

choice

the magazine of professional coaching

**Breaking
the Rules!**

Is it time
for the
coaching
paradigm
to expand?

Shattering
the Myths

A Roadmap for
Rule Breaking

Is it Time to
Change Course?

How do I honor both my credentials and my clients?

the situation

“I’ve recently completed my coach training and am applying for my professional coaching credential. I’m fortunate to already have a few paying business clients. The conflict I have is that the coaching I’ve learned and need to complete my credential exam is not exactly what my clients want from me. How do I reconcile this internal conflict and honor my profession and my clients at the same time?”

the experts weigh in

By Victoria Trabosh, CDC®, CEC

I don’t find these two issues diametrically opposed. It’s great that you’re getting credentialed in one type of coaching. Continue that work and see it through to completion. If you find in five years that you haven’t used what you’ve learned, ask yourself if there’s anything you would have done differently if you’d known that type of coaching wasn’t going to be the conduit for your coaching revenue.

I’ve been working as a full-time executive coach since 2003. As I’ve grown, my desire to know more has grown. Through that growth I’ve pursued a number of different credentialed programs.

But I realized early on that clients were hiring ME, not the credentials. Calvin Coolidge said, “Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers. It may not be difficult to store up in the mind a vast quantity of facts within a comparatively short time, but the ability to form judgments requires the severe discipline of hard work and the tempering heat of experience and maturity.”

Your knowledge comes through training. Your wisdom (which is where you must place and value your worth) comes through time, trial and error, and application. As you grow, your value increases to a client. That increased value will be reflected in your rates and your total revenue.

Asking great questions, articulating the value you bring, saying no to what you know you cannot do and delivering on your promises, will bring results for the client.

You’re already working as a coach. Explore with your clients what you bring to them of value. Evaluate your training and get more of what you need and less of what you’re told you *should* have. A coach must be first and foremost an entrepreneur.

Don’t ask others their opinion of your practice; ask them how they can help you build it. And if you build something of value, articulate it well and deliver on your promises, your coaching practice will blossom.

If you’re finding that your clients want something from you that you are uniquely qualified to deliver but you don’t think it



falls clearly under any coaching umbrella, I enthusiastically say: Hooray! You’re developing your unique practice within the confines of the coaching industry. There is no conflict from my point of view. There is a fluidity in this business as there are in many businesses. Follow your instincts, finish what you start, and be willing to course correct when necessary.

By Suzi Pomerantz, MT, MCC

Exactly! You are so right! Your business clients do NOT want what our profession considers “pure” coaching. Your knowing that will be the secret to your success.

Kudos to you for completing your coach training, and for your stake in the ground that expresses your commitment to a professional standard of excellence; i.e., seeking that credential. The fact that you have a few paying business clients tells me that you are already doing something right in the domains of networking, marketing, and sales. Bravo!

The topic you’ve raised is one that comes up quite a bit amongst the MCC crowd. You are quite correct that your business and corporate clients, particularly leaders and executives, are not paying you to come in and solely ask them questions or guide them on a heart-centered inquiry. They want results; real, tangible, measurable, preferably quantifiable results. If you have knowledge to bring to bear, they want to hear it. If you have models to share or frameworks to teach, they want proven structures.

They want strategic thought partnership and ideation. They want support for innovation. They want a sounding board with gravitas and a reality check within a safe, reflective space. They want a trusted and confidential collaborative resource who will tell them the truth. They want mastery, insight, and perspective applied specifically to their custom situation.

They also want action! The art of conversational influence, including storytelling, has impact for them. They also typically require bottom-line headline, executive style communication. And you’ve got to do all that while being real and authentic

and upholding the ethical requirements of our profession.

At the MCC level, particularly for organizational coaching with leaders, we know that what constitutes “pure” coaching as defined in your training and exam requirements will not be what gets you hired enough to make a sustainable living as a coach. This conundrum explains why we often hear dismal statistics about the high percentages of coaches who fail to make a living at it.

Think of it like training to be a chef. You must learn and master the fundamentals of various techniques of cooking before you go out into the world and open your own restaurant, where you are then free to design your own unique flavors and flair to please the palates of your ideal customers.

The distinction that may help is to separate the coaching practice from the coaching business. The practice of coaching, as you learn it and test on it, can be the purest form of the craft. The business of coaching, however, requires a departure from the purest form of coaching in order to meet your clients’ agendas and therefore succeed and thrive financially.

I’d argue that you only truly honor our profession when you hit upon the right balance for you and your clients, embracing their agenda, so you can thus go on to thrive in a viable, successful, coaching business.

How you practice the art of coaching within your coaching business is up to you. Your training and exam are the first stage of designing that for yourself. Stick to what you were taught for the exam, and then design with and for your clients the practice of coaching that will best honor their agenda and your ethics in your business. Honoring the client agenda IS honoring our profession.

By Craig Carr, PCC, CPCC

As I understand it, your internal conflict is that you don’t believe your coaching school is providing what you need to help the clients with whom you want to work. If that is correct, then I feel your pain. However, I either don’t get why you go to that coaching school, or I begin to suspect that it may not be coaching that your clients want. Either way, there certainly is a mismatch that needs to be sorted.

I’m going to make a few assumptions from experience working with many students who had to figure out how to adapt new coaching skills to their first clients. Often, early clients are enrolled from pre-coaching relationships, so I’m going to assume that’s true for you, too.

Whether you agree with my further deductions or not, here they are: 1) You are a victim to the trap of wanting to be liked and approved of by your clients. 2) You don’t yet trust the new coaching tools you’ve learned and probably haven’t practiced them enough. 3) You think the result the client says they want is all there is. In other words, you aren’t asking enough questions to get out of a constraining box called, “what my clients want from me.”

That may be a lot to take in. Perhaps it helps to think of yourself as being on a stepping stone that all coaches pass over. Aside from the internal conflict, let’s look at your desire to feel you are honoring the profession and your clients. I have a simple answer for the client side of the equation and you’ve

no doubt heard it a hundred times (but you may not yet fully appreciate what it means).

I’m talking about holding your client Big. Your client stays small and stuck if you play to how they think the coaching should go. I don’t care what you’ve made up about what you can and can’t talk about with “business clients.” If you are a coach, you are going to hit on emotion, feelings, transformation, personal conflict, and more. If you want to consult - if it appears that is what they want - then do that, but don’t confuse it with coaching, especially at this early stage of your career.

Working on that simple frame - really understanding what holding your client Whole and Big truly means - will go a long way toward honoring the profession. Now, on building your skill set so you can trust what coaching can do, here’s an assignment: Out of every 10 sentences you utter to a client, nine of them must be questions. Do this for a month. It will get you out of the “must provide value” trap (because you will!), give you permission to slow down and feel awkward, and teach you to trust the power of curiosity to blow your client’s mind!

Have someone (your coach) hold you accountable to this, as it is extremely important to your growth. ●

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.