COACH

COACHING FOR BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

Brian Icenhower

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ISBN-10: 172-0556717

ISBN-13: 978-1720556718

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BRIAN ICENHOWER IS THE CEO AND FOUNDER OF ICENHOWER COACHING & CONSULTING (ICC), which provides customized & structured coaching & training programs for real estate agents & team leaders, representing many of the top producing agents in North America. ICC also offers broker/owner consulting on agent recruiting, training & retention. ICC has hundreds of coaching clients and a team of talented coaches. This progressive company also produces online courses, podcasts, training materials, speaking events, video modules and real estate training books.

Brian Icenhower is also the creator of TheRealEstateTrainer.com, the world's leading production training website for real estate agents with hundreds of thousands of subscribers.

Brian Icenhower began his career in real estate as a top producing real estate broker in the early 1990s until launching and operating a number of production-focused real estate offices in California and the Midwestern United States. His implementation of extensive real estate productivity coaching, training and recruiting programs propelled these companies to be repeatedly recognized as some of the highest producing and fastest growing offices in North America by a number of major industry media sources.

Throughout his career, Brian Icenhower has had the privilege of coaching, consulting and training many of the highest producing agents in the country. Mr. Icenhower has also opened various escrow companies, real estate licensing schools, property management and commercial real estate divisions affiliated with these real estate brokerages.

Brian Icenhower is also an attorney, a former instructor in real estate law at the College of the Sequoias, and a frequently published author. Brian served as the President of the Tulare County Association of REALTORS in 2011, and has served as a California Association of REALTORS State Director, a Missouri Association of REALTORS State Director, and as a National Association of REALTORS Director.

ICC OVERVIEW

Icenhower Coaching & Consulting (ICC) provides customized & structured coaching & training programs for real estate agents & team leaders, representing many of the top producing agents in North America. ICC also offers broker/owner consulting on agent recruiting, training & retention. ICC has hundreds of clients coached by a team of talented and experienced coaches. This progressive company is quickly advancing with online courses, podcasts, training materials, speaking events, training workshops, video modules and real estate books.

ICC COACHING & CONSULTING

ICC coaching programs offer much more than just weekly calls with our real estate coaches. ICC coaches are experienced real estate business consultants that offer strategic planning and a full library of training resources to elevate agents' businesses and their careers. Coaching clients are continuously engaged with their coaches through ICC's Online Coaching Platform where agents can communicate with their coach, track their activities, attend training courses, monitor their businesses, and access the ICC training library.

Upon founding ICC, Brian Icenhower inherently understood that people learn and retain information in a number of different ways. Whether it be visually, audibly, verbally, kinetically, or through engaging interaction, ICC's programs are designed to accelerate the learning processes while engaging clients more effectively. Brian set out to create training materials you can print and touch, videos you can watch, calls you can listen to, and workbooks that really break down processes and truly involve agents in the process. ICC's vast resource library is made up of training modules, videos, scripts, tools, job descriptions, budgets, business plans, workflows, systems and other interactive tools to help clients grow their business systematically.

ICC TRAINING MATERIALS

Brian Icenhower's real estate productivity coaching, training and recruiting programs have propelled a number of real estate companies to be repeatedly recognized as some of the highest producing and fastest growing offices in North America by a number of major industry media sources. ICC's production department now produces video training modules on a wide variety of productivity focused topics. These modules come complete with agent workbooks, instructor's manuals and audio files that can be white-label branded for any real estate company. Additionally, ICC's broker/manager coaches are available to consult with company leadership to ensure proper understanding and implementation of brokerage retention, training & recruiting systems.

ICC SPEAKING & TRAINING

Brian Icenhower, along with a number of ICC's trainers and coaches, are available to speak and train on a variety of real estate and business topics by request. Event programs can feature any combination of real estate, educational, motivational, business or leadership focused training as well. Brian's interactive training style provides a high level of energy that keeps attendants engaged and receptive to learning throughout the entire event.

Brian Icenhower has presented for many organizations across a wide number of industries. He has presented at real estate companies, trade conferences, Realtor associations, financial institutions, non-profit & service groups, and for a variety of national corporations. Mr. Icenhower has also been a keynote speaker for numerous organizations. Event sessions can be conducted by the hour, half day, full day or over multiple days depending on the topic and audience. Audience sizes have ranged from a group of ten to a room of thousands.

INTRODUCTION

What's Your Problem?

If you're like most coaches, you've got a problem. It's a serious problem too, one that coaches across our profession all struggle with.

So, what's your problem?

It's simple, really.

You coach your clients on how to overcome their challenges. Showing them exactly what they need to do to hurdle the difficulties and get the results they want.

And then, after they have full knowledge of how to achieve their desired results - some or even all of your coaching clients do... NOTHING!

How's this possible?

How is it that your clients and those of coaches everywhere can know what to do - and then not do it?

These questions taunt us as coaches. For they suggest that we're not nearly as effective in our work as we'd like to believe. After all, if we were truly great as coaches - all of our clients would follow our coaching, do what they need to do, and achieve the results they want.

Yet that doesn't happen, does it?

Exceptions To The Rule

Naturally there are exceptions. Since we do occasionally get coaching clients who don't have a problem taking action. Such clients are the proverbial "go-getters". They're the ones who go above and beyond in completing the homework we give them to do between calls.

If their coaching homework, for example, was to make 20 cold calls; clients of this "go-getter" nature won't stop there. No, they'll probably make 40 cold calls, all of which they record, analyze and use in constructing a powerful phone script.

Clients with personal initiative...rarer than diamonds!

Talk about personal initiative. Frankly, such initiative is so extraordinary that it seems almost superhuman. Which probably explains why most of the clients we're coaching aren't like this.

"Go-getters" vs. "Put-offers"

In place of being "go-getters", most of our clients will be more like "put-offers".

This is apparent if you consider the cold calling example. The one we just looked at for our "go-getter" clients. In that case, the majority of our coaching clients won't be nearly as "superhuman" in their efforts. These clients might make a few cold calls, well below the 20 that were assigned. Or, in a depressingly high number of cases, the clients won't even make 1 cold call.

Concerned? You should be. Because it's not just cold calls. Move beyond this general example and look in the real world. At actual real-world data.

Our Problem - By The Numbers

Examine the data and you'll see the problem we're talking about. The problem's on full display, conveyed to us with plenty of concrete numbers.

