

# Group Coaching Success Guide

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by

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## INTRODUCTION

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### *What is Group Coaching and how is it different from one-on-one coaching?*

**G**roup coaching is simply guiding a group of clients through a process that leads to their desired goal while supporting, encouraging, teaching, inspiring, and holding them accountable along the way.

The most traditional form of coaching is the one-on-one model; however, the problem with this model is that it limits the provider's growth prospects. Offering coaching in various group formats brings a lot of leverage, increases a coach's ROI and provides more interaction opportunities to the members of the group.

With one-on-one coaching, although your heart is in the right place and you want to help everyone - one person at a time; but the fact is that this model of coaching actually restricts you from reaching out to all those people who can use your help.

The advantage of the one on-one-module on the other hand is that the interaction stays strictly between you and the client and you can help them sort out their personal issues in a better manner.

However, if you look at the big picture, Group coaching works out to be a better option for you as a provider. After all it allows you to expand your client base, create your own community, you get to grow and flourish with the group and the best part is that the content of your course develops organically through spontaneous discussions and debates.

From the client's perspective group coaching is more affordable and comes with the added benefit of peer interaction. In fact it is because of the second reason that group coaching is considered to be far more effective than individual coaching in many cases. After all when people meet in a group, they can share a wide range of experiences and perspectives, they get the opportunity to observe others as well as themselves and often gain insight on a broader range of issues than they would have in an individual coaching scenario.

I admit that personally I still look at one-on-ones as so precious given the relationship that you can build up with your clients. But, the problem is that over the years I have come to realize that one-on-one sessions are extremely time consuming and not the most economically viable! At the end of the day all of us want to expand our business, group coaching is a feasible way of doing the same.

Through this guide I hope to help you move forward into this community and successfully address the challenges that you face as provider.

### ***BENEFITS: Why is it important to offer group coaching?***

Plain and simple - running groups is the best way to serve more people, leverage your time and maximize your income. Plus, the group dynamics are great as you don't need to do all the work.

In a group learning environment, everybody learns from the experiences of others-whether it's you 'the coach' or your clients-learning for everyone is amplified and you get camaraderie as a bonus. What's more you get to create a community and help more people than you would have if you were holding only one-on-one sessions.

If you look at it from a purely business perspective, the group coaching model offers you the following advantages-

- *It can work as a low cost entry point into your practice, this means that a group coaching session will get you higher financial returns despite investing the same amount of time that you would have in one-on-one sessions.*
- *It can work as a powerful maintenance program for clients after they complete a one-on-one coaching engagement with you.*
- *You can also combine one-on-one coaching with group coaching to bring more value to your clients.*
- *Group Coaching is often the perfect entry into corporate coaching. High-impact and low-cost per person coaching is highly valued by organizations especially as a follow-on to skills training programs.*

From the client's perspective Group coaching is a great idea because:

- *It is VERY affordable for the client. In our current economic climate this benefit does not need any additional explanation!*
- *Each member feels like they are part of a highly connected and supportive team, this builds their individual confidence and team-spirit.*

Essentially what you're doing is connecting the group at another level. It is not just one accountability coach, one person, one resource that a client can go to; the group members together form a cohesive unit, where each member supports the other.



## ***BIG PICTURE: How does group coaching fit into your overall business and your line of products & services?***

Group dynamics are a fertile bed for challenges and avenues for finding and presenting solutions. I feel all industries have certain challenges and if you hit on the right challenge, clients will definitely come with less investment from you on prospecting them.

Group coaching gives a place where people can actually afford to get the benefit of their peers' intellect and ideas through regular brainstorming sessions and discussions.

In your business, you've already tapped into a really nice niche. That really makes it a lot easier for you to build and position yourself in the group format. If you haven't figured out what your niche is, do it now! Before you go any further you need to make up your mind about the niche where you place yourself and the message you want to send across, only then will the roadmap to your target market become clearer.

What's more, groups can really form and expand your products and services, reinforce your methods- even something as simple as knowing how to ask better questions!

We'll go into more detail on this topic, but most coaches create a wealth of products from their group materials, like e-books, study guides, learning manuals, learn from home courses, etc.

Take **Daniel Finley** for example. He is the President of a company called *Advisors' Solutions*, which helps financial advisors build a better business. Dan has had quite a success with doing group coaching and he was a financial advisor previously for 13 years. He got into the coaching business in '93 and noticed that there was a wide need to be filled for financial advisors who lacked a formula and process to find the right direction.

Dan had built up a nice business and started coaching on the side to help other advisors. It was a natural thing for him as he was doing it informally for a period of time. When he

designed and created *Advisor's Solutions*, the business took off and got to the point where he had to make a decision: was he going to walk away from the investors that he had or go work with advisors and keep running with *Advisor's Solutions*?

He felt there was a real niche not being filled, even if there were an advisors with a million dollars in commissions, they still had time management, sales and client servicing issues.

Dan designed a program and wrote 400 pages of material over the course of 11 years. As his business evolved and grew, Dan realized that he needed to have a better system than just one on one coaching. If you're reading this guide, you've likely reached that light bulb moment as well.

Dan's program, *The Advisors' Solutions Group Coaching Program* is a six month program, 24 weeks called the - *Advisor's Business Wheel* - it is a combination of all of the eight different facets of business. So it might be time management, prospecting, sales; and then within those are other facets, sub-facets of the business, for example five forms of prospecting for the financial advisor. Dan typically covers a chapter per week in the group in a coinciding format. They have a structure. They know exactly what the agenda is for each session. They know exactly what the format is. All in all he has a pretty dynamic and powerful structure!



## GROUP DESIGN

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### ***COMPONENTS TO INCLUDE: What's included in a group coaching program?***

**F**irst let me distinguish between two constants, a group coaching program and a coaching group. A Coaching group is more fluid and flexible in its structure; it's essentially an ongoing program where the numbers of the participants keep fluctuating.

A group coaching program on the other hand has a more organized structure with a set curriculum and module. The program focuses on collecting likeminded individuals with similar issues, so that they can all work together and fulfill a specific set of goals, with the help of regular inputs, assistance and guidance from the facilitator/coach.

I would recommend offering a combination of both. For example, you could teach a coaching program, and you can enroll these people into your ongoing coaching group. But the prerequisite must be the fact that they have gone through the program in the first place.

### ***Components to include in Group Coaching Program***

Based on common wisdom collected from several coaches I know and my own experience, I feel it makes sense to include the following components in your group coaching program:

- ❖ A teaching component in the form of lectures, study material, slides or talks, to share your knowledge base, delivered as a weekly or monthly group session over the conference line, or in another format.

- ❖ A small group component in the form of group activities, discussions, debates and brain storming sessions, etc, that allow members to connect with each other and share their experiences and opinions.
- ❖ A working group component, in which individual members receive, personalized group attention to help them bring their businesses to the next level. This can be done by asking the group to suggest solutions for a certain individual's problems. It is important that as coach you should give your input as well, during such discussions.
- ❖ Individually-developed homework assignments to implement action steps for significant gains. These assignments should be such that they encourage the participants to implement what they have learnt.
- ❖ Individual time between sessions with you acting as leader to accelerate change and enhance decision-making.
- ❖ Study Materials in different formats. For example, I deliver information to people as a tangible, physical product. The advantage of doing this is two fold, one it helps people grasp the concepts that you are teaching better and two, it increases the perceived value of the program that you are delivering.
- ❖ A structured support and progress checking system for continued growth between sessions. After all, the key to the effectiveness of a group coaching program lies in regular measurement of activities and results. The following are two of the most commonly used checking systems:
  - **Peer Based System:** You may design your program based on the peer system that includes buddies or partners or small groups so they can convene between the coaching sessions to encourage and support each other in the creation and execution of their action plans.

