

BE the Coach: Use Coaching Principles and Competencies in Marketing

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BE the Coach! This is how to succeed in marketing and networking. For 28 years as a coach and 23 years of those a coach trainer and mentor, I can honestly say what I do works because I consistently maintain a steady stream of clients, students and mentees. I accepted this CHOICE challenge to examine why and how so others can increase comfort with business development and become, or be more, successful.

My strategy is to offer a free 60-90 minutes experience to prospective clients. Fourteen reasons and six coaching principles guide my presence, expression and interaction. People will say yes to your services because they want to spend more time with you. This suggests that when you are congruent in your thoughts, beliefs and expression in alignment with being a coach, you are much more likely to succeed. I believe that applying the ICF coaching competencies informs my success and I note them as appropriate.

Allow me to blurt out a pet peeve. I do not use the word 'marketing'. I prefer 'sharing' and you will understand why as you read the 6 coaching principles that guide my presence, expression and interaction and 14 reasons for offering a free experience.

'BE the Coach' Principles: invitation to a free experience

1. **Encompass** all answers because you believe, as coaches do, that clients have wisdom and your role is to bring forth and expand that wisdom (Establishing Trust and Intimacy). For example: when your prospect learns you are a Coach and says, "*Oh, that is like a therapist.*" Flow with the information you just received, acknowledge you heard it (Active Listening) and reply, "*I hear you are familiar with therapy. Then you know that therapy takes bad things and makes them smaller. My profession, coaching, takes big things and makes them bigger.*"

I do not say, "*No, it is not like therapy.*" What I am not saying with that reply is, "*You big dummy you are wrong and let me tell you why you are wrong.*" Of course we would never say that. That is still the message and how it is received when we say "No". What we are not saying is just as important as what we are saying. As coaches we are trained to listen for what clients say and what clients do not say. Be the coach!

2. **Empower** prospects to be in charge of the conversation. Masterful coaches allow clients to teach us ways to move that serve their interest and desired outcome. (Coaching Presence). We do not drive the process. When prospects ask a question they are in charge of the direction of the conversation. They want to spend more time with you because you create a space in which they are in charge and feel empowered.

3. Keep the conversation **open** by briefly answering the prospect's question and return to the invitation to spend more time exploring the possibility of coaching. Either they will be ready to accept your invitation or will ask another question and have more time in the empowered driver's seat.

Do not finish with a dead-ended sentence. For example, your prospect asks, *"How long will this experience take?"* and your reply might be: *"Ninety minutes. What is the best time for you to explore coaching?"* Coaches guide clients to keep options and possibilities open until the client is ready to choose (Designing Actions). Remember while they are asking you questions, the conversation is still open. They will inquire, *"What will we do in this time?"* Or *"How much does this cost?"* Or *"What qualifies you to be a coach?"* Answer each question briefly and finish with an open question such as: *"When would you like an experience of coaching?"* or *"What would be the best time for you, daytime, evenings or weekends?"* instead of *"Would you like to experience coaching?"* Competent coaches ask open questions (Powerful Questioning). BE the coach!

4. Be **curious** and invite partnership. Give only information that directly answers the prospect's question (Direct Communication). Save everything else for the free experience. My 'sharing' strategy is not about telling everything I know the first time I meet someone. I want prospects to feel empowered to spend more time with me. I use my Neutral Observer/Detached Self/Meta position to monitor myself because as coaches, we have competency in holding both objective and subjective perspectives. (Coaching Presence).

In my experience, speaking too much in this situation might be a sign of lack of confidence either because there is a need to appear knowledgeable as an expert (Establishing Trust and Intimacy – coach is comfortable not knowing) and/or a fear of rejection and/or discomfort with silence. Remember coaches are not experts; we are partners in an exciting exploration of life. Silence is needed for processing thoughts. In coaching we invite empty space as a place for reflection and wisdom to emerge.

5. Include **"Being"** in your invitation. As you authentically share your passion for coaching, use 'being' words that describe your emotion. For example *"I would love to share an experience of coaching with you."* Or *"I am excited to share..."* or *"I would enjoy sharing..."* or *"I would be happy to..."* Effective coaches can be vulnerable and share their being in behavior and words.

6. **Accept** that whatever happens is the perfect thing to happen (Coaching Presence). If prospects accept, fine. If you are surprised, even better. You have been present without expectation and genuinely experience surprise. If prospects say no, fine. Coaches are confident in themselves, the process 'sharing' and the prospect. We trust people to be accountable for their own decisions (Managing Progress and Accountability).

Why Offer a Free Experience?

Your prospect says yes and you schedule a free 60-90 minutes experience of coaching. During this time you continue to BE the coach as you share energy and determine whether there is a match. You also provide necessary information such as explanation of your context, background or approach, your values, the parameters and rules of engagement AND, save at least 30-45 minutes for a coaching conversation that invites prospects to begin creating their desired results/outcomes for the entire coaching engagement (Establishing the Coaching Agreement). I do 50+ of these a year and am often asked why I offer this for free. Here are my drivers.

- Be an ambassador for the profession
- Be of service, sharing aha moments
- Curiosity about people, learn about others
- Fun
- Purposeful
- Learn about yourself because we are all mirrors for each other
- Chance to practice coaching, improve skill
- Caring connections
- Empowering
- Reinforce your identity as a coach within yourself
- Visibility as a coach, your reputation
- Create space and possibility for awareness
- Opportunities to practice receiving
- Energizing

A few years ago I participated in a study in which successful coaches were asked to what they attribute their success and 90% said, "*BE the coach.*" So, *BE the coach!*