

# 7 Tips For Marketing A Coaching Practice

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Awareness of coaching has climbed significantly over the past several years and that's good news for coaches. Most people find their coaches through referrals, either from someone already on that coach's client roster or from another coach. Referrals alone are not enough to keep most practices busy, though. And even when they do come in, they're not always a perfect match. Coaches need to develop focused, shrewd communications and marketing programs to introduce themselves and their work to prospects and colleagues. These 7 tips will help you think about approaching this often overwhelming set of problems in a sane, coherent way.

## 1. *Your brand is you*

Coaching is an intensely personal service, provided by intensely human people. In order to attract clients—especially the right clients—coaches need to project their unique attributes, personalities and strengths in the marketplace. Sure, this will come across when you talk to someone, but how do you maximize the number of opportunities to do that? One key way is to develop a “brand” based on your strongest asset: yourself. Brand is a way to introduce yourself when you're not physically present and to generate some additional interest when you are. For most coaches working independently, brand elements should be simple, straightforward and very personal:

- Use your favorite color on your business card, website and other marketing materials
- Come up with a tagline that encapsulates the invitation you make to your clients
- Pick a couple of key themes (eg, adventure, balance, healing) you want to emphasize and weave them into all of your materials
- Let prospective clients hear you speak through your materials—give them a taste of what it might be like to work with you

## 2. *Marketing is an invitation to conversation*

Nobody is going to pick a coach based solely on marketing materials, no matter how good they are. As you develop your website, brochure, articles and other materials, keep in mind that their role is solely to get people to want to talk to you. Use your materials to show what you know, how you work and the positive impact your services have had on people's lives.

## 3. *Be generous with what you know*

If you show people you know a little, they'll generally assume you know a lot more (and they're right). Don't make the mistake of holding back for fear of giving away the store. Develop articles and presentations that share certain essential knowledge or experiences. This will show people you're open and lead to conversation.

## 4. *Really know what you know*

We acquire wisdom and build habits that help us to the lives we want on a daily basis. But we seldom stop to acknowledge what we've done or learned, much less think of crystallizing it to use in a marketing vehicle. A client who is a coach told me a story about a really bad day she had, in which one thing after another went wrong and she was forced to perform a number of silly tasks and deal with frustrating people. I was sympathetic and found myself feeling angry on her behalf. When I told her that, she said that she had recognized early on when things started spinning out of control that she had a choice. And she chose to laugh. She was content to leave it at that, but I, ever on the lookout for material, pointed



out that her anecdote and the principle that it wrapped had the perfect makings for a short article she could use to illustrate the life coaching side of her business. Stories in which we reveal what's happened to us, how we've responded and why we make the choices we do are very compelling. Woven into articles, they can be very powerful marketing tools for coaches, serving as a very personal introduction and a profound illustration of coaching at work.

### *5. Frame the offerings and name the possibilities*

Frequently the sky is the limit when it comes to coaching—there are so many things that can be done, depending on the client's will and your skill. Remember, though, that people come to coaching because they're having trouble seeing or realizing the possibilities. It's often helpful to frame distinct service offerings aimed at the kinds of clients you want to work with. A good service offering identifies a need, reassures that the need can be met and lays out the approach. Few people will take you up on your offering as you've specifically defined it (client agendas are very different, after all). But well-constructed offerings can lead to counter offers and then to strong working relationships.

### *6. Strategize about how best to reach prospects*

You probably know what kind of clients you want to work with, but have you thought about how best to reach them? Do you know what magazines they read? Do they attend professional groups? Are they especially Web-savvy? By answering these—and similar—questions, you'll have the information you need to begin assembling, prioritizing and deploying material. Some of it is common sense. If you want to work with technologists, a Web presence is essential. If your target group is lawyers, you need contact with the local bar association. Don't be afraid to pick up the phone and call publications to see if they can help you get your story out there. Reporters and writers love the chance to talk about interesting new ideas. Whatever your target group, you should keep in mind that no one vehicle is likely to capture everyone's attention. An informative Web presence can be great for attracting clients who like to research online. Since some people only visit sites after they find out about them, you'll also need print materials. I recommend to my clients that they go through the exercise of developing a short brochure whether they plan on printing it or not. Working within a tight size limitation forces you to be really clear about what you're offering. When you're ready for production, consider digital printing. New technologies allow for fast color printing in small quantities at a reasonable price.

### *7. It's hard to value your own offer properly*

Remember the last time your coach was able to point out something that had eluded you but somehow seemed really obvious once it was on the table? Good marketing consultants can do the same thing for you within their specific areas of expertise. The best will follow a process that looks a lot like coaching and helps you really get at key differentiators and selling points.



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