

To Coach Is to Sell

Salma El-Shurafa

As a coach, you often have to don several hats to perform multiple, sometimes disparate roles in order to bring about the results that your clients want to achieve.

But one role that many coaches often forget about is the role of a salesperson. Quite simply, you need to be good at selling, but not in the common notion of the word.

A coach must be good at "selling," because they need it — to build their business, to deliver tools that help clients attain goals, to increase awareness on coaching, and so on.

Take away all its negative connotations, and selling will come out as a critical skill set if your goal is to create meaningful connections and help other people achieve their personal and professional goals.

As author Daniel Pink says in his book *“To Sell Is Human”*: *This is what it means to serve: improving another’s life and, in turn, improving the world.*

In defense of selling

It is no understatement to say that consumers have grown wary and weary of different forms of [advertising](#). Online or offline, consumers are simply not interacting with advertisements in a meaningful manner. Online, consumers do not click on ads. Some even install ad blockers.

Right or wrong, people have associated sales and marketing with deception and double-talk, with companies pushing for products or services that people do not really need. In short, marketing professionals are often viewed as people who will do anything to earn money.

But that is an impartial view of what sales and marketing are. In an ideal scenario, marketing and sales are all about making genuine connections with people. And that genuine connection can only be established if you are willing to listen and talk.

Sound familiar?

The connection between coaching and selling

Good coaches require the following traits that are likewise useful in the task of being able to sell well.

A willingness and passion to help

In selling, the goal is to help people find solutions. As a coach, you have to go beyond offering your clients a suite of services. Instead, you show them proof of what coaching can do for them.

Helping does not necessarily mean that you will be doing all the hard work required to facilitate change. As a coach, you are there to offer guidance to your clients as they make their decisions and plans on their own.

A keen understanding of people

Coaches are interested in understanding people and what makes them tick — a key trait when selling. In coaching, you have to first establish a connection in order to better understand your clients and tailor solutions that work for their individual needs and circumstances.

Ability to communicate & connect

Contrary to what some people may believe, selling is not about talking. In fact, most of the time, you need to listen to your audience and ask the pertinent questions.

The same rings true in coaching. You need to identify the problems your clients are facing, and in order to do that, you have to shine a spotlight away from you and toward your coachees by asking the right set of questions.

In turn, this helps you establish long-term relationships anchored on trust. If you show genuine interest and a keen understanding of the problem at hand, you build your credibility.

Coaching as selling

If you cannot picture yourself as a salesperson, consider [a change of perspective](#).

That simply means that instead of selling your services to your clients, you are selling them solutions.

Consider for a while your own problems. Say, for example, if the holidays have left you overweight, you are not simply looking for weight loss products. Instead, you are looking for a long-term solution to solve your weight issues.

The same thing applies to your clients. They are not looking to purchase your services. What they are looking for are solutions to the problems they are facing.

But before you can do that, you have to focus on your clients and ask the right questions, like what their problems are and what you can do to solve these with them.

Once you arrive at potential solutions for these problems, you can now focus on selling these solutions to your clients. Quite simply, having solutions at hand will enable you to have a compelling offer that will move your clients and lead them to positive transformation.

BIO

[Salma El-Shurafa](#) is an experienced Executive Coach and founder of The Pathway Project. She is a Professional Certified Coach by the International Coaching Federation (ICF), a Certified Professional Co-Active Coach from The Coaches Training Institute (CTI) and a graduate of CTI's Co-Active Leadership program.

Salma is the first Arab female faculty member of CTI in the region, a certified Agile profile coach and trainer as well as a Cultural Intelligence Certified Advanced Facilitator. She works with a wide variety of individuals, ranging from directors and managers at Fortune 500 companies, entrepreneurs across various industries, and other professionals.