

Introduction

Coaching is said to be one of the fastest growing professions.

Lifestyle magazines run articles about coaching and personal development and there are life coaches on the radio and on TV. Celebrities are publicly thanking their coaches for their support, business people are acknowledging their coaches when they have achieved success and conference speakers talk about coaching as being one of the most useful management tools.

There are Life Coaches, Work/Life Balance Coaches, Relationship Coaches, Career Coaches, Parent Coaches, Executive Coaches, Small Business Coaches, Presentation Skills Coaches, Leadership Coaches... the list goes on.

Everyone seems to be talking about coaching and many people, like you, want to be a successful professional coach.

The biggest taboo in coaching...

Whilst coaches are in training, they experience coaching for themselves and they discover that it can have a profound impact on people's quality of life, probably more so than they would have imagined before they started their studies.

Friends are made on the course, people keep in touch and it feels good to be around others who can talk in an educated way about coaching models, techniques and experiences with clients.

As coaches become more involved in the coaching community, they hear success stories and 'rags to riches' tales of coaches who have 'made it big'. People are talking about hourly rates of £50, £100 and sometimes even £500! It's exciting to think that anything is possible and coaching offers not only the chance to work in a very rewarding profession, but to achieve financial security.

Everything is building to that magical day when the certificate or diploma arrives. The day that you can say with confidence, *“I’m a qualified coach.”*

Around this time, many new coaches decide to launch their new coaching practice. The desk is set up, the phone line is installed and the business cards are in their shiny new business card holder ready to give out to anyone who asks, *“I’m thinking about working with a coach, do you know anyone?”*

But next comes the part that we don’t talk about – it’s the biggest taboo in coaching. The phone doesn’t ring all by itself. People walking past your home don’t telepathically know that there’s a coach inside who could help them to achieve their goals. For new coaches who have not been in business for themselves before, and even seasoned professionals, it can be daunting to think about ways to start spreading the word about your new coaching practice and start attracting clients.

Marketing coaching is different

Even if, like me, you’ve spent all of your career working in marketing (see later), it can be a shock to discover that marketing coaching is not like marketing a can of baked beans or any other packaged good or product. Coaching is intangible – people can’t see, hear or touch what it’s going to be like when they buy. They can only experience it. Clients are taking a big risk when they decide to work with a coach because they have to take your word for what they’ll get from it. For this reason, trust is a much larger factor in a client’s decision to work with a particular coach than it is for many other purchasing decisions.

Some very successful marketing professionals who have made the transition to being independent coaches have found that the techniques and strategies that worked for them before don’t work now. Why? Well, very often they have been successful at marketing an established product or service. Something that is known to its buyers and has an element of goodwill attached to it. When you’re starting a service-based business from scratch it takes time to build up a brand and goodwill.

Hannah's background

I was lucky when I came to starting up as a coach because I already had a background in marketing and business. I also had experience of selling to companies. That's one of the reasons I decided to write this book – the majority of people starting off as coaches have come from very different backgrounds and don't enjoy marketing as much as I do.

My story is that I started off in retail sales and then after completing a four-year university degree in Business Studies (I specialized in marketing), I worked for a sales promotion agency, a PR agency and a generalist marketing consultancy before moving 'client-side' to the marketing department of a well-known womenswear and home furnishings retailer.

Over the next four years, I looked after the full spectrum of marketing activities from direct marketing, advertising, PR and in-store promotions to organizing exhibition stands and new store openings. I then moved into the male-dominated cut-throat world of electrical retail where I ran the marketing department. There I held together and developed a team of eager marketing professionals whilst we had the threat of redundancy hanging over our heads. When the redundancies did happen, I moved into magazine publishing and helped to launch a new glossy magazine, then took a gap year with my husband and worked in publishing in Australia. (I also did lots of other short-term jobs like door-to-door sales, a driving job, worked in a clothes shop and even was the 'face' of a recruitment consultancy when I posed as a midwife in their press adverts!)

