feeling, positive self-image and confidence are your primary focus. With Personal Agency, you are self-protective.

- With *Impersonal Agency*, your stance is outward. Evaluating evidence is your primary focus. With Impersonal Agency, you are concerned with discovery and discernment.

- With *Divine Agency*, your stance is open-ended (neither inward nor outward). Consent is your primary focus. With Divine Agency, you are revising long-standing orthodoxies as best you can.

Just to be clear: Divine Agency is not about a supernatural power. Divine Agency is about releasing the emotional investment we place *alongside the things we create*. If you arbitrarily maintain your investment in what you create (as protection or discernment), you are not demonstrating Divine Agency.

Because we are deeply invested in safety and discernment, we struggle making decisions. So to be more zanshin, you

must mindfully shift between all three agencies, planning to give some attention to each. That can be quite difficult. The organizing “need” which each agency serves – to protect (with Personal Agency), to discern (with Impersonal Agency) and to confirm (with Divine Agency) – do not easily coordinate.

Intuitive vs. Deliberative Decisions

So how do these agencies correlate with intuition and deliberation?

On the face of it, Personal Agency seems to be about intuition while Impersonal Agency seems to be about deliberation; but that’s not really correct. The real difference between Personal and Impersonal is between Intuition and Evidence.

Intuition is the inner knowledge of what good feeling, positive self-image and confidence offers; whereas, evidence is the outer knowledge for that which we do not create ourselves.

So, when we deliberate, we move between intuition and evidence, struggling to confirm which path we want to take. Then we must choose: to affirm or reject what we tell *ourselves* or what the world tells *us*.

So how does Divine Agency fit in? By helping us to ac-

cept whatever we encounter, Divine Agency allows optimism to unfold because once “reality” is accepted we receive new hope and resilience. Intuition and deliberation find new ways to move forward.

The zanshin decision-making process is enlightening because it builds on the wisdom of Eastern and Western philosophy. In

Zanshin decision-making draws the best from intuition and deliberation while also creating an intermediary space for optimism.

discovering how to make decisions from this place of *internal power*, you elevate your awareness and free yourself from the pain of indecision. By becoming zanshin, you can bring forward your best and highest self, and contribute to the world in new and greater ways. ●

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Coaching for Change

14th Annual Executive Coaching Conference

The Conference Board's 14th Annual Executive Coaching Conference, held on March 7-8 at the Westin Times Square in New York City, attracted 160 attendees for two days of seminars, exercises, presentations and panel discussions.

This year's event featured a full-day pre-conference seminar focusing on the Future of Coaching. Presenters included: Alex Pascal, CoachLogix, Inc.; David Peterson, PhD., of Google Inc.; Josh Rogers, M.A. of Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.; Dr. Gary Ranker, Global CEO Coach; Jeremy Stover of LinkedIn; Lauren Wiswall of CoachLogix, Inc.; Dolores Bernardo of Airbnb; and David Straus of Reason Ventures. Sponsored by CoachLogix, the seminar focused on the evolution of coaching, and present and future trends that are or will be available in this rapidly changing environment.

The focus of the main conference was Coaching for Change. Conference sponsors included CoachLogix, EY, CoachSource and AIIR Consulting. The keynote address was presented by Robert Kegan of Harvard University, who presented on the concept of "Immunity to Change." A coaching exercise based on this concept set the stage for a knowledge-sharing experience and created a high level of engagement.

Amy Abel of the Conference Board and Lee WanVeer of Amtrak co-presented the new Global Executive Coaching research by The Conference Board, highlighting how companies are preparing future-ready leaders, implementing cutting-edge

coaching initiatives, and scaling efforts through robust internal coaching programs and a widespread coaching culture.

A group of four coaching thought leaders – Brian Underhill of CoachSource, Chris Pollino of Genentech, Karen Mathre of Medtronic and Patrick Murphy of GSX – discussed how measurement matters and the practical metrics and tools they are each using to measure the ROI of coaching.

Alex Pascal of CoachLogix outlined contemporary trends in organizational

One of the panels focused on the new and emerging technologies that will augment the way coaching is delivered.

development, including holocracy and teal organization. He also made practical suggestions as to how a coaching culture can be used to support more agile, flexible and resilient organizations.

Janice Smith of EY delivered a compelling presentation on how to develop high-performing teams through team coaching, and identified the five winning behaviors they consistently demonstrate and the defining moments that make or break a team's experience.

A few of the presentations focused on Women's Coaching programs. These

included Stephanie Trotter of GSK, which has a successful coaching program geared at increasing women in the leadership pipeline. Lynn Schmidt of Micron Technologies also delivered a session focusing on women and coaching competencies and strategies to help build resiliency. Lynn shared insights and key takeaways from her award winning book, *Shift Into Thrive: Six Strategies for Women to Unlock the Power of Resiliency*.

One of the panels focused on new approaches to coaching in a dynamic experience economy as well as the new and emerging technologies that will augment the way coaching is delivered. Panel members were Stephanie Trotter of GSK, Dolores Bernardo of Airbnb, Becky Cotton of Google Executive Coaching and Leadership Team and John-Lawrence (J-L) Etame of John Deere.