- **The Results System:** The results system is another popular module. In such programs each participant in the coaching program is required to do weekly evaluations and periodic reviews so that everyone has absolute clarity on performance. *Group Coaching Manager* makes this easy. When you follow the outlined steps, they quickly understand the relationship between what they are doing and what they are getting.

Designing a program is essentially like product development where you are documenting your process. For example, early on in my business I created a six step process. **First step**, find a niche in each market. **Second step**, define your business models. **Third step**, create market visibility. Then I get little bit more detailed. These are the five strategies that you use to build your market visibility. **Fourth step**, create passive and residual revenue. **Fifth step**, build your systems. Create your automatic systems in your business. **Sixth step**, become a leader and a ‘mover and a shaker’ in your niche market through innovation and leadership skills. These six steps are my program. Of course, it evolved and shaped over time, in fact it took me a couple of years to actually develop the program fully. Now that it is in place, I can sell it as a home-study course or as a group coaching program.

Once you have the basic structure outlined, prepare a schedule and list all the activities that you intend to include in your program and figure out the number of hours or minutes it would take to accomplish each one of them.

It is also a good idea to divide your program into manageable weekly chunks, as it will make it easier for you to run the program. Let me explain this with a personal example. When people join my “Passive Income Unleashed” program, they immediately start receiving weekly lessons delivered in three different formats – video, audio, and PDF – for convenience. Each lesson also comes with a Frequently Asked Questions guide. This strategy helps me break the program down into manageable weekly chunks and allows my clients to follow a specific schedule with exact weekly targets.

## ***Tips to make your program more effective***

Based on my personal experience as coach and the tips that I have received from many of my peers I would also recommend the following additional strategies to make your program more effective:

### ***Avoid Information Overload***

I see some people piling up stuff in their programs. They offer so many things - a guest expert to come on one of the sessions, numerous business tools, workbooks, benefits and bonuses, etc! While it is a good thing to offer clients value for money, coaches need to realize when what they are offering becomes ‘too much!’”

The trend these days is to overload clients with information they think they need. Unfortunately, what happens as result is that people tend to get overwhelmed with sheer amount of information they receive and are unable to process it.

As a coach it is important that you don't just give information but also teach people to how to use that information. I therefore recommend an action oriented approach in group coaching programs. Trust me! I can say from personal experience that you will get better results.

### ***Get to know your clients***

Create as many opportunities as you can in your design for human touches for follow up. To create an appropriate design, you as a group leader can get to know your clients better by asking the right questions. The following are a few examples:

- *Tell me about your situation?*
- *What challenges are you going through?*
- *What concerns you most?*

The answers to the questions above can help you choose your design and decide what to include, so that you can set appropriate and reachable goals.

### ***Keep the group small and Manageable***

Keep your groups at a manageable size at least while you're starting out and getting comfortable with the process so that everyone can participate in some way on each call.

### ***Let the program grow organically and remember to retain a fair amount of flexibility.***

If the plan isn't working, change it spontaneously to meet the participants' needs. Keep the pace easy and relaxed so that as the facilitator you can cover all that you intend to. Don't let anyone fall through the cracks and most importantly don't let anyone dominate.

### ***Hold Preliminary sessions or Orientation calls to explain your program structure***

If you give your clients a general overview of what you will be covering in the program and tell them how to use the resources and materials you will be providing, it will put their mind at ease and will help them increase their pace of learning.

For example in my Group Programs I hold two orientation calls. One of them is to make sure that people have chosen a niche market that they want to work in. For your own program, ask yourself, what do they need to know, have, or understand to get off to a great start? Cover that in your orientation call.

The second orientation call covers all the housekeeping components of the program. They are going to learn how to use the online help desk, what types of access they get to the coach, and how to get support throughout the week. I also emphasize that it is important not to miss any calls because that will put them behind in the program and

that they must actively complete the assignments and post their files, their documents, in the student area. These are all housekeeping parts of the orientation. Outline for your own program these types of things with an orientation call before the program kicks off officially.

With the physical product (home-study materials), I give out, I add sheet with specific instructions like- “What to do?” “Step one, listen to this CD. Step two, watch this DVD. Step three, open the workbook to page 11 and complete the exercise...” etc. I also make it clear in the beginning of the program that it is advisable for the participants not to jump ahead and focus on only one step per week. This helps them with the consumption of the program materials and increases the likelihood of implementation. When individuals don't receive information in this manner, they become incredibly overwhelmed. You need to make it easy for them in order to ensure that you get results.

Finally, make sure that while designing the program you keep your focus on what your clients require. Do they need help in identifying their challenges? What are the most common professional and personal issues that people who come to you need help with? What kind of approach will work best for your client base? The answers to these questions will help you design an effective group coaching program.

Always remember, it's not about you, it's about your clients and their concerns. If you can understand where your clients are coming from and design your program accordingly, you will find easy to create the right group dynamic.

### ***Decide on the GROUP FORMAT: In-person groups vs. virtual groups?***

If groups are to be truly cost-effective, it may not be possible to fit in regular in-person meetings for the entire structure, but that doesn't mean that they can't be a critical feature within the tenure of the group.



Something that I learned early in my coaching business is that anytime you create a high-ticket program, make sure there is an in person component. Whether it is a three-day *Annual Retreat* with all of your members of the group or three *Mastermind* meetings a year; choose whatever suits you the best.

Forums where you connect with people in person can create a stronger bond within the group. It may surprise you but the fact is that even though you might cover the same material via phone, online or in writing, people do need and want to get more of a connection with the rest of the group members.

I am not trying to negate the value of meeting online, phone, via video conferencing and presentations. The fact is that no one has the time, energy or budget to travel hundreds of miles a week, hire dozens staff, book conference suites, put up with no shows and stay far too many nights away from family and home. Telephone and online meeting are therefore necessities.

So, the vital question now is how do you devise the perfect format? Based on my personal experience I would recommend the following strategies-

### ***Keep your clients' convenience and expectations in mind***

Whatever the formula, in-person, virtual or a mix of both, participants will expect:

- *Regular engaging conversations*
- *A mix of individual and group exercises*
- *An accountability structure for their goals*
- *Assignments between sessions to help deepen the learning process.*

So, it is important that you fulfill these expectations with the format you decide on.

## ***Create the right balance between spontaneity and your planned curriculum***

It can be easy to base a group format on existing curriculum tools or documents and products you've developed. However, you must also remember to be flexible and spontaneous enough to adapt your training plan and content to your clients' customized needs.

Groups are always interactive, and spontaneous, but the finish should always be standardized with an action plan. So my suggestion to you is that you should draw upon your existing experience to carefully design a format outline. Think about the things that are important to you and model attentive listening and positive, constructive feedback in your sessions.

In order to achieve a balance between spontaneity and my planned curriculum I often take time to talk to each prospective group member personally before the start of group as well as at the end.

### ***Form an action plan***

I tailor group programs each time by what has emerged in previous sessions. Think about your format as encompassing four parts:

- *What has happened?*
- *Progress since the last meeting.*
- *What is needed to move forward?*
- *Sharing tips and experiences with each other.*

These steps help in forming an action plan – a workable format. I also count on these steps to allow trust to build up, thus giving participants an opportunity to 'coach' each other.