When I met some coaches while I was away, I realized that I had been using coaching techniques as a manager for some time, before they had been labelled as such, and when I returned to the UK, I decided to study for a coaching qualification with The Coaching Academy.

I then set up a coaching practice where I worked with a group of experienced coaches and I concentrated on Business Development – going out and getting the clients. Within three months we had our first corporate client which was an international PR firm. The practice has grown from there and now most of our clients are people working in professional services firms.

Along the way there have been good times and tough times, and I've learned a lot about what works and what doesn't when promoting a coaching practice.

In addition to running my practice, I launched a specialist website for coaches who want to learn more about marketing: www.marketinghelpforcoaches.com – and I am one of the marketing trainers at The Coaching Academy. I work on a one-to-one basis with new coaches to help them launch their coaching practices. I think that good marketing is absolutely essential for new coaches and in this book you'll discover some of the secrets about getting your message out there.

About this book

This book is about getting started as a professional coach. But it goes beyond just talking about getting started because in this book you'll find the tools you need to identify your target clients, establish your own personal brand and develop a marketing strategy.

Comfort zones

Would I be right in thinking that at least once, you've needed to challenge a client to step out of their comfort zone to do something that's going to help them to achieve their goal? You might say to that client that unless they're prepared to take action and do something, nothing will change – *“if you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got.”*

It's the same with this book.

Practically everything you need to start getting coaching clients is in here. But it's your responsibility to do something about it – I can't make you. It's one thing to know what you should do, it's quite another to actually do it.

If you're serious about being a professional coach, then from time to time, perhaps every single day, you'll need to stretch or even smash your comfort zones.

And if that makes you uncomfortable...it should. That's the idea!

Wealth warning

The chances are that if you're thinking about becoming, or you already are, a professional full-time coach, then you'll either have already given up the day job or it's on the horizon.

The stark reality is that, unless you are already 'financially free', if you are giving up a regular pay-check, you are going to need to achieve a certain level of income from coaching. In a nutshell, you need to make a *living* as a coach.

Whatever your beliefs about money, in this material world you do need money to live. Money has been around as a means of trade for thousands of years and it's not going away.

Despite our best efforts, positive intent and 'giving something back' does not pay the mortgage or the gas bill. And whilst you might be able to barter coaching for other products or services, you can't use it to buy petrol, food or your favourite treats.

This book is about finding ways to get clients who **pay you** to coach them. If this offends you, then please stop reading right now because you're going to be even more offended as you read on!

Get rich quick

Very, very few people are an overnight success as a coach. This book will **not** help you to get rich quick. In fact, if you want to be a professional coach, prepare yourself for the long-haul. Unless you have a book of contacts that are ready to start using your services, expect to have to support yourself for your first year.

That's right, it can take up to a year (sometimes more) of hard work to earn a good, regular income from coaching. I don't say that to scare you, but I say it because I think you chose this book and you want me to be honest with you. However, if you're prepared to stretch your comfort zones and be bold, you can definitely accelerate the process. This book will show you what you need to do, step by step.

Assumptions

When I sat down to write this book, I had to make a few assumptions that may or may not be true about you:

- You're studying for or have already completed a good, solid coach training programme and are familiar with basic NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming) techniques
- You have some practical experience of coaching people
- You'd like to have more paying coaching clients
- You have little or no prior experience of marketing a professional practice
- You're prepared to try new things
- You have someone you trust who can coach you to overcome any fears, limiting beliefs or blocks that might be holding you back
- You have access to someone who can advise you on the legalities and tax implications of starting your own business
- You want me to be straight with you

Finding your way around

This book is organized into sections that go into greater depth about each aspect of marketing yourself as a coach. This means that you can dip in and out as you need to and gloss over any ideas that you might already be using in your coaching practice. You may find it helpful to keep a pad and pen with you so you can work through the exercises straight away.