



Top 5 Tips for Becoming a Business Coach

If you want to be a Business Coach the starting place is to work on being absolutely clear about what your personal definition of a Business Coach is. For as 'eggs are eggs' you will be telling a lot of people!

Every time I say I am a Business Coach someone says, "A Business coach, what exactly do you do?" And I answer, "I work with individuals and groups to improve their performance at work"

Perhaps, the questioning is as a result of being part of a new profession. I heard recently that Coaches are now the second fastest growing profession in the world. Type business coach into Google and you can choose from 66,100,000 sites.

The good news is that how you distinguish yourself as a Business Coach can be up to you. You choose how to ultimately define yourself. The bad news is you also get to live with the burden of choice and that can sometimes feel tough.

The following 5 tips are aimed at helping you become the Business Coach you want to.

1. Do some serious personal reflection

When a client is buying a Business Coach they are buying you, you are the product. Personal reflection will help you sell your features and benefits with confidence.

Reflection is the process of asking yourself questions and exploring your answers. Don't worry about having succinct answers when you first begin. It takes a while to get clarity and you may benefit from asking yourself the same question a few times. The process can feel like peeling layers off an onion.

Here are some good questions:

- What 3 words best describe me?
- Why do I want to be a Business Coach?
- How would I describe my approach?

- What theory and models inform my work?
- What is my philosophy?
- What is the difference between Business Coaching and Personal Coaching?
- What is my particular area of expertise?
- What am I passionate about?
- Who would be my favourite client and why?

Something else you can try is to take yourself to a peaceful and happy location. Somewhere you feel you can relax and enjoy being. Make yourself comfortable and cast your minds eye back to a place/time in your work where you can truly say you felt at your best.

Close your eyes and try to picture yourself back there, standing and feeling at your very best.

Then take a closer look in and ask:

- What was happening?
- Who was involved?
- What was it that contributed to the success?
- What were the results?

This affirming process purposely searches out energising moments of our past success. The energy from these memories sparks new energy for building our confidence to attract more of what we want in the future.

Sue Annis Hammond's book *Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry* (Thin Book Publishing) is a terrific read if you want to find out more about the theory. Appreciative Inquiry Commons is also a good website to visit

<http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/intro/whatisai.cfm>

2. Know your Business World

To gain a strong reputation in the market place you have to be credible at what you do and that means staying up to date with what is happening in the business world you operate in, internally and the wider world.

A good starting place is to research magazines and journals your clients subscribe to. Buy them read them and chose one to subscribe to. Any more and you risk not reading them.

The Harvard Business Review is a good choice.

<http://www.subscription-service.co.uk/magazine-harvard-business-review.asp>

The Internet is another great source of information. Try surfing the net to spot a good article and send it to your client.

Also, in meetings with existing and prospective clients, don't be afraid to challenge the jargon and ask the 'idiot question' like, "Why do you do that?"

It demonstrates you are interested in their business and have an appetite for learning.

Another part of knowing your business world is making it your business to familiarise yourself with the Performance Management Process/system the business has in place. Any coaching you do has to be done in the context of this. Don't forget, as a Business Coach you are helping others to improve performance in the world of work.

You should also know what and how the results of your coaching activity are going to be evaluated and what and for whom feedback will be required.

Patrick E. Merlevede and Denis C. Bridoux do a good job of clarifying some of the key components of coaching in their book *Mastering Mentoring and Coaching with Emotional Intelligence* (Crown House publishing Limited).

3. Get positive feedback from others

Your clients are the ideal people to help you define your business so it makes perfect sense to ask them.

Think about clients, colleagues, people you work with in a professional capacity, past and present. Select the ones you want to seek positive feedback from, 6 is probably a good number

Positive feedback will help you to define your USP (unique selling point). You are your product and you need to be clear and confident why Businesses should buy you. Clients want to be able to quickly read and trust 'it does what it says on the tin'.

Positive feedback will also strengthen self-belief. You have to believe your strengths if you want others to. In her book *Be Your Own Coach*, (Coronet Books) Fiona Harrold talks about the power of positive belief. In a study (Demography magazine) of 28,000 people who went to church at least once a week, their life expectancy increased by an astonishing fourteen years.

Try and stay away from asking open 'catch all' type questions like, "what would you say about me?"

Instead, prepare a few clear and concise questions to ask, no more than 2/3.

Some example questions:

- What few words would you use to describe me at my best?
- Why would you recommend me to others?
- What was it I particularly did well that enabled you to be successful?
- What do you see as my top three talents?
- Why would I make a great Business Coach?

- What do you see me doing that other Coaches/Consultants don't do?
- How would you sum up my distinguishable difference?
- In a few words describe what is it you think I do?

Remember, you want to search out the good, not the bad and the ugly. This is no time for being bashful.

4. Ask for what you want

When you are looking for opportunities to network, grow leads and develop your prospects always say who you are and what you want.

If you are very clear about what you want and need it will make it easy for others to help you.

Instead of saying, "I am a business coach and do you know anyone it would be good for me to meet?" You might replace this with, "I am a business coach and I would like the names of 2 Human Resource Directors in Financial Services who hold a budget for Executive Development."

Have your one minute 'elevator pitch' ready and with you always, "I am a Business coach who....."

You never know when you are going to need it.

Write it and rewrite it until you can deliver it with passion. Passion engages reaches out and grabs us.

'All the great things are simple, and many can be expressed in a single word: freedom, justice, honour, duty, mercy, hope.' Winston Churchill

5. Always have a formal contract for work you do

As the saying goes, 'business is business'. Don't leave things to chance. Where you are not sure about any aspects of contracts it is always good to pay for a solicitor to give a contract the 'once over'. However, be a 100% confident before you sign anything.

Talk to colleagues and create and customise your own. Colleagues at the Association for Coaching is a great place to ask

<http://www.associationforcoaching.com>

You may want to include the details below in your contract:

Your process

You should include details of the 'package', how many sessions, how long and over what period of time. The client will often expect you to take the lead and ask you how it all works. Be clear on your process and from here you can always build and modify it with your client.

Intellectual property

It is also good to be clear about intellectual property. What belongs to you and what belongs to your client? If your client uses your intellectual property then you need to agree if you are going to charge a one off cost, a cost per unit, or no cost at all (being recognised as the author is enough).

Cancellation policy

Make sure you include a cancellation policy. You don't want to be cancelled the 'day before' with out being compensated. It is normal to have a scaled rate, dependant on how close to the original booking the client cancels. Where a replacement booking is made you may want to include the text, "no cancellation fee will be incurred if the booking is rescheduled within a period of time agreed to be mutually acceptable by both parties."

Travel and accommodation

Make sure you always agree this up front in your proposal for work.

Often it is customary to charge up to half your per diem rate for additional travel time where time exceeds over what is deemed to be reasonable for a journey time to work.

Confidentially agreement

This is an agreement to protect confidential information revealed during discussions, proposals or negotiations.

Finally, remember that these five tips will encourage clarity to permeate your business. You will have a strong foundation for building your success.

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If you have found this guide helpful and would like further information on any aspect of coaching, please contact:

www.associationforcoaching.com

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