## ***Get Feedback***

I personally find Group Coaching Manager an excellent tool for collecting feedback. It has the capacity to download the entire matrix of questions from participants and that literally gives you first-hand research data at your fingertips.

The research data in fact can also provide you with excellent material to develop new products. Group Coaching Manager allows you to view all questions and answers in a single spreadsheet; this makes it easier to choose what product to create next, based on the frequency of certain questions that kept repeating over and over.

## ***FREQUENCY: How often do you meet?***

Several factors may impact the length of your group coaching engagements including the kinds of goals you establish, the way you like to work, your financial considerations as well as those of your clients.

How often you choose to meet is entirely up to you, but it's also important not to leave long gaps between sessions as that can easily lead to loss of enthusiasm in your group. Coaching sessions on average are typically held 1-2 hours a month for 3-6 months. Some do year-long programs or create group levels for continuity. Some even schedule only on an as needed basis. You should choose whatever works best for you.

## ***SESSION FORMAT: How do you create agenda for each session? What's the format for group sessions?***

Groups can encompass a wide range of modalities; some people use a free form approach, while others create a minute by minute detailed script of their calls. As with so many other areas of your business, you have to think about what format is going to

work for you. Personally, I feel the following general strategies will help you decide on the best format for each of your group sessions:

### ***Design the session format around your niche's core questions or issues***

You will certainly know a lot up front as you construct a group based on who they are. Find out what your clients really want. Allowing your clients to set the agenda creates a powerful group dynamic. Some group leaders find that giving a free introductory call is invaluable in creating an agenda.

### ***Create Goal Markers for what you want to accomplish on the way***

Laying down goal markers will give your clients the confidence that you have been there and done that and therefore know what you are talking about. So share your experience as suggestions as to what has worked for you without telling them what to do. The best part is that by following this strategy you will be able to encourage the participants to take a large part in defining the niches they want you to fill.

### ***Do your homework***

Also, do your homework upfront. Once you have an interested group of participants, assessment tests or evaluations can provide a lot of great commentary and information about how you should proceed during the course of the group. Be sure to assign a sense of urgency or deadline to complete these types of assignments in advance, so that you have adequate time to prepare.

The upside of all this preparation is huge. For example, I have done case studies in groups as a companion to the course material as we go along. This exercise can form a complete workbook and that in all honesty becomes almost another group coaching program.

## ***Create Material Products as you go Along***

Creating material products as you go along also creates great dialogue, and all the while, everyone learns. I would write a case study a week before and I'd post it on *Group Coaching Manager*, so that we could refer to the chapter to understand some of the solutions.

## ***Prepare Ice Breaker Activities***

As you start out it is important to make group coaching (just like individual coaching) all about the clients. It is a good idea to prepare ice breaker activities (even if they know one another). The two most important activities that a majority of life coaches recommend are:

- 1) **Relationship activity** – This activity has been invaluable for setting up expectations, communication channels and guidelines. You need to ask the clients, what three things do they want from others in a professional relationship and what three things are they willing to do or give to others in a professional relationship? I like to post these 'Expectations of Relationships' to all group members for their reference throughout the group term.
- 2) **Goals of group activity** – Participants list three goals they want to address, work on, or solve during the course of the groups term. I compile them, look for common themes, and get group consensus on the order of the items to be addressed in the group. This exercise can be invaluable in getting buy-in especially if some attendees are not sure of their goals. The end result is the direction of the group is determined by the clients rather than me.

## ***Get a co-host if you are just starting out***

If it's your first group coaching activity and you aren't feeling too confident about your oratory and leadership skills, getting a co-host may help you get over your first time jitters and gain confidence. The bungee jump of silence when you ask a question and

the group is quiet in thinking is hard for many new group leaders to cope with, so having a companion can give you a lifeline and someone to talk to while your group catches up and gets braver in responses.

### ***Choose the talking style that you are most comfortable with***

Some coaches have fruitful programs with flexibility, they follow a fluid structure in which conversation flows easily and the entire session is like a discussion, where subjects are chosen on the spot. While others prefer a more scripted and planned approach. Then again there are coaches who like to take the middle path. Every coach has a different style, what will work best for you will depend on your own comfort level and the demands as well as expectations of your clients.

I actually find in my own group coaching sessions that when a person asks a question or poses a challenge, I tend to answer it first, and sometimes I even forget to throw it back to the group just because I am a teacher by nature. What I try to remember and focus on is that it is very important to throw it back to the group. Asking each other how we can relate to what's been said always provides great focus and can get you back on course immediately. I believe that it is also important not to be afraid to have fun and inject humor into your time.

### ***Keep a tab on your group's progress***

I personally find Group Coaching Manager an excellent tool for keeping track of the progress of the group I am coaching. The accountability sections in Group Coaching Manager have been critical keys for me in my formats, specifically: Accountability Session and Accountability Single Takeaways. These features allow the ability to:

- *Reinforce session tasks.*
- *Constantly give positive reinforcement to each other.*
- *Increase the group dynamics and session follow up.*

- *Foster camaraderie and player learning.*

I have heard from other coaches that have found the document download area extremely useful as well.

Attachment features when you want to do a group email with attachments. For me, every week is generally associated with a particular document. So if you want people to have access to a worksheet, workbook, PDF, zip file or a Word file, you can upload it right into that week schedule and just allow people to download it beforehand as prep work or set some other system for its use. So it becomes your library – a place for all of your stuff – organized in one place. Some coaches make that mandatory in their program – a place where you have to go to read materials beforehand because they know it will be a topic for questions and discussions.

These features help your group members get to know each other and establish clear channels of communication.

There is no magic bullet for format, you have to design what works for you and the participants. Some opt to set a six month length, a year or even just a month or even no determined time length at all, but most do set scheduled and determined times to meet so participants and you can plan accordingly. Too long in-between sessions as well as too frequent meetings can be cumbersome and ultimately nonproductive, so you must think carefully about what will work for everyone.

***CONTENT: What's the perfect amount of teaching content, coaching, and masterminding in group coaching?***

***What to include in the content?***

The temptation to include all that you know in your program is hard to resist. But that fact is that if you overwhelm your clients with information, the plan is likely to backfire

on you. Ideally keeping the following points in mind while structuring your content, will help you arrive at the perfect balance-

- *Anchor audience in what they know based on their own experience on the topic.*
- *Add new information continuously.*
- *Set tasks that appeal to your audience*
- *Ask your clients to apply what they know to the new information.*
- *At the end of session, ask your clients for their take-aways of the day.*

Another vital concern of most life coaches is about managing the group content while you're running the conversations with people. I am sure this brings up a lot of other questions as far as content balance goes, such as-

- *How do you prepare for each group session?*
- *How do you keep it all straight?*

I strongly recommend sending e-mails to your clients with the teaching content before every session so that everyone can thoughtfully prepare and come up with their questions in advance. I do it through Group Coaching Manger that offers me this extremely convenient feature of inserting teaching content in template mails at the click of a mouse.

## ***Masterminding in Coaching***



I feel that striking the balance in your group is all about adding Mastermind principals to the process, i.e. bringing together a group of likeminded individuals to brainstorm over their concerns and issues. The advantage of applying mastermind principles is that they allow members to fully relate to one another on several different levels and connect with each other both within and outside the group setting.