Of those numbers, let's look at the ones for REALTORS®.

Why REALTORS®? The reason is that they're one of the largest groups to receive coaching. Plus, if you're reading this and training to be an ICC coach, you're going to be coaching plenty of REALTORS®. So it behooves you to understand the problem they're facing.

Focusing then on REALTORS®, let's look at the numbers.

*****As a warning, you might want to have a box of tissues nearby while reading this.***

Why the tissues?

Because the numbers tell a very, very sad story. Sadder than the ending of Life is Beautiful and (if you're a bit younger) Toy Story 3.

It brings a tear to the eye, for example, to hear that 33% of newly licensed REALTORS® quit after their first year. That's according to annual membership stats from the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR).

The Association's stats also reveal that 87% of agents (i.e. REALTORS®) leave the business within their first 5 years.

Why do they leave? That depends on the agent, of course, since each will have their own reasons.

Still, if you look at the big picture - it seems safe to assume that a lack of success is probably the overwhelming reason. This assumption is supported by more numbers from NAR. According to the Association, 89% of all real estate transactions are handled by only 11% of agents in the U.S. Which means then that most agents aren't doing transactions.

Why You Should Care

Ok, you say, but how does this relate to me as a coach? Why should I care about these "tear-jerker" stats?

To answer that, think back to what we were talking about earlier. You know, the problem of your coaching clients not doing what's needed to be successful. Even after you've explained it to them, often in painstaking detail.

Take that problem and think about it in the case of real estate.

Within the real estate profession, coaching has grown, collectively, into a business worth hundreds of millions of dollars. This growth comes from the fact that agents seemingly can't get enough of coaches and coaching organizations.

While official stats on this aren't available, it would be an understatement of understatements to say that a few agents hire coaches.

A few? No, more like hundreds or even thousands. All of them eagerly flocking to various coaching organizations. And in doing so, giving real estate coaching its "m"s, as a field generating millions upon millions in revenues.

Real estate coaching may be doing well. But what about agents?

Harsh Realities

From those NAR stats earlier, we saw the cold, harsh realities of agent success. Given those stats, it's clear that most agents are NOT succeeding. Not by a mile. In fact, many real estate franchises and brokerages now make agent productivity training and coaching as a key component of the value proposition that they provide to their real estate agents.

So what gives?

Why is it that so many real estate agents are failing in their efforts and dropping out of the business while, at the same time, many of these agents are undoubtedly working with real estate coaches?

In other words, how can there be such high failure rates in the industry when coaching is so popular?

Those two realities - the failure rates and coaching's popularity - don't seem possible together. Failure rates should, for example, be accompanied by a lack of coaching in the profession. Or, on the other hand, coaching's popularity should mean that there are substantially lower and less depressing failure rates. The two sides should NOT co-exist as they do.

How's this possible?

Why Agents Fail

The answer is...surprisingly simple. In fact we already addressed it earlier. Remember how we described the problem of our clients knowing what to do but not doing it? That, in a nutshell, is the same reason most agents fail.

In the case of real estate agents specifically, the vast majority of them know what they should do. Even without a coach, most agents will know that they need to build a sphere of influence (SOI) and use it to get business.

This strategy, with an SOI, is the tried-and-true way for an agent to get all the business they could ever want. So much business in fact that they'd never have to close up shop.

Nonetheless, even with this awareness - only one out of a thousand real estate agents actually builds their SOI or does even anything to try to get business.

The rest - the other 999 out of a thousand real estate agents - sit back and wait for business to magically appear. They seem to follow the idea from the movie Field of Dreams. You know, the notion that "If you build it, they will come".

That idea's fine in the movies. But it's a recipe for disaster in real estate.

Just because an agent starts a real estate company and opens up an office - doesn't mean customers are just going to magically show up.

No, in that case and in most other businesses - the customers show up because the business owner does the work to ensure they show up.

What then, is the key to making them do the work?

How To Make Our Clients Do The Work

As coaches, we need to figure that out. Otherwise, we're not going to have much success with our clients.

We may, as mentioned, have those rare, superhuman clients who follow a certain sports company's advice and "just do it". But most of our coaching clients won't be like that - and as a result, they won't be able to achieve the results they want.

And make no mistake, our clients need to achieve results. Without results, those we coach - especially real estate agents - will end up failing in their businesses and potentially folding.

In addition, the lack of results by clients threatens our own livelihood as coaches. After all, if we can't help our clients achieve results, they may question the need to continue working with us.

To avoid either scenario, we must therefore get our clients to do what they know they should do.

And we need to figure out, pronto, how to do that. We can't just wait and think this problem is going to work itself out. Or that it's an issue for other people to solve.

No, it's on us, as coaches, to solve this problem.

Looking In The Mirror

Solving the problem - of our clients not following through - begins with a look in the mirror. Figuratively-speaking, we need to look in the mirror. This means examining the way most of us, as coaches, have been guiding our clients.

Why engage in this kind of reflection? The reason is that our coaching is clearly not working. Yet we lack an understanding on why it isn't working.

So take a look in the "mirror". Gaze into the looking glass and you'll see that we - and perhaps you too - tend to coach clients from a content-based, instructions-only approach.

An approach of this sort tells clients what they should do. So the client learns from us, for example, that they should build a sphere of influence or they should make more cold calls.

Yet what do we keep saying is the problem?

—They know what they should do, but then don't do it.

So clearly - clearly - the content isn't the source of the problem.

Why then do we continue coaching to such a large extent from a content-based approach?

Can't we see that just giving our clients instructions isn't effective?

Look Again

Hopefully questions like these make you take a second look. Re-examining your efforts as a coach.

Right now, for your own coaching, are you only approaching it in the content-based sense?

If you're like most coaches, the answer's "yes". But it's not your fault. The content-based approach is probably all you know. Or it's what you've seen the majority of coaches do.

Regardless of what you've seen or what you may know from past experience, it's time to move on. Time for you to progress beyond content-based coaching and all of its defects.

Alternatives To Content-based Coaching

Progress begins when you consider the alternative to content-based coaching.

Actually it's two alternatives.

The first of those alternative ways to coach can be described as the self-discovery approach.

For those who appreciate *Star Wars* references, the self-discovery approach can be described as the coach's "jedi mind trick". For the rest of us, self-discovery can be likened to the "art" side of being a coach.

