

# 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

# 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

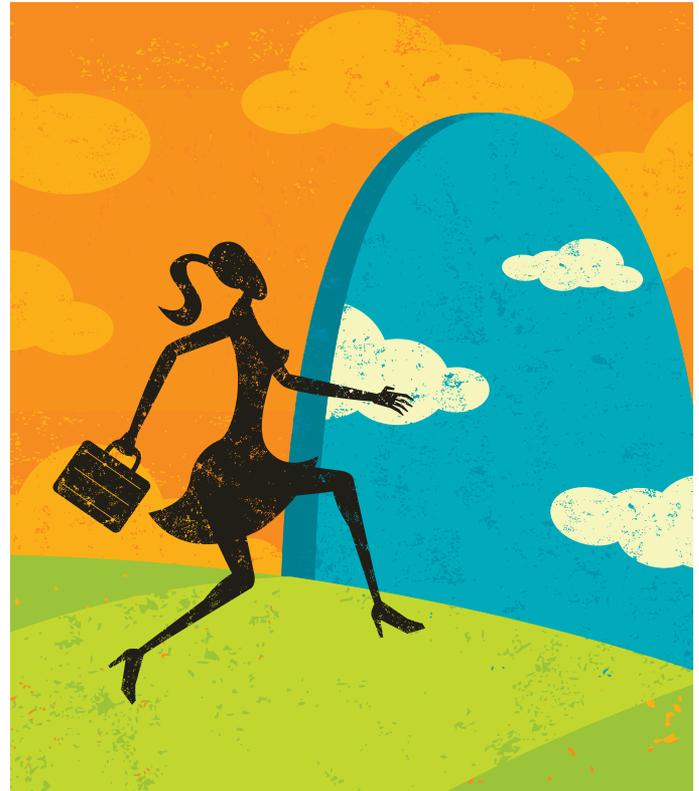
We are getting more and more “sticky situation” questions having to do with staying in business; never mind the actual coaching conundrums we get into with clients! This is a complex arena with many layers to consider so, as I often do, I’ll start by deconstructing your question a bit.

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

**Y**ou 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

**O**ver 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](mailto:submissions@choice-online.com) and put "sticky situations" in the subject line.