I know coaches who spend two calls of their program coaching their clients on the power of Masterminds, sharing the structure, and setting the tone. They then organize their larger groups into smaller Mastermind groups who meet weekly, in addition to the regular class calls each week. More personal support is gained, as well as given, this way.

Over the years I have discovered that the best and the most effective mastermind groups have an element where they meet in person a few times per year. People will not mind attending the group or meeting in person when they know that they are going to be surrounded by like-minded, success-oriented people whom they can interact with and learn from. They know most of the time these strategies are transferable from one industry to another.

In addition, you can conduct monthly or bi-weekly calls with the group in between meetings to keep the group moving forward. I strongly recommend at least one personal meeting in a year. Most mastermind groups get together about three times per year.

This personal example will perhaps help you understand the importance of in-person meetings in 'mastermind groups' better- I was invited by my mentor last year to attend a three-day retreat/mastermind/coaching group where people designed their business plans for the year. When we came back, we already knew each other. We already understood each other's challenges and businesses, when the coach followed up with us, by holding four group calls, it was like, *"Oh, hi, Karen."* *"Oh, hi Judy! How are the kids?"* Or *"How's your business plan being put into action? How are you doing?"* So we were already connected on a personal level.

Furthermore, this is one of the most lucrative streams of coaching income. After all most of the people who join the mastermind group are likely to be those who have participated in one of your programs, this means not only do they already trust you but are also extremely serious about implementing what they have learnt through your program. It is not uncommon for such people to invest \$15,000 to \$20,000 a year to be participants in a mastermind group!

## ***ACCOUNTABILITY: How do you create accountability in your group?***

In group coaching it makes sense to have accountability checks at every level, i.e. not only is it important for you as a coach to hold your clients accountable, the structure of your program should be such that your clients can also have accountability checks on you as well as each other.

### ***Holding the clients Accountable***

I have found Group Coaching Manager extremely useful for solidifying the accountability forum for my clients as it allows them to post their weekly challenges, answer questions posed by the coach and post their own questions, queries as well as comments.

From the coach's perspective this feature helps in understanding the concerns and issues of each member of the group. The two questions I usually ask my clients through Group Coaching Manager are:

- *What's your mood?*
- *What was your biggest accomplishment?*

Their answers help me monitor their individual progress and understand the issues they need help with.

Another effective way of holding your clients accountable is by following the matrix method. Dan Finley uses it regularly in his programs. He goes to each person in his group with a matrix of names and questions and asks them, “tell us about your week, your wins, and your challenges?” This method is a little more time consuming but helps the coach connect better with each participant.

You may also encourage your clients to mail you a "Weekly Evaluation of Activities and Results" so that both you and the client have absolute clarity on their performance. The report will also help them understand the relationship between what they are doing and what they are getting.

### ***Making Group Members accountable to each other***

When members pair up, they can be accountable for each other. To create some kind of structure to their conversation, I put together partner questions such as:

- *What was your win this week?*
- *Did you do the action steps from last week?*
- *Why or Why not?*

Your role is to get the conversation going and ensure that every member of your group is taking away something from the program. Creating micro groups within the group and posing questions through which they can hold each other accountable, can help you achieve this objective.

### ***Allowing Members to hold you accountable***

It's important as well to always have formalized action steps like giving assignments or 'homework. Such a structure creates a level of expectation that makes it increasingly likely that everyone will take the actions they commit to do. In my experience it also allows the members to hold you accountable, for instance, if you forget to give out an assignment at the end of a call or session, the participants will in all likelihood remind you, because getting an assignment is something that they will start expecting from you.

From a facilitator's point of view, building multiple levels of accountability works really well, after all it means less effort and better results!

I have discovered that Group Coaching Manager offers wonderful tools to help you build accountability at each of the three levels. Through Group Coaching Manager, you as well as the group members can share their insights, services, objective perspectives, shared experiences, recommended books, etc, with each other, thus creating a far more powerful group experience where everyone has investment and buy-in.

### ***INDIVIDUAL COACHING: One-on-one guidance to group members? Call-in days for laser coaching? Email support?***

It is good to periodically mix up individual coaching with your group coaching program as members often need individual time from the coach, in order to process and deal with some of their personal challenges.

To combine one-on-one coaching with individual coaching I offer my clients the facility to log into their Group Coaching Manager accounts and schedule /or request a one-on-one session.

Sometimes I get participants who use it regularly and that indicates to me that they're going to wind up being one-on-one clients. After all, when they're doing repeated check-ins over a group course, it is obvious that they really need a little bit more one-on-one help as well.

You can also schedule call in days, so that people can show-up if they need help without setting up prior appointments. Again, you need to determine what works best for the group dynamics and your available time. You can look at these tools on an as-needed basis or make them part of the regular schedule.

With my one-on-ones, one of the things that I do is require an 'Accountability Email'. Clients can decide what they want to write, whether it's a small paragraph or a detailed report, as long as they let me know what they feel they have accomplished. This helps me provide them the support they need from me.

I personally prefer an open door policy, i.e. anyone can email me anytime and I'm clear on responses and timing. Of course this policy doesn't mean that all the responses need to be handled personally, I know coaches who use assistants to go through the emails and if anybody needs a detailed response, then the assistant as appropriate would forward those emails directly to the coach. That way the accountability is still there and you are not required to micro-manage the process.

### ***PROGRAM LENGTH: Time-defined vs. ongoing?***

More than the length of the program it is important to develop a powerful, time-released cost-effective method which provides long term benefits.

Some people use a free form approach, some set a definitive length for groups, while others have ongoing formats until it's clear that the clients have accomplished their goals and it's time to move on, some folks even run multiple groups - it's mind boggling!

The drawback to putting all the eggs in one basket (e.g. very short group tenures) is that people reach a saturation point quickly and that shorter groups may dissipate over time if there is no mechanism in place to foster using and practicing new skills.

So, a key question here is-What is the end game?

When people learn new methods and techniques, there is often a missing link – the support system to reinforce and help them assimilate the information when the group is finished, practice new behavior and bring into action the crucial learning that affects change.

### ***MULTIPLE GROUPS: How do you handle multiple coaching groups?***

A coaching group helps you achieve your objectives faster by delivering the richness of multiple perspectives and the efficiency of resource sharing, so if you have a successful program in place, why not duplicate or triplicate it? Or better still, grow to multiple groups?

In your one-on-one business, there is a limit to the number of people that you can coach because there is a limit to the number of hours in a day that you can see clients. As long as you are trading time for money you are limiting the amount you can earn. When you add multiple income streams with group coaching as one tactic, you increase your earning potential exponentially. You can continue to increase your income by adding revenue through multiple group coaching.

### ***So, how do you keep it all straight?***

I would suggest that you should do what you can handle. Sometimes multiple groups really are a sort of arc continuum- each can focus on a specific piece of a larger puzzle in your product arsenal or you may run the same content concurrently. If your goal is to get to the heart of a particular issue, these kinds of scenarios may appeal to you.

If you feel like you are in the right place at the right time and have more participants than you'd like in one group, make two, or three!

## ***CONFIDENTIALITY: How do you handle confidentiality issues and what measures you put in place?***

Focus first on creating safety and a spirit of generosity in your coaching group that enables clients to take risks, trust each other and allow themselves to be vulnerable. In any peer based group, there are confidentiality issues and comfort levels that need to be addressed upfront.