In either case, the point is that self-discovery coaching is more abstract. It's not a set of specific "how-to's" and tutorials. No, quite the contrary. Self-discovery coaching tackles the other side.

Looking not at "what to do", but rather at how to engage a coaching client so they actually do it.

Given the emphasis on engagement, the self-discovery approach to coaching is therefore where the magic happens. It's what does the seemingly "impossible" task of getting your coaching clients out of their comfort zone and into action.

So your clients will then, for example, take the time to make the 20 prospecting calls they know they need to make. Even when they're afraid of being rejected. Even when they're "not good on the phone".

Heck, even making their 20 calls/day when the client is convinced, really convinced that the combination of 1) warm weather outside + 2) a big movie opening that day + 3) local school schedules - will ALL guarantee they won't reach anyone on the cold calls.

In that third - and absurd - case, along with the others; self-discovery coaching will make all the difference. It will mow down client resistance like unruly grass and allow coaching clients to do what it takes to achieve the results they want.

Picasso + Michelangelo

Given its power, self-discovery coaching is what makes a decent coach into a GREAT coach. It's what allows us - in our work as coaches - to be the equivalent of renowned artists like Picasso and Michelangelo.

Or if we're comparing ourselves to sports coaches, self-discovery coaching would make us the equivalent to a legendary basketball coach. To produce magic of your own, you need to incorporate self-discovery coaching into how you coach clients.

Right now, though, you're probably a little lost on how to do that. Perhaps you're not even clear on what exactly this whole "self-discovery approach" thing is.

Not to worry. Artsy and Jedi-like as it may be, the self-discovery approach to coaching can still be defined.

Here's what we're talking about, when we say "self-discovery coaching".

What's Self-Discovery Coaching?

"Self-discovery coaching" is the process of getting your coaching client to discover their own solutions.

As coaches, we do that by asking our clients questions, rather than telling them "here's what you do". The questions we ask lead clients to find the solutions for themselves.

Our approach in self-discovery coaching is comparable to the Japanese martial art of Aikido. In Aikido, the idea is to use the other person's energy and weight to get the results you want.

Now we're certainly NOT fighting anyone, like a martial artist is when they use Aikido. But our philosophy as coaches is no different. We too, are "staying lazy" by channeling someone else's energy to produce the result we desire.

In our case, we do this by asking our clients questions. Questions get clients thinking and providing us with extended answers. As the client gives their answers, we guide them ever onward - letting the client's own answers serve as "battering rams" that knock down whatever roadblocks they've been facing.

Powerful, right?

Especially since, as we said, the client's own answers were what got them past the roadblocks. All we did was expertly guide them, helping our client to find the solution(s) for themselves.

That process of guiding them - rather than telling them - is the essence of the self-discovery approach to coaching.

"Does this stuff actually work?"

While self-discovery sounds great, you might wonder how practical it is. In other words, is this the kind of thing that works in theory but not in practice? Or something that can work, but only in a few cases.

Thankfully, self-discovery is none of those things. It's a highly practical form of coaching that can work nearly anywhere.

The reason it works is that your client comes to the solution(s) themselves. Hence the whole "self-discovery" part.

Apart from this reason, here are five other reasons why self-discovery works.

REASON #1 Your client's strengths are incorporated into the coaching

As a coach, you certainly bring a lot to the proverbial table. Knowledge, experience coaching others, and often a dazzling array of personal career accomplishments. Here's the thing, though, your client is *also* bringing things to the table. In the client's case, they bring their own unique set of personal knowledge and life/career experiences too.

The beauty of self-discovery, then, is that it lets your client's own unique strengths and background shine just as brightly as your own. Moreover, by incorporating their unique attributes into the coaching dynamic, the client can get coaching that's custom-tailored to them.

Customization is possible because the client brings things to you as a coach that you wouldn't otherwise have. You can therefore adjust your coaching so it fits the client as well as a custom-tailored suit.

REASON #2 "If they author it, they own it"

"If they author it, they own it". That's a phrase every coach must always remember. The kind of phrase you'll definitely want to write down. And if you're crazy enough - perhaps tattoo the phrase on your eyelids. That way, you'll literally never lose sight of the fact that, as we've said, "If they author it, they own it".

Why is this phrase so important?

It's important because if your clients are going to make a change, one that they actually stick to; you can't be the one telling them how to do it. The client needs to feel as though this is a change that they've mapped out for themselves.

They must therefore feel as though they (your coaching client) are the author of the given change/solution.

As the author, your client feels that they're also the rightful "owner" of the change/solution and entitled to keeping it. This sense of ownership then eliminates any sense in your client's mind that the change or solution they're making is one they've "borrowed" from you as a coach.

How do you make your clients "author it" and "own it"? The sure-fire way is through the self-discovery approach to coaching.

REASON #3 Puts Client Self-Confidence on Steroids

Looking for a great way to boost your client's self-confidence? Putting their confidence on more steroids than a bodybuilder at a competition? Look no further. You'll find the answer with self-discovery coaching.

The self-discovery approach with its emphasis on asking questions allows your client to be the one creating their own solutions. This sense of creating solutions for themselves is incredibly empowering for your clients. For it shows them that they have what it takes to find the answers to their difficulties. Or, to steal a line from so many heartwarming (and cheesy) movies - "You had it in you all along".

Yes, your client *did* have it in them all along, to see the way around their roadblocks. But they wouldn't have had the confidence to ever dig deep within themselves and try finding a solution without you. You the coach are the one who helps them try and self-discovery is how you do it.

REASON #4 Places Your Client in the Driver's Seat

If your client is going to accelerate in business and life, they need to be the one in the driver's seat. Part of this means that the client "authors it" and "owns it". Going beyond that concept, we also need to bring out our clients' leadership abilities. Getting our clients to the point where they're the ones who own up to their challenges

and then lead the charge toward solutions. Self-discovery coaching makes this happen. It places clients firmly in the driver's seat, as the saying goes.

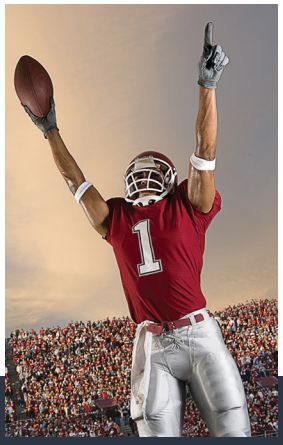
In this position, our clients can thus see themselves as leaders when facing their challenges. And in that leadership role; they'll echo one of history's greatest leaders - Napoleon - when he famously declared "Circumstances?...I make circumstances".

