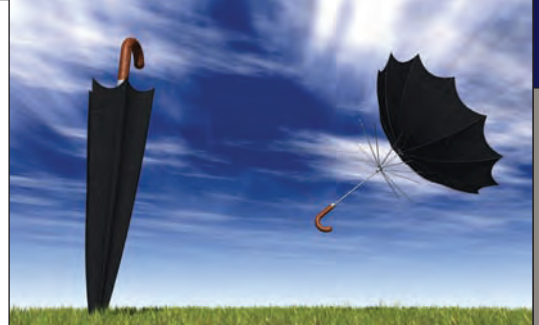


sticky situations

EXPERT GUIDANCE ON CRITICAL COACHING ISSUES

“I can’t get my coaching business off the ground”



the situation

“I’ve been struggling to get my business off the ground for almost two years. I’ve taken marketing classes and have tried to implement web exposure strategies but nothing seems to give me any traction. My own coach and I are looking at the possibility that maybe coaching isn’t a good fit for me and perhaps I should be doing something else. I’m so confused and depressed by the whole thing I don’t know what to do. Can you help me get some perspective on this?”

the experts weigh in

By Craig Carr, PCC, CPCC

I’m not sure I can give you the magic words that will turn this around for you, but you are correct in more ways than you may imagine that getting perspective on this sticky situation is an important step.

As professional coaching has grown and the economy has contracted, there is a compelling case to be made about the increased competition for fewer potential clients. If you buy into that, you are doomed to have a tougher time than if you stay focused on what you are doing and, more importantly, why you are doing it.

In a recent newsletter article I wrote about the distinction between deciding and choosing. When we make a decision we select in an either/or context, and often a decision comes down to whether it feels better to move toward something or away from something. The state of mind that influences a decision is often one of desperation, pressure, or even fear.

Choosing, meanwhile, means that we have three or more potential options in front of us. Our selection suddenly has a sense of being freed up, filled with possibility, hope and creativity, simply because we are getting ourselves out of an either/or mindset. There’s a good reason this magazine is called *choice*: making choices is one of the fundamental building blocks of the entire coaching paradigm.

I mention all this because you and your coach may be falling into the trap of colluding around the desperation and disappointment you feel. A corner you can paint yourselves into is the “should I or shouldn’t I be doing this” conversation – talk that is decision focused – and you may have gone to that place too soon. Whatever you do, the point is to be sure to come from a state of choice. I believe that if you learn to simply do that, it will make you a better coach and support you in turning this thing around.

One last thing: There is an early Robert Kiyosaki book called *Cashflow Quadrant*, which I often recommend to coaches in the early stages of building a career. Though not his most famous book, I like it because it is all about choice and perspective. He says that in business you are in one of four positions and you are much more powerful and geared for success if you know where you are coming from.

You have some work to do, but for now get curious about the four mindsets that Kiyosaki says are available to you. Do you come from the perspective of an “employee,” a “self-employed person,” a “business owner” or an “investor”?

The premise is that if you are in one of the first two mindsets it is much more difficult to be successful as an entrepreneur. Based on what I’ve seen and experienced myself, I tend to agree. Knowing yourself means knowing where you will be the most joyful and happy through the years of your life.

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: editor@choice-online.com and put “sticky situations” in the subject line.

By Victoria Trabosh, CDC®

Starting any business and marketing it isn't easy. Yet we're told with just a few steps we'll have a thriving business very soon. We've heard over and over: "Get a great 'squeeze page' and drive clients to your products and your coaching programs! Learn SEO for your website and then everyone will be able to find you! Don't forget to leverage social media! Write three blogs this week – no more than 250 words each! Do you have a strong 'elevator speech'? If you're not a professional speaker, you probably can't make it!" No one told you (including your coach) how difficult it could be to start a business.

My perspective is that we're spending too much time asking the wrong questions of ourselves and then portraying our coaching services in the wrong way. So much time is spent on the "what" and "how" of coaching. What you provide. What your clients expect. How they'll receive the coaching. How they can use it to change their lives. What you charge. How they can pay you. What your coaching niche will be.

These types of statements don't build a business – they sustain it. You must go to your passion – to your reason for starting a coaching practice in the first place. That place is the "why" question.

This model is succinctly explained in a TED Talk by Simon

Sinek: "How great leaders inspire action." Sinek explains how great leaders and thinkers act, think and speak. I highly recommend you watch this 18-minute TED Talk (go to TED.com and search for 'Sinek').

Sinek explains that it's the 'why' of our work that will make people interested in what we do and how we do it. It's our personal story and our passion for this work that give meaning. Can you explain why you're passionate about coaching? How it's changed your life? The profound effect it's made for you and others?

If you don't know or have lost your way, don't despair. Begin again. And decide: WHY do I want to coach others? Am I passionate enough to overcome the bad days? Can I overcome my issues about money and being paid for what I love to do? Could I walk away from this dream and never regret it? Am I willing to set up the business of coaching? Can I understand that selling is not a necessary evil but just necessary?

If you can answer "yes" to any of these questions, the WHY will answer itself. It's the 'business' of your coaching business that's slowing you down. But it's the passion (or lack thereof) that will affect whether or not you should go forward.

Work with your coach – define your passion – and if it aligns with coaching, begin again.

By Carol Adrienne, PhD

It sounds like you – and your coach – have hit a brick wall; a good place for a reality check. Reading between the lines still leaves me with a lot of questions. I'm captivated by the words, "tried to implement," "struggling," "confused" and "depressed." Life shouldn't be this hard. Brick walls can actually give us valuable information (in the form of questions) if we take them seriously. Here are the questions: What happened two years ago that you decided to start a business? Did you lose a job and decide to go off on your own? Did you have a passion that you felt you were ready to pursue? Are you comfortable with the uncertainty of being an entrepreneur? What is your business? Is it something you think is a good idea, or is it a product or service that fills a compelling need? That is, a compelling need that people are searching for on the web ... now? Is your product or service unique, or one of thousands? Did you have a business plan? Or did you just think, "Hey here is a good idea and I think it could work?" Many of us love something, but find out sooner or later that our passion is not widely shared or not differentiated from many others. Are you a solo operation? (It's often very hard to keep motivated, if you are at home staring at the screen.) You sound as if you have lost motivation and are just kicking the tires at this point.

Good for you that you are taking classes and beating the bushes, trying to harness the viral potential of the

Internet. However, 'exposure strategies' are not the same as finding a need and filling it. People abound on the Internet who are hot to sell you their exposure strategies, but that doesn't mean it's going to work, or work well enough for you. You've been at this for two years. Maybe you are at a turning point, and it's just a matter of time before your business kicks into gear. Or maybe you've lost interest and don't really have the energy to pursue this. What is that little voice in the back of your mind telling you? Not the fear-based one, but the one who knows.

It's one thing to have a brick-and-mortar business where you can see the product go out the door, talk to customers, nurture relationships, meet and greet locally and feel like things are growing, however slowly. It's another thing to be working in a void, comparing yourself to thousands of other websites. Granted, the void (Internet exposure) carries the mystique of viral prosperity, but if you are not feeling it, this may be the time to rethink and regroup.

It may be that you need to reevaluate your passion. If your thinking is dominated by worry and anxiety that time and money are running out, that nothing is working, I'd step back. Either the timing is not right but you are prepared to keep going till something hits, or you don't really want to do this anymore. You've learned a lot, but maybe it's time to let go. Be prepared for an unexpected opportunity once you have released the struggle. ●