A successful coaching process that bridges any issues in confidentiality involves intuitive listening, constructive feedback, thought-provoking questions, coachable moments, identifying solutions and options, creating successful action plans, identifying obstacles that might limit the individual's success and above all successful implementation of your plan.

So, in order to get your group to the point of feeling really open during your sessions, it is important to look for common ground – areas where they all speak the same language. Give them something to relate to.

To ensure confidentiality, spell out the rules in the beginning, after all you need to strike a balance between freedom of speech and group decorum, in order to hold successful and effective group discussions. You may want a formal agreement or you may trust people at their word, either way you should be clear on the consequences.

## ***RECORDING CALLS: Do you record calls for later listening or repurposing?***

I am sure some of you are concerned about devaluing your work product and your immediate reaction to this idea is to not open up sessions to recording. But if you think

beyond your initial trepidations and you will realize that your calls can prove to be extremely valuable study guides that group members can listen to again when needed.

These recordings in fact can even be the basis for new products and services for you or a way to provide samples to prospective clients who could not attend but really wanted to listen in. On the flip side you need to ensure that your recordings are not misused or plagiarized.

I use Group Coaching Manager to record my calls as it offers me the advantage of limiting their use and access and creating expiration dates.

One thing I would recommend is that you should avoid using last names. This will make your clients more comfortable and help you keep the format generalized in terms of the attendees' personal information. You may also want to set ground rules within your group about the confidentiality of recordings.

### ***PRICING: How do you determine the pricing?***

Pricing largely depends on the market, the topic, the demand and what type of support you provide. It also depends on the basic market dynamics of supply and demand for YOU and YOUR companies programs and services. So I would suggest you take the following points into account before deciding on your price-

### ***What kind of services are you going to offer?***

I think there are two types of coaches in the world. The first are coaches who are active in their area of expertise, or niche, and are very successful in that area. Their time is limited because they are successful doing something else, they are coaching others in doing whatever it is that they are successful at. I call these coaches mentors. These are coaches who provide the big picture, the strategy, they create programs and processes.



They are creators and entrepreneurs. They do very well in something and they just turn around and pass their knowledge to their clients.

Then there is another type of coach. That is a coach who is more focused on implementation and accountability. Depending on the type of coaching you do and how well you provide your services, your prices will vary. I will not pay more than \$500 a month for accountability and implementation support because I am a pretty self-disciplined person. So if I have to pay more than that, I just won't.

On the other hand, I will invest much more for exposure to big picture strategic thinking with defined processes, systems and strategies. You must think about what kind of service you are providing and what kind of expertise you are sharing with people. Are you somebody who helps people make their decisions, brainstorm, strategize? Do you share your expertise and your contacts with people, your resources, your million dollar rolodex?

Having said all of that, I generally have seen group coaching programs start anywhere between \$250.00 a month to as much as \$1,000 a month based on the market and the amount of time and commitment that people are giving you. I have also seen people charge a lot more when they offer a combination of coaching, mastermind groups, and consulting, mentoring and retreats in one big program.

### ***What is your current price?***

I would suggest that you look at your one-on-one coaching costs and go from there. Remember this should be an easier cost to bear (more affordable). However it is also important to build in security for yourself with your price points. Your pricing should be such that you clients would need to financially commit to the whole group tenure.

Payment plans and credit card/PayPal charges on a schedule are nice too if available for you to accept.

You could offer discounts on in-depth one-on-one sessions while in group or use formulas, for example some coaches I know charge 50% of the cost of one-one-one sessions for a group coaching program.

You must also have a provision for people who need to back out of a commitment and must clarify your return procedures right in the beginning. For example you could have a 50% refund policy or offer to adjust the amount in the next group program the client enrolls for, do whatever works best for you.

### ***Your current Market position***

If you have achieved a certain level of success and you are recognized in your market as a mover and shaker, then people would want to hang out with you just because they want exposure to you and to your mentality. Your pricing power would obviously be much greater in this scenario. If you are not as well known and you are offering certain expertise but you have not positioned (or not YET positioned) yourself as the star of the industry then your pricing power will be lower. So part of your pricing potential has much to do with the level of recognition in your market that you have been able to achieve.

For instance, look at what Mark Hanson does, he has got a very comprehensive program that includes his inner circle. Inner circles tend to be priced much higher. The reason for that is because an inner circle is revolving around a star, whether it is a star in that industry and/or a celebrity in that particular market.

To quote another example, the world famous author Michael Gerber, the E-Myth guy charges \$3,000 for a two-day event, just to be in the hot seat in his program. I guarantee you that the hot seat will probably be less than an hour; two at the most. But just to be in the room with Michael and being able to talk to him and get his feedback people happily pay \$3,000.

Think about how much would you be willing to pay to spend time with Dan Kennedy? Dan does NOT spend a lot of time with people in a one-on-one or group environment for

that matter. But when he does it is worth a lot of money to most people. He has waiting lists for his mastermind groups at prices we would all dream about!

What I am essentially trying to say is that if you're starting from scratch, careful questioning and testing out fee structures can be helpful in determining a standard for you. While it's essential not to keep the price too high, it is also equally important not to undercharge for your products and services. I would also recommend Group Coaching Manager to integrate Sign Up and Payment Fulfillment.

### Chapter 3

## MANAGING A GROUP

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### ***CREATING TRUST: How to get the group comfortable, creating an environment of confidentiality and trust?***

**Y**ou have to have chemistry with your coaching clients in order to build a relationship based on mutual trust. I am sure in your business you are already practiced in appreciative inquiry and teamwork/team building ideas. Bring them into your group setting at the start. Trust building exercises, energizers and ice breakers all help to build motivational and inspirational trust, helping you to unleash passionate, positive & engaged people.

Beyond that, I have one word for you in group facilitation: WAIT. When you ask a question, learn to count to five and wait. Give your participants the time they need to process your question. It is in the silence that they will be encouraged to think further and respond better.

Waiting is important because facilitation is really about the learner. Another mistake can be letting a group member pick their own accountability partner. You as facilitator

are much better suited to make those kinds of decisions based on more information and what their specific needs are. I pair people off based on what I hear on the first few calls. So, let's look at some key qualities a manager must possess in order develop trust.

- *Effective Communication*
- *Mutual trust*
- *Honesty In Everything*
- *Strong Group Guidelines and Ethics*
- *Credibility*
- *Consistency*
- *Accessibility (on your end)*
- *The ability to maintain Confidences*
- *Simple language that is impressive, understandable and free of unnecessary jargon*
- *Flexibility*

Here are some things that are best avoided:

- *Not discussing expectations at the start of a program - yours and the clients.*
- *Assuming that one size fits all within your group.*

- *Marketing only one date at a time for your upcoming programs.*
- *Not managing Group Dynamics and Process.*
- *Trying to cover too much.*

### ***DOMINANT MEMBERS: How do you avoid a member dominating the conversation?***

You also need to know when to get down in the weeds or out of them. This means that if a member is taking too much time, as the facilitator you need to flip it to the group and ask something like, “Can anybody relate to what’s been said?”

It can also be as simple as setting forth the ground rules up front - that everyone gets a chance to speak in order to avoid one member dominating the conversation. Think of it as the conversational equivalent of common courtesy. It may take a bit of time for folks to get the hang of it; most people talk nervously in groups and it is an art to distill your comments down to what's most relevant and appropriate. Unfortunately, those repeat offenders who love to dominate the conversation often seem the least likely to engage in critical self inquiry, so you may have to work on your diplomatic and persuasive skills in order to move conversations forward tactfully.