REASON #5 Bonding and the sense that "You get where I'm coming from"

By asking questions in self-discovery coaching, you take an active interest in your client's situation and background. Doing this allows you to achieve a true understanding of your client. An understanding that goes football fields beyond anything you might achieve with mere content-based coaching.

Understand your clients at such a high level and you'll have no difficulty scoring a figurative "touchdown" as a coach. The "touchdown" will happen because your clients will feel as though you genuinely care about them. This perception will lead clients to trust you more and bond with you as a coach. It'll also lead to coaching that works because your clients will feel as though "you (their coach) get where I (the coaching client) am coming from". Your guidance as a coach and the results of a coaching session will therefore feel natural and authentic to clients. Which furthers aids us in our efforts to help clients make lasting change.

"Is Self-Discovery All You Need?"



How are you feeling on self-discovery coaching? Do you now see it as the "best thing since sliced bread"? Or as incredible and game-changing as a cure for cancer?

Self-discovery is incredible and it's certainly a game-changer too, but it's NOT the best approach to coaching.

Not by itself.

Just as content-based coaching had its flaws, so too does self-discovery. These flaws make self-discovery coaching problematic if it's the *only* way you coach.

The reason here is that the people you coach want answers. Naturally, you'll help them find those answers. Doing so via the self-discovery process. But even with that process, your client still expects you to give them at least a few answers to the issues and challenges they're facing. This is why they hire you in the first place.

You're seen as being able to bring new information to the client and add value to their situation. The client expects you to do this by answering their question of "what to do?". If you're purely asking them questions - in self-discovery - that doesn't happen. Your client may appreciate and benefit from your efforts, initially.

But they'll ultimately feel as though you haven't added any tangible value to the coaching dynamic.

Get the picture? Let's paint it even more vividly with an actual example...

Amy's Story, or "The Dark Side of Self-Discovery Coaching"

Meet Amy.

A talented coach. A highly-experienced real estate agent. And a total sweetheart as a person.

Yes, make no mistake, Amy was each of these things and so much more too.

Yet she failed as a coach.

Any idea why?

Amy herself couldn't see it initially.

She couldn't grasp why her coaching clients were turned off. Why her clients came to believe that she was clueless on how to solve their challenges.

Imagine being in her position, with decades of real estate experience, and having clients believe that you lack any valuable expertise.

Sounds crazy, right?

Yet that's exactly what happened in Amy's case. As a coach, she left clients with the impression of her being clueless on their particular field (real estate).

How did she achieve this unfortunate "magic trick" - making her expertise disappear, right before the client's eyes?

Unlike many "magic tricks", Amy's wasn't hard to figure out. Her expertise vanished from sight during coaching calls because of how she was coaching.

Amy, talented as ever - was nonetheless, a believer in PURE self-discovery coaching.

It was her only approach in coaching clients. This meant that Amy wasn't giving her clients - in a tangible way - the answers they wanted.

In place of such answers, Amy would engage her clients in self-discovery, self-discovery, and... (you guessed it!)...MORE self-discovery.

Considering Amy's background, it's hardly a stretch to say she probably found the answers to her clients' problems long before they did. Meaning Amy did, in fact, know what to do and was NOT clueless.

The problem though was that she never spoke up. By sticking to "self-discovery" alone, Amy never showed any sense of having answers. With pure self-discovery and the questions it entails - she therefore failed as a coach.

In Defense of Self-Discovery

Now, to be clear - You should still engage in self-discovery coaching.

Don't let Amy's story turn you completely against it.

Our point is only that the self-discovery approach to coaching - much like ice cubes in a drink - can be overdone. So the questions in self-discovery actually end up "watering down" your coaching calls. Your clients will still "drink up", but what you're serving them - as a coach - is definitely NOT what they *thought* they were ordering.

Remember - people turn to coaching as a means of settling their personal issues. This is why you'll NEVER have a client just come to you and say - "Can you tell me how to find the answers in my own brain?" Your coaching clients don't want that. Instead, what they'll really say is, "can you tell me what to do?"

So, for that reason - you must prove from time to time that you *can* handle those issues. Proving to your clients that you are, in fact, able to provide them with real, tangible solutions.

A Balancing Act

The coaching dynamic is therefore a balancing act. An equation really. Where both of its sides must line up. On one side, we're the expert and we know the process to get to the solution. This is the content-based approach that many of us, as coaches, seem to instinctively gravitate toward. Where we as coaches are "Solutions Sam", telling our clients "here's what you do...".

That first side of the equation must be balanced with the second side. With the second side being the self-discovery approach to coaching. That's self-discovery in the sense of continuing to ask your client questions, so they engage in the coaching conversation. Questions create engagement because they lead a client toward finding the solution to their own challenges. This creates the "author it, own it" result we're after.

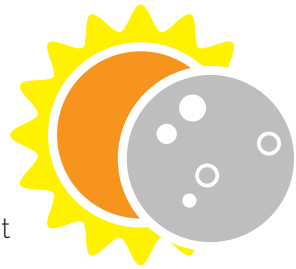
In addition, questions allow us to track whether our clients are really following us during a coaching call. Are they figuratively "asleep"

on a call - doing time because they've paid for the coaching? Or, on the other hand, is the client only taking in what we say and NOT thinking about it?

Both of these questions indicate equally bad coaching calls. We can prevent those kind of calls, however, with questions. Questions force our clients to sit up and pay attention. Much like a college professor would do by suddenly calling on a student in the back. Suddenly that student needs to stop playing with their phone and actually listen up. Same thing here, for us coaches.

We want to ask questions and continually get new agreements from our clients. This is how, as noted, we see whether they're with us or not. How we see and confirm that they *are* in fact, buying into what we're saying. If we can do this, on the second side of the coaching equation - with self-discovery coaching - we solve the whole "why don't they do it when they know what to do" problem.

Blending



The self-discovery approach.

The content-based approach.

Two ways of coaching that seem as distant from one another as night and day.

But then - if you think in those terms, with night and day; what do you call twilight?

Isn't twilight the meeting of night and day? A time in which the two blend together, often producing a stimulating atmosphere.

It's no different for us as coaches. The two ways we coach may appear disparate. Yet they can, and should be blended together.