The panel on Strategies for Building a Sustainable Corporate Coaching Capability explored sophisticated and strategic approaches to coaching within organizations. Panelists were Jeremy Stover of LinkedIn, Denise G. Kasper of Capital One, William H. Hodgetts, Ed.D., Fidelity Investments and Chris Oster, of General Motors Company.

The closing session was a wrap-up and summary of the conference highlights presented by Rene Carew, conference program director, and Patricia Gill of the Mayo Clinic.

The Conference Board is already planning next year's conference and will announce the dates and location soon. ●

SAVE THESE DATES!

July 13 – 16
Fifth World Congress on Positive Psychology
 Montreal, Quebec, Canada
www.ippanetwork.org/wcpp2017/

August 24 – 26
ICF Global Convention 2017
 Washington, DC, USA
<http://coachfederation.org/events/>

October 13 – 14
The Coaching Conference That Never Ends
 Boston, Massachusetts, USA
www.instituteofcoaching.org/conference-never-ends

October 17 – 21, 2018
Third International Columbia Coaching Conference
 New York, New York, USA
www.cclacolumbia.org/about-conference-never-ends

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The Future of Coaching is Now!

With *choice* Magazine

Our upcoming issues will guide you toward a happy and successful coaching life

Here's what we're working on to keep you on the leading edge of what's happening in the coaching world:

V15N3 Breaking the Rules!

It's that secret conversation where we admit to a colleague that we also give clients advice, regularly teach or train them, or even tell our own stories. How are we limiting ourselves and not offering everything we have when we refrain from these things? How do we manage the balance between standard descriptions of coaching and what our clients are asking us for? Why are we afraid to challenge the convention that is only 20 years old? Is it time for the coaching paradigm to expand?

Article Deadline: Closed

Advertising Deadline: July 15, 2017

Mail Date: Late September, 2017

V15N4 Past, Present & Future of Coaching

It's the 15th Anniversary of *choice*, the magazine of professional coaching! We will dedicate this issue to looking back at how far coaching has come since its inception, spotlighting key milestones, and the many facets of coaching today. We will also look ahead to where coaching is going as a profession, as a business, and as a community. Coaching is alive, strong and growing. We will celebrate the past, present, and future of professional coaching in this exciting issue of *choice*.

Article Deadline: Sept. 1, 2017

Advertising Deadline: Oct. 15, 2017

Mail Date: Mid-December, 2017

V16N1 Coaching Tools, Tips & Techniques

What creative tools and techniques do you use to make the work you do stand out as memorable? What results are possible when you introduce new stimuli into your work? How do tools add value and help your marketing or branding? How do you "break the ice," get out of a rut, shift perspective and create aha moments? What tips do you have for new or struggling coaches? This issue will discuss coaching tools, tips and creative processes to help you become a better coach.

Article Deadline: Dec. 1, 2017

Advertising Deadline: Jan. 15, 2018

Mail Date: Mid-March, 2018

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Updated June 2017, Subject to Change

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Focus!

Magnifying your power through specialization

Focus is a great thing. When you use a magnifying glass to focus the sun's rays, you end up with a lot of power concentrated in a very specific place. This focused power is useful in many ways.

When you specialize your coaching business, you're bringing a more powerful message to the people who most care. When you tighten the scope of a coaching discussion, you're increasing the possible outcome for a specific area of work. And when you concentrate on a particular area for the next hour, you've just increased the likelihood of accomplishing something useful.

I find that focus is a rare thing in our current culture. I struggle with a to-do list with a wide range of Big Important Tasks, while dealing with an overflowing email inbox. Don't get me started about the nattering of social media; it's addictive.

Time management experts usually start with identifying the importance of tasks. Prioritize them A, B, C. Or look at the size of the tasks. Complete the small ones first so you have a few quick successes. Or work on the big ones during your most productive time of the day.

When we, as coaches, connect our own sense of mission and values to the right clients, our own power is magnified.

My experience has been that these techniques easily fall into the trap of optimizing at the small scale, while losing sight of the big picture.

My cousin's husband died unexpectedly, which got me thinking about the priorities in my life. All of a sudden my packed calendar seemed to be cluttered with less important activities. I realized that my top priority, even above my coaching business, is my family. So I cleared away some confusion and am now working with new energy.

This is exactly the kind of awakening to which we help our clients arrive. It changes lives.

We might think that clarifying our marketing messages is somehow an artificial exercise. It might seem superficial, like whether we want to paint our house red or blue. But we have to remember that coaching is about helping people who are making the world a better place. Starting with themselves, our clients will move forward with conviction and clarity, which will change their families, communities, businesses, and even the planet.



When I'm able to help my clients connect their business vision to the world, their impact increases by leaps and bounds. When we, as coaches, connect our own sense of mission and values to the right clients, our own power is magnified. And that is simply what marketing is about! Connecting with the right people and moving forward to serve them in life-changing ways.

That is the true power of coaching. But if you don't connect with the potential clients who will benefit from your work, it's all for naught. It's a certificate hanging on your wall and a website that nobody reads.

I hope you've learned from the articles in this issue, and are working hard to connect with your own amazing niche. Your people are out there, just hoping that someone like you will help them. ●

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