You absolutely need to fit into the roles of a leader, a facilitator as well as someone that can almost orchestrate the whole symphony of the session. If you leave it to organize itself, you will find yourself in a situation where some people talk too much and others hardly manage to get a word in. In such a scenario, those who feel left out will eventually fade away from or the group or quit the program.

Of course there may be days when ‘chatters’ will prove to be great resources, especially when people are in a funk and are not interacting as much as they normally do. In such scenarios a person who keeps chiming in can keep the momentum going. On days when

the group interaction is normal, you can subtly avoid the talkative members by not directing specific questions to them.

### ***RULES & EXPECTATIONS: Are there rules & expectations you share with them?***

It is critical to establish the ground rules and group rules. You need to be absolutely clear about how you plan to talk and facilitate inter-group communication during your sessions. Everyone needs to be on the same page right from the start. The following is a set of basic rules and guidelines that I would suggest:

- *Respect confidentiality.*
- *Do no harm in any way.*
- *Respect each other.*

You can develop more as you go along based on the group dynamic.

Some coaches I know also include the following provisions as part of my setting the ground rules in audio welcoming messages with Group Coaching Manager when working with a group:

***"There may be occasions that I have to cut you short when answering a question or I may have to give you a very brief answer to your question."***

This little opening statement can ensure that people stay with the topic for the week so that you can achieve exactly what you need for the success of your program. It is also a good idea to let participants know that you would be more than happy to go into more detail either at the end of the session or at a more convenient time for both of you. In fact you may find Group Coaching Manager extremely helpful in dealing with post call/session questions and queries. I for one, encourage my group members to post questions and queries by logging into their accounts, so that I can address them at a convenient time.

### ***ACCEPTING NEW MEMBERS: A group gels - what about accepting new members into it?***

You should consider natural attrition and evolution. Some people never accept new members – some leave an open door. Consider these questions as you figure out what's right for you:

- *Does everybody in the group start at the same time and then stick together for the entire duration of the program?*
- *What if you meet somebody who just wants to join a group but has already missed a start point, what do you do?*
- *What if the group members feel that they are really not at the level where they can help another person?*

Remember, the best discussions take place among group members with the greatest variety of experience and skill levels and to get there you may have to accept transitions.

However, before you accept new members you must examine how well your partner and buddy systems are constructed and whether new members would cause disruption or add depth to the group.

If you decide to induct new members remember to pay great attention to their introduction. After all, introductions if done well can help in assimilating new members so everybody gets connected. Ideally by the time you are done with your introduction speech, the group members should be saying, "Well, glad to have you!" to the new addition.

### ***COLLABORATIVE CONTRIBUTIONS: How do you make sure members create value for each other?***

Creating value is as much about the attitude of your group as anything else and it helps if they are a group of like-minded individuals in at least some major areas of intersection.

One initial challenge in any collaboration is time management – how to train a group not to go off on a tangent? This is definitely an art not a science, and your job is to guide the conversation, whether it's by injecting a comment that indicates closure of an argument/discussion or by asking a concluding question in order to move on.

This means that when you coach a Group you essentially have to wear a lot of hats- leader, facilitator mastermind. You have to be quick in your responses and discard one hat to wear the other as and when the situation demands.

It is also important to make sure that everyone is getting a fair amount of talk time, so that no one feels left out of the group.

Here are some broad items where group member's priorities should intersect and bring benefit to each other:



- *Increasing sense of value.*
- *Building relationships.*
- *Increasing motivation, productivity, and personal commitment.*
- *Empowering and creating greater personal accountability and responsibility.*
- *Learning action-oriented processes for growth.*
- *Creating opportunities to collaborate with peers across functional lines.*

### ***GROUP DYNAMICS: What are some of the tips for creating great group dynamics?***

Group dynamics begin with you - be totally present - take notes about the people on the call or record to help you in structuring the next session and determining group needs. Also, you need to be attentive and Group Coaching Manager can help you in this regard.

One of the features helpful here is that anytime anybody posts their answers, you get a message alert when there are new posts. Quick response on your part helps set a great tone. The time you spend on the message board or in the progress area can really help in forming the dynamics of the group and keep you prepared from check-in to close of session.

I admit that I used to feel a bit of anxiety before each of my calls too, because I wasn't sure of how they would go. The two questions that I thought about the most were:

- *What are we going to talk about?*

- *How can I bring value today?*

Group Coaching Manager's features completely eliminated it for me, because I could not only read participant's questions that they posted since the prior week but also the comments that other members of the group made. This helped me in planning my call/session content.

### ***Managing Group Coaching Programs: Engaging Participants***

In order to successfully manage a group you need to make each member feel that he/she is heard and noticed, without compromising on group interactions and discussions. The best way to do the same is by asking members to share their challenges and then turn to the group and allow them to brainstorm over the following questions-

- *Can anybody relate to what is being said right now?*
- *How can you relate?*
- *Are you having the same challenges?*
- *Has anybody implemented a solution that they'd like to talk about?*

This process becomes very dynamic as the conversation is still centered on that specific topic until the person that asked the question comes to the realization that there are really good solutions available.

Once the concerns of a particular member have been addressed to his/her satisfaction and he/she feels that they have the information that they require in order to take action and get through their challenge you can move on to the next person. You may not get to

every member every single time, but usually other members of the group can relate to the challenges discussed even if they don't get to pose their own.

The final thing is a Single Take Away, where you can ask each member of the group to share one idea they are taking from the call. This can be invaluable in wrap up and getting members to articulate what's been important for them in session.

### ***LETTING GO: Do you ever ask a member to leave? When and how?***

With so many different individuals in a group it is possible that you may come across participants who are either so disruptive that having them in the group becomes a liability or are so slow or busy that they are unable to cope up with the pace that you have set. The perplexing question is what should you do in such situations?

I tell people, even when group starts, "one thing that I will not coach on or I don't feel that I can coach on is desire. If you don't want to show up, if you don't want to apply any of the stuff, you'll probably have the exact same results you currently are. But if you do want to apply it, I know that it can be helpful for you, I hope you stay with us."

In order to deal with extremely disruptive members I would suggest that you try and counsel them or ask them to enroll for additional one-on-one sessions, so that you can address their issues at length.

If you've chosen your group members well, got their buy in up front – this should be an extremely isolated management issue. People will drop off every once in a while and if they leave by their choice – it's their choice.

## ***TOOLS: How do you use Group Coaching Manager to manage and enhance your groups?***

As you will have realized, running a group coaching program takes a lot of administration. Group Coaching Manager was designed to help me in all facets of group coaching – everything from keeping in touch with my multiple groups, sending specific information and managing details of sessions and appointment schedules with ease.

I wanted a design through which I could easily upload and even develop presentations, give my participants the ability to post on various forums, discussion groups as well as access to a wide array of helpful resources that my clients could choose from based on their interest, thus providing me with all the time and ability to manage and monitor information and encourage my clients to move forward.

The software fulfills all my needs and what's more, even helps me keep the cost of my programs attractive without compromising on the amount attention given to each client.

Perhaps this little example will make my point clearer. By using Group Coaching Manager you can deliver a one hour group session to participants at a cost that provides them with a substantial saving in time, money and effort and keep more of your profits. Everyone can be spread across the country or globe. You can use Group Coaching Manager to enroll, send out their course notes using the Coaches Console. They can complete their Goals and Evaluation sheets and much more through the tools made available to them through this software.