When we create that blend, combining the two approaches - we're doing BOTH self-discovery coaching *and* content-based coaching. Recognizing that these two approaches can be brought together, under one roof if you will.

The blending of them is the other alternative coaching approach, the second of two we'd alluded to earlier.

This new approach - with blending - represents a far, far more powerful method of coaching. One that fully serves our clients - giving them what they believe they want and what they actually need too. Plus, all those other specific benefits we've highlighted so far, with both content-based and self-discovery coaching.

As coaching approaches go, the blended method is what this book and its authors strongly advocate. It's the approach that any coach reading this book - at least in the authors' opinion - should take when coaching clients.

And yet...

...The blended approach (content-based and self-discovery) is NOT what this book focuses on.

Moreover, this book actually goes and openly takes one side.

Huh?

Taking Sides

Yeah, that probably comes as a shock. Especially after all we've said so far about the need for a blended approach.

In order to blend, though, you need a clear sense of the two methods and how to successfully engage in each. Then, with that understanding, you'll be able to blend in a way that brings out the unique strengths of each method without overdoing either of them.

With that in mind, this book will be focused purely on the self-discovery method. Why? Because the content-based method is based on knowing specific material within your field or profession. As an example, those coaching real estate agents would need to know how to farm a neighborhood. To obtain that knowledge, the coaches could read articles and watch videos. They could also turn to various books, podcasts, and other content. Indeed, there's no shortage of educational, "how-to-do-__X__" content out there.

Recognizing that, we'll leave learning the actual content in your field or profession up to you, as a coach. So in place of trying to teach any content that's specific for a single industry; we'll avoid discussion of content-based coaching altogether.

In place of content-based coaching, we'll be looking at the other side of the coaching dynamic.

This book, in other words, is going to examine how to coach, along with the skill-set of actually being a coach. We'll help you to master each of those by covering the self-discovery approach, in depth.

Our focus on the self-discovery approach makes this book very different than others, especially those in real estate education. Unlike the other books out there, we're covering how you develop the true skill set of coaching.

Having that skill-set means that you know how to come from curiosity and ask questions. It also means you're adept at helping your clients participate in the coaching relationship.

So your clients stay engaged and author their own solutions. And, as this happens, you're able to develop a coaching partnership. The kind of partnership on which you can build long-lasting coach-client relationships and ensure your clients don't burn out or fail.

To help you reach results like that, this book will NOT be about how to do a given profession.

If you've picked up this book expecting that it will educate you, for example, on how to be a real estate agent...well, you might want to stop reading.

Can you believe that?

No wonder so many coaches have difficulty helping their clients achieve desirable results.

The difficulty faced by these coaches - and perhaps you too - is to be expected. It makes sense because no one is talking about the other side of the coaching dynamic (self-discovery). Nor is anyone learning how to effectively blend both sides together.

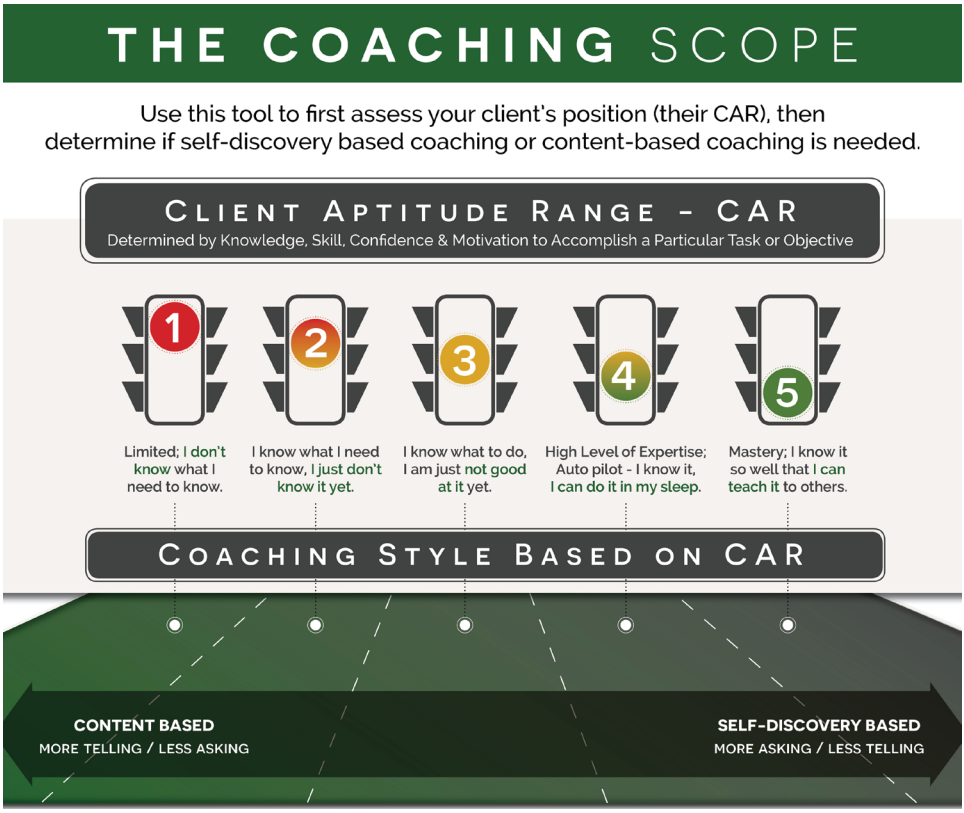
You can get the content, sure. But then when it comes to purely being a coach and having a coaching skillset - you're just supposed to figure it out. Or make it up as you go.

To be fair, every coach is going to have their own style and personality. But there's still a core essence to coaching. A basic approach which, when combined with your personal style and industry-specific content-based coaching, leads to success.

Self-discovery is that basic approach. And this book will empower you to do it effectively.

Let's get you started on that now, by reviewing the following picture.

Getting Started On Self-Discovery



The picture above matters to us because it answers a major question. A question you've probably been wondering about too.

"When should I use content-based coaching and when should I use the self-discovery approach?"

It's a logical question and one we've got to answer. Otherwise you won't have a sense of timing when using all of the material we're about to cover on the self -discovery approach. You won't know when to use it, and you won't be able to blend self-discovery with a content-based approach.

We want to clarify all that. So you know - really know - when to hit the gas versus when to hit the brakes on the self-discovery and content-based approaches during your coaching calls with clients.