I may not be objective but I think it's an incredible tool that the industry really needed. There are so many different aspects that Group Coaching Manager could apply to in our businesses. I have heard from numerous users that they have found the tool extremely useful for organizational and administrative purposes.

On the personal front *Group Coaching Manager* has helped me in several significant ways:

- *I am able to connect better with my clients*
- *It has helped me improve inter-group interaction as the members of my group can read what their peers and posting and can interact with them as per their convenience.*
- *The self-sufficiency of some of these key factors has helped me manage my groups more efficiently.*

Let me explain some of the features with examples. The home page serves as a Welcome where you can write your message and revise as needed. You can choose the look and brand it with your logo – whatever you want to do – you have the capacity to customize it to the way that you would like.

On the Welcome page you can actually place an audio message welcoming new members or broadcast a message to participants in between sessions.

A central feature that I use on a consistent basis is the ‘All Users Progress Step’. This provides me with a matrix that coordinates all the participants and their data for the length of the group commitment. This is important to me because when getting ready for Group, all I need to is to click on the names of people who have posted and the software lets me know what posts are still unread. So, the tool essentially helps me structure the entire group right off the bat.

As for other common features I use frequently, I find the Bio section very informative so everyone can get to know one another - with pictures and text stories that help avoid the disconnect of a phone or online group. It can connect people and members of the group on a different level and give you the ability to learn things you didn't know about this person. Message boards are also solution driven to accumulate a wealth of knowledge, with the capacity to organize common questions, themes and topics.

## ***How To Adapt The Group Coaching Program according to your needs***

The best part about the Group Coaching Program is that it is so versatile that you can adapt to suit your needs. Not every coach operates in the same manner and the software allows enough room for different styles of working. For instance, Dan Finley (Financial Advisors Coach, AdvisorSolutionsInc.com) uses Group Coaching Manager in a manner quite different from mine and yet it works perfectly for him.

Let me explain this with an example. Dan uses the software to seek feedback from his clients at the start of the session. He also encourages his participants to download entire chapters at the click of a mouse, through Group Coaching Manager, thus making it easier for them access the resource materials as per their convenience.

Like me Dan also uses the software to provide one-on-one guidance to his participants and schedule in person sessions if they so require.

We'll reference other features throughout this manual in various sections. Overall, with Group Coaching Manager I've done the heavy lifting so you don't have to. I've also been able to price it affordably, so that everyone can fit it into their budget if they want to, especially if you factor the cost alongside the amount of revenue you generate running your group coaching programs. It's a drop in the ocean in terms of pricing.

### ***QUESTIONS FOR ENGAGEMENT: Good questions to ask to engage the whole group***

This list could be 30 pages in and of itself but here are some highlights that will hopefully help you come up with more questions customized for your group:

- *Hey, what do you really want to improve in your business?*

- *What do you think is going to happen if you spend 24 weeks going through Group?*
- *Do you think you'll get less of the benefits or more?*
- *What's holding you back?*
- *How am I really doing with my goals?*
- *How do you define your goals?*
- *What are your greatest tools?*
- *What questions are unanswered for you?*
- *How are you going to test yourself today*

The answers to these questions can help you understand the group you are coaching better and mould your teaching plans accordingly.



## FILLING A GROUP

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### ***POSITIONING: How do you position yourself to fill your groups easily? (Create your own fame)***

**L**et's talk about how you actually get people in the group. If you read what people are saying today online, in terms of marketing and getting coaching clients, you'll hear a lot of things like, "Well you need to do social media and Twitter and Facebook" or "online marketing is the future", etc.

Though I agree with the importance of social media marketing, I do believe that there are several other effective ways to market and sell your programs.

Some coaches I know have found that approaching already formed local groups is a great way to market their group coaching: book clubs, local activity and social groups, alumni clubs - venues you would not ordinarily think of. Group coaching provides them a way to deepen their bond while taking steps toward their own goals.

So, the question is, how do you decide on the best marketing and positioning methods for your business? I would recommend the following time honored strategies-

### ***Promote, promote, promote. Create your own fame.***

Use all the venues you are accustomed to for your business - online via your website, newsletter, articles, blogs, social networking; offline at all events and make sure you recommend your group coaching as a follow up to inquiries. If you are already doing some kind of formal advertising, remember to include your group activities as well.



### ***Hold low-cost intro programs***

I know of a lot of coaches offer a free or low-cost intro evening that has some real content and experience value, not just a big ad for their program and then follow it up with a one-day intensive training. From these two types of events, you can determine the serious prospects that will be willing to commit to the full program. You may view these sample group coaching sessions in a very similar ways in which you already use tele-seminars, like preview calls. The difference being you actually coach people and demonstrate to a tempting degree as to what a group coaching experience is going to be like if they join one of your groups.

### ***Participate in speaking events***

A lot of coaches I know use speaking engagements as a way to attract clients. All speaking events may not pay that well but they serve as excellent marketing opportunities. If you make an impressive presentation people get an idea of what you have to offer and it is a well known fact that when you give people a sample or taste of something worth their while, there are better chances of them buying the whole product.

### ***Look for Useful Partners and Affiliates***

Partner with existing organizations and associations who have built-in constituencies of the markets you wish to reach. This reduces and sometimes eliminates the need for being a marketing guru (especially if you're not) so you can focus strictly on providing your coaching services. There is always an avenue to get out to your target market through affiliate groups.

### ***If you don't have your own mailing list tap into someone else's***

Group coaching can also be a numbers game. If you don't have a big enough mailing list or database, it's not impossible – there are certainly strategies to share and tap into someone else's list. Let's say if I wanted to fill a group of 10, I would hope to have a list (or be able to tap into someone else's list) of at least 1000 subscribers.

## ***Get Noticed***

Be assertive – use as much media as you have access to - contact the editors of magazines and publications, the online associations you participate in, introduce yourself and send out articles. Getting your articles published or having your name mentioned in articles and reports about your niche area can be a big help in marketing your business overall and especially your groups.

I believe anyone can successfully promote just about anything when you have salesmanship skills, but it's very hard for even the best to authentically promote themselves. You can solve this by being honest and engaged and providing the most relevant information for making an informed decision on what you can deliver in a group setting.

## ***Be Selective and target the right people through free seminars***

It is critical to select the right members to provide real value, and to find leaders who will challenge each other and create a truly high performing group. Getting this right will provide value to you many times over.

Let's create an example: so to begin, you can start targeting notable executives in your area through your local business listings and stories, various award announcements, and sending congratulatory notes or a phone call along with an invitation to attend a free meeting with other local leaders.

Through this meeting you will be able to demonstrate the true value of the group, process a few issues so the guests could experience the essence of your coaching program and set up appointment to sign in new members at the event itself. You can also follow-up with those people who could not make it to the event through mails and phone calls, to land more appointments.

So the idea is to do a seminar or a three-day event, so that people can connect with you. Live events have this terrific quality of making people feel as if they have known each

other and you forever, you laugh with them, share personal anecdotes, have lunch together and basically build a sense of belonging and camaraderie. Such an atmosphere encourages people to continue with the arrangement.

### ***Deliver a high quality product and follow-up after the session is over***

Develop a great program with supporting materials that prove to be effective and once the program is over, ask the participants to give you referrals and most importantly remember to keep in touch and stay connected with the members of your group.