How Much Content-based Coaching Versus Self-Discovery Coaching?

The short answer to the question above - on when to use each coaching approach - is that it depends.

What's it depend on?

Look at the picture and you'll see.

The picture shows us that the approach you use depends on your coaching client's aptitude, going off one side of the chart, versus the topic we're coaching them on (the subject, the issue, the goals).

Zooming in a bit more on the picture, we see that it moves from right to left. Going numerically from 1 to 5. Those numbers describe our client's aptitude in each of the topics we're coaching them on.

Depending on the topic, our clients range may be at a "1" for a particular topic. In this case, the "1" signifies that the client has a very limited aptitude in the given topic. Alternatively, a coaching client might be at a "5" for the topic. Here, our client has such a high level of experience in the topic that they can teach it.

See how this works?

The idea is that the closer a client is to "5" on a topic - the less content-based coaching you do and the more you engage with them through self-discovery coaching.

Makes sense too, right? After all, a client who's experienced enough to teach a topic (at an aptitude of "5") doesn't exactly need you to give them educational content on it. The client already knows what to do. So content-based coaching wouldn't make sense here.

Self-discovery coaching, on the other hand, would make sense. Since the client in this case may have difficulty getting themselves to do what they know is needed. Or they may be so knowledgeable and experienced that it's led them to issues like burn-out or being overwhelmed with opportunities.

"5" isn't the only aptitude your clients may have for a particular topic. Neither is "1". Between those ends, your clients could be at a "2", "3", or a "4".

HERE'S HOW THE 5 POSSIBLE APTITUDE LEVELS STACK UP, ALONGSIDE ONE ANOTHER.

#1 = "I don't know what I need to know"

#2 = "I know what I need to know, but I don't know it yet"

#3 = "I know what to do, I'm just not good at it yet"

#4 = "I know it so well that I could do it in my sleep"

#5 = I know it so well that I can teach it to others"

Cars And Coaching

The 5 aptitude levels above make even more sense when you think about them in terms of driving a car.

In this example, an aptitude of "1" would describe someone with ZERO knowledge of driving. Say a 14-year old. The kid thinks and knows that they can, in theory, drive. They've also seen other people drive. But the kid doesn't know anything about driving - not even how to fill up a tank with gas.

Fast-forward a few years, though, and the kid's aptitude changes. Not because of the years passing. But rather because their knowledge and awareness on the topic has changed.

Now, the kid is at an aptitude of "2" for driving. They're in the process of studying for the driver's test. In the process of studying - the kid knows what they need to know. The trouble is that they don't know it yet. So they know, for example, that as a driver it's often necessary to parallel park. But the kid has no idea on how you parallel park. There's a gap between their awareness of the necessary knowledge and the knowledge itself.

That gap closes at an aptitude level of "3". This is the point, in our driving example, when the kid is practicing with their father for the driving test. By this stage, the kid knows how to drive. But they're not very good at it.

As their father points out time and again - the kid needs to remember to check their mirrors when turning left. Or, if they've got that under control, perhaps the issue is remembering to turn on their headlights. Good luck getting "Junior" (the kid in our example here) to consistently remember headlights, mirrors, and all of the other things needed for successful driving. It's all too much for them to keep in mind on a regular basis.

Eventually, though, we reach an aptitude level of "4". This is the point where the kid is no longer a kid. Not legally anyway. They're well into adulthood and have their driver's license. With the license, they've been driving successfully for several years. As a result, our adult driver here is so good at driving, that they can do it while drinking coffee, adjusting the radio, or engaging in other tasks.

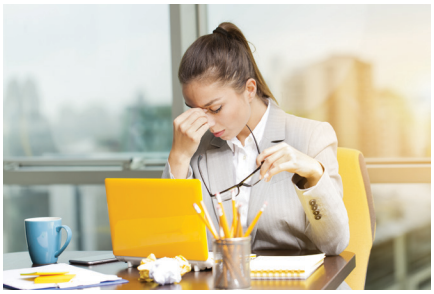
Being at a "4" on aptitude level isn't the end of the road, however. There's still one level above it. The 5th one we talked about earlier - Mastery. Mastery is the point where the driver in our example is so good at driving that they can teach someone else to drive.

Having the ability to teach is rare, as most of us just stop at "4". It's also very difficult to get. The difficulty stems from the fact that teaching someone else to do something requires having a system and a set of written processes.

A Prescription For Failure

We see this difficulty in business, for example, with business owners who attempt to bring on new employees. In "onboarding" their new employees, the owners often trust that the employees will "follow my lead" and "pick it up as you go". While this sometimes works, it's often a prescription for failure.

Not every new hire, after all, can learn their responsibilities without proper guidance. Some can do it, of course, but who's to say which ones? And why leave it to chance, if a new employee will succeed in learning their job without proper training? A far better approach is to have a documented "onboarding" process. The kind that comes when a business owner achieves mastery. Level "5" on our aptitude picture.



For Your High-Performers

In discussing this concept of aptitude levels, you should be aware of how to apply it with high-performing clients you may have.

Your awareness begins by assessing what exactly makes such clients "high-performers".

Or, to put it another way - what specific topics are such clients "high-performers" in? What are their strong suits, if you will?

Answering these questions is necessary because a "high-performer" client, someone who's aptitude for example is at a "5" - may still need content-based coaching.

Why?

Because they're not nearly as strong on other, connected topics.

We'd see this disparity in aptitudes, for instance, with a coaching client who's coming to us after being a seasoned telemarketer. Here, the client might be at a "4" or a "5" on the topic of advanced phone prospecting. Truly a "high-performer" on this topic.

So when we cover phone prospecting with them, they won't need a lot of content on this one specific topic.

By contrast, however - and this is the key - the client *will* need content from us when covering areas outside of phone prospecting. In this instance, our coaching client might be a total newbie at real estate. A newbie and an unsuccessful one at that. This sort of client would therefore need us to provide some content through a content-based approach. With content, we could breeze through the topic of phone prospecting and focus on other real estate topics, those where the client had less aptitude (i.e. level "1" or "2").

From this example, the takeaway is that we as coaches may need to re-adjust a client's position on our coaching spectrum. Adjusting it based on the topic and the client's aptitude in that topic. To arrive then, at a complete understanding of when, within our work with a client, to do content-based coaching (providing content) and when to shift into self-discovery coaching. That's the essence of what we're talking about here, as described earlier in the CAR image. (In case you've already forgotten that image, here it is again, below)

"Who's Behind This?"