### ***LOGISTICS: Do you start new groups or just re-fill existing groups?***

This decision essentially depends on the kind of response you have been getting and your own satisfaction levels. For instance, if you start having trouble filling an existing group, perhaps it is time to start a new group or program. You should also look at the feedback and the answers to the 'Single Takeaway' from your previous group members, this will help you analyze whether you should continue with what you are doing or explore new avenues.

I also know a lot of coaches who start a group and then keep it going for years, if one member leaves, they replenish the group by admitting another one. You should do whatever works best for you.

### ***How to move from one-on-one to Group Example***

Once people complete your one-on-one program, they may want ongoing implementation support. If you had a good program, their confidence and trust in you

will have sky rocketed! So, you can offer them your next coaching group program and in all probability they will sign up, thanks to the goodwill that you have built through your one-on-one sessions. Of course, it is important that you spell out exactly what the client will gain from enrolling in a 'Group Program'.

The coaching group is very much like a mastermind group with a leader at the head of it. Once your clients have gone through your one-on-one program, it is time for them to implement and grow. At that point in their development you are needed as a coach to help them implement what they have learnt and assist them in dealing with their challenges. In a group atmosphere, this task becomes easier, because not only do clients get assistance from you but also get the opportunity of receiving feedback and suggestions from their peers.

For example, in my Group Coaching sessions any time that somebody asks me a question in the group, I first say, *"Okay, here's what I think. Are there any other suggestions for Meg?"* People just chime in with their thoughts, and you won't believe the collective wisdom that I get through the group. People who have some issues with their own confidence about business building all of a sudden come up with gems of advice. So it is absolutely valuable and the coaching group is almost like an extension of the coaching program.

To quote an example, this exactly how the coaching concept for Dan Finley was born. He had a dozen financial advisors who did not know each other, but he knew all of them as clients. So he thought, "Why not bring them all together?"

To quote him, "There is no way that I could do one-on-one with as many people. I just don't have time. So it's leveraged my time to be able to create and go over that material to help more people. The outcome has been it has helped me to service more people and I make more money than I did through just one-on-one sessions. Many of my one-on-one clients are in group as well and sometimes, interestingly enough, they stay longer in the group setting while we're taking a break from our one-on-one coaching."

So for Dan this strategy created client retention. Out of his entire client base in the last five and a half years, only three of his one-on-one clients did not join his group coaching program!

It is clear from Dan's experience that people love the group coaching structure, even if they are working one-on-one.

### ***Group Support Programs***

Once you have accomplished the goals you had set out for the group, you can start a group support program, it will help you monitor the progress of your clients and retain your connection with them.

You could also invite a guest speaker once a month to give people the opportunity to grow to the next level.

Now, many of the coaches who are professionally trained and licensed reading this are probably thinking "blah"-- 'This is not what coaching is about.' I don't really blame them, after all there are two schools of coaching and they probably belong to the more traditional one.

According to this school of thought coaching is about asking intuitive questions to help people move along in their process. That is what the traditional coaching will tell you. In my world, it almost never happens. The reason for that is because people generally just do not put a lot of value on asking the right questions. Or they put a value on it for a short period of time and then they find they have outgrown the coach and they want more out of their relationship.

The second school of coaching, the non-traditional coaching, is where you bring your expertise and advice to the program. You can also bring external, outside experts into the program. You design interesting experiences like a field trip or a retreat. It is like an inner circle or a mastermind group. Every "big" player, coach and/or trainer in his or her industry has an inner circle. Mark Hanson has one. Dan Kennedy has one. Rory

Fatts has one. Mike Crow, the inspection guy, has one. At different levels, you have an inner circle. This would be a closer description to what a group coaching, a coaching group looks like.

***APPLICATION PROCESS: How do accept new members? What are the criteria? How about accepting Competing Members?***

Most coaches set certain benchmarks that the candidates need to meet based on the niche area they operate in, their target market and their own business goals. You can follow the same procedure and ask prospective candidates to fill in application forms or send in their CVs.

As your groups grow, an effective tool for encouraging appropriate participation for new members could be in a peer review process. This way the older members are vested in the process, the issues of competition dissipate and everyone is on the same page at the start.



## LEVERAGE AND GROWTH

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### ***CONTINUITY: What's next after a group coaching program is done?***

**I** survey my groups after the end of our meetings and the results so far have indicated that the most important take-aways from group coaching experience have been:

- *Improved communication*
- *Improved relationships*
- *Improved business projects, activities and performance*

In order to gain the maximum leverage from the goodwill you have earned through your program and ensure continuity as well as additional business, I would recommend the following strategies-

### ***Give individual time to each participant post the completion of the program***

If not too cumbersome it can be good practice to have individual time with each participant – as a thank you and as a way for them to tell you about your experience. You may pose questions like the following in order to encourage them to talk-

- *What did you think of group?*

- *What would you recommend that we improve on?*
- *How do you think this all pertains to you?"*

If you're using the communication components in Group Coaching Manager such as message and discussion boards to gauge progress, you can easily determine recommendations based on the participant's individual needs. As we've discussed previously, they could funnel back into 1-1 coaching other or events and programs, new and better study material and even new groups depending on their unique needs.

### ***Think about what next?***

Someone commented on one of my blog posts:

"Well your job as a coach is to coach yourself out of a job, or coach your client out of a job for you. In other words, if you have a client who keeps staying with you must not be doing a good job. "

I completely disagree, because I believe that if you have something to offer a client, at each level of their growth, and then offer it. If you feel like there is nothing else you can offer, then it is time for you to do some professional and personal development so you could have something to offer at the next level.

Sustainability can be attained by taking all the information and data gleaned from your program and repositioning it into a new follow up program.

Sustainability coaching can be about applying the course material in a forward manner. It's more on accountability and action versus just awareness of the material. The whole idea of sustainability in group coaching is making sure people succeed in implementing what you have you have taught them.



## ***GETTING ONE-ON-ONE CLIENTS: Converting group members to one-on-one clients?***

Usually when I go through group sessions, I make it a point to identify people who have a lot of questions, as these are the most likely candidates for one-on-one sessions. Of course, it is important to keep in mind that not everyone can afford exclusive sessions, therefore if you want to ensure continuity of your business, offering discounts and free-time when appropriate is a good idea.

## ***RETENTION: How do you keep your client retention up?***

Some people use a setup that is not quite group coaching, but more a sort of mastermind coaching kind of group. What I have noticed is that some people leave their members on their own. The coaches start the call, teach the members how to lead their own calls and then leave the members to carry on with the session on their own. My issue with this format is, how long would members stick to such a group and more importantly why would they want to pay a coach for simply organizing a call?

I feel that as a coach you need to be present in this equation. After all, if you're not contributing value, why would they stay?

## ***OTHER LEVERAGE: How do you Leverage your Time and Income with Groups?***

We already know that group coaching is by itself is leveraging your time when you coach clients, but what else? One of the ways is to give the administrative and lower rung task to others – mailings, registrations, email follow ups, writing, editing – whatever you can manage and afford.

Your time should be focused on branding yourself to show how you stand out for the pack and what you do differently.

You will have to confront leveraging your time at some point, because if you're coaching for five to six hours a day, prospecting clients, developing products, editing as well as writing, you are going to feel completely drained out by the end of the day.

Delegating can help you move to the next level. I know it sounds like, "Well, you've got this extra added expense". It's not. It's an investment in your time and efforts by leveraging. I leverage my time and income because I systematize things and I have help and that's what makes the difference.



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