After reading everything we've just covered, you're hopefully clearer on the timing of our two coaching approaches.

What you might not be as clear about is who "we" are. As in, who's behind this book? You've got a right to know. And it wouldn't be fair either, to expect that you'd blindly follow the material in this book without a clear sense of who created it.

So let's get down to business and fill you in.

Wondering "Who's behind this?"

That would be →

icenhower
coaching & consulting

Like the name suggests, ICC is a company providing coaching and consulting services.

Those services are provided specifically to those in and around real estate - including agents, brokerages, and industry affiliates.

Working with these groups, our aim at ICC is to help clients develop long-lasting, successful careers. The kind of careers where our clients build tremendous wealth, while maintaining - if not increasing - their personal life balance.

We do that in three ways. Three "pillars" if you will, that we provide in figuratively supporting members of the real estate community.

The 3 Pillars Of ICC

The first of our "pillars" is agent coaching. This ranges from 1-on-1 coaching, of individual agents, to coaching all of the agents in an entire real estate brokerage. Also, group coaching and online training courses

Second among our "pillars", is speaking and training events. We'll help clients in these areas by speaking at their events and/or providing the clients with training.

Finally, as our third "pillar", we at ICC often create educational materials. These materials are designed to help our clients with their education and training. Among our clients, the ones who usually benefit the most here - with the third "pillar" - are real estate teams, brokerages, large regional and national real estate companies, and real estate industry affiliates.

Together, the three "pillars" have allowed us to not only assist ICC's clients, but to also "go the extra mile" in doing so. Our efforts here, to do all we can for our clients - and then some; hasn't gone unnoticed either.

Not to toot our own horn too loudly here, but people kind of like us. Do a Google search for "Icenhower Coaching and Consulting" and you'll see.

Or if you'd like to see them now, here are some testimonials from a few of our many clients.

What They're Saying...

"I've worked with several of the coaches with Icenhower Coaching & Consulting. I've attended and watched many of their courses and have learned many things from each of them. This is more than just a one of a kind business. It is a household necessity for any real estate agent, brokerage, or any growing real estate team that wants to set themselves apart from the rest.

--Logan Herrera - Second Year Real Estate Agent

"Meeting Brian changed my life both for my business and personally. His coaching style with coaching me through challenges and critiques were always spot on with what I needed and still need to get to the next level. Take a few minutes and talk to Brian or one of his coaches and let them change your life too."

---Edie Waters - 400 homes sold per year

Who's Brian?

Brian? Reading the second testimonial above, you might be wondering who he is.

Brian is our founder and leader - Brian Icenhower. He's been coaching those in the real estate industry to success for over two decades. Apart from that, Brian is also a former top-producing real estate broker, a highly sought-after speaker, and the creator of TheRealEstateTrainer.com - the world's leading production training website for real estate agents. For more on Brian (Brian Icenhower), our leader at ICC, check out his full bio at the end of this book.

With Brian as our leader, we at ICC have grown into a respected coaching company (as seen in the testimonials above).

That future focus has led us to create a long-term goal. A vision really. One that guides and inspires all of our efforts to help those in/around the real estate industry.

What's our vision?

The ICC Vision

Our vision at ICC is to be *the* leading name for education and training in real estate. Not one of the leading names, but THE name.

We envision being recognized across the real estate industry, as the Harvard or the Yale of RE education and training. Meaning that we're known for having such a high standard of excellence in these areas (education and training) that our standard is *the* standard.

Our vision comes from the painful realization that much of the education and training that's available to the real estate industry is sorely out-of-date and irrelevant.

We see this time and again, especially when working with clients. Far too many of our clients, for example, will come to us with sales scripts that mention having a beeper/pager. This might have been OK in the 80's and 90's. But today, decades later, it's a joke. Only the joke isn't funny. Not here and not in all the other cases we see. Cases where, again, real estate professionals are having to rely on inadequate training and education. The sort of training and education which may give you some limited knowledge and capability now, but ultimately stunts your long-term growth.

Enough is enough! Today's real estate professionals deserve better education and training. We aim to provide that on a massive scale, through pursuit of our vision. Becoming the Harvard/Yale in these areas, and setting the gold standard for quality.

Back To You

Enough about us, though. Let's get back to you.

For you, the reader, what is it that you can expect to get from this book?

In response, we'd say that this book will help you to be a more successful coach. The book will accomplish that by teaching you how to use specific tools, exercises, and coaching conversations to motivate, persuade, engage, and help your clients self-discover their own solutions.

Much of our discussion in the pages ahead will be based on a set of six, high-level questions. Those questions will each support your efforts toward having clients self-discover their solutions.

To give you a sense of them, here's a quick look at our six core self-discovery questions.

The 6 Core Self-Discovery Questions

THE 6 CORE SELF-DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

01 THE CATALYST QUESTION

"What's the most important thing for us to talk about today?"

The clock is ticking as you begin your coaching call. Ask the catalyst question and you'll get down to business ASAP, not wasting any precious time. Using this question, you re-focus your client on what the key issue is for the call. Refocusing in this way cuts through the day-to-day "noise" in the client's world and trains their attention on what really matters.

02 THE PROBE QUESTION

"What else about that...?"

With Question #2, you begin the process of digging down to find the truth of what really "ails" your client. Ask this question once and then continue asking it in different ways - the more the merrier. That's the key to digging. You dig and you dig and you dig and you dig and you...

03 THE PINPOINT QUESTION

"What's the MAIN issue here for YOU?"

Ahh the Pinpoint Question! It's powerful "medicine" because it gets your client beyond merely thinking about the "symptoms" of their challenge. In place of the "symptoms", the pinpoint question allows the client and you as coach to pinpoint the MAIN issue. What's that MAIN issue for your client specifically? You'll find out by pinpointing it with this powerful "tonic" of a question.

04 THE FINISH LINE QUESTION

"What's your ideal end goal here?"

"A spoonful of sugar makes the medicine go down." Really? Then here's where you as a coach give your client that "spoonful". Ask the finish line question to "sweeten" your client's outlook on what's ahead for them. Using this question, you'll get the client focused on the reward (i.e. the "finish line") that's waiting for them, if they make the needed changes. Get their minds on the pleasure of the finish line and NOT on all of the "pain" required to get there. When you do, your client will find it easier to do what's needed now to reach their "finish line" later on.

05 THE SUPPORT QUESTION

"What's the best way I can help you?"

Like a surgeon's knife, this question accomplishes big things despite its tiny size. First, the Support Question brings you officially into the coaching conversation as a recognized participant. Not only that, the Support Question also focuses your client on the best way you can help them. When you client thinks in those terms - of how you can help - they'll feel a sense of ownership toward the solution you provide and they'll want to apply it.

06 THE EXECUTION QUESTION

"What do you need to do... by when?"

By this point in the coaching call, you're practically at the end. Your client will have arrived at their sense of a general solution. All that remains is for you to now zoom in on the solution's details. Hammer out those details with the help of Question #6 and your client's next moves, after the call, become abundantly clear.

icenhower coaching & consulting

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The questions, in short, are:

1) The Catalyst Question - "What's the most important thing for us to talk about today?"

This is a great question to ask your clients, when they come on a coaching call and are having "one of those days". A bad day, in other words, when the client's in major pain and doesn't know where to start in having you help them as a coach.

How do you help them? You'll learn that later in this book, as we cover the catalyst question and all that it involves, in full detail.

2) The Probe Question - "What else about that...?"

If you've realized anything in coaching clients, it's that there's nearly always something else going on in their business or lives. Something "lurking" in the background, that's invisible to you as a coach. Almost like the bottom part of an iceberg - where the biggest and most formidable section is hidden below the surface.

Our second core question - the probe question - helps you fully grasp the "icebergs" when dealing with clients. So you see these challenges in full and don't miss a beat.

Also, like an iceberg as well, there's far more to this second question than meets the eye. A ton more, in fact, and we'll be getting into exactly what it consists of in later modules.

3) The Pinpoint Question - "What's the Main Issue here for you?"

Asking this question helps us, as coaches, to find the root causes of our clients' problems. By pinpointing those causes, we can then help clients advance toward lasting solutions. The kind of solutions which are comparable to long-term surgery rather than a quick fix, band aid.

4) The Finish Line Question - "What's your ideal end goal here?"

Ever heard the phrase, "begin with the end in mind"? That's what we're doing in this fourth core question. By focusing our clients on the ideal end goal, we bring to their minds the pleasure that will come from achieving that goal.

The pleasure, however, lies in the future since the client has yet to actually achieve their goal. To achieve it, they'll probably need to make some uncomfortable changes. Our finish line question therefore helps clients get through the discomfort and make the necessary changes. So the client can then - as per the name of this question - reach the finish line (i.e. their goal).

5) The Support Question - "What's the Best Way I Can Help You?"

At this point in our questions, we want our clients to start thinking for themselves. This will lead them to the "author it, own it" scenario we desire. So with Question #5, we're getting our clients to first think about how they can personally solve their problems. Then, as they do that, this question offers support - establishing how we, as coaches, can help clients in their own problem-solving efforts.

6) The Execution Question - What do you need to do... by when?"

Last but not least, comes the execution question. It marks the end of our self-discovery process (i.e. the "coaching conversation").

With this final question, we're helping our clients get clear on their next steps. It's almost like a doctor's prescription. Only in this case, the patient and the doctor together have come up with a custom-made prescription. A prescription that's far more customized - in the doctor-patient analogy - than just "take 2 pills and call me in the morning". Any doctor and any coach can offer generic action steps like that. But those who are truly successful will customize and collaborate on what needs to be done next. And that's what we're driving toward with our clients on this sixth and final question.

It Won't Work Unless...

Now, powerful as these six core questions are, it's important for you to understand that they won't work unless you do. That is, unless you yourself make it a practice to ask them regularly.

Still, that's easier said than done. Especially since our natural tendency as coaches is often to do only content-based coaching and tell our clients what they should do.

We may have that tendency, but it can be changed. How then do you make such a change? How do you reach the point where asking these powerful questions becomes a habit for you, instead of a sometimes thing?

That's our focus in the next part of this book - as we prepare you with the skills needed to then put the 6 core questions to best use. We'll be doing that in the next section by examining how you can train yourself to be an "asker" and not just a "teller". Then once we're clear on that, we'll dive into the specifics of each question - since you'll be ready by then to ask them.

Ready to go?

Or to put it more appropriately - are you ready to get the kind of knowledge that can supercharge your coaching abilities and lead to jaw-dropping success in helping your clients?

That's a far better question. Since it conveys more accurately what awaits you in the pages ahead.

If you like what you're hearing, join us in the next section. Reading on now, into section two...>>

An Inconvenient Truth

No, we're not talking about Al Gore and his award-winning film ("An Inconvenient Truth").

Instead, we're referring to an inconvenient truth regarding ourselves and our coaching clients.

Truth is, our clients are NOT the only ones who struggle with following through on what they know they should do. Turns out, we as coaches often face the same issue. In our case, the issue comes as we struggle to follow through and do those things that we know will make us more effective coaches.

Our lack of follow-through could be on basic things like not checking in enough with our clients, to see how they are. Or, we may not follow through on doing more complex things, like changing the way we approach coaching calls.

It's this second area that we're going to explore over the course of this module. Our focus here is going to be on how we as coaches can get in the habit of asking questions, in the self-discovery method (described in the last module). How, in other words, we can make questions and self-discovery overall, part of our regular efforts. So it's something we're naturally inclined to do. Rather than something we have to consciously remind ourselves to do each time.

Making it Stick

How exactly do you make self-discovery "stick" as a new behavior to remember and consistently engage in?

You can start by defining what "self-discovery", as a coaching behavior specifically means. For this behavior (self-discovery), we'll define it as the process of having a conversation with your client, where you the coach end every sentence on a question. That means your sentences always end with question marks and never with periods.

Why's this new behavior worthwhile?

Because it promotes engagement with those you coach. The engagement comes since questions welcome your clients into the coaching conversation. Clients see there's still space in the conversation for them to add in their own thoughts, concerns, and questions. You haven't signaled to them that the conversation is closed. No, definitely not. Your use of questions has shown the exact opposite. Clients feel there's still plenty of space, "breathing room" in a sense for them to step in.

As clients step into the coaching conversation, they're also more likely to "buy in" (i.e. accept) any plan that's created during the coaching call. The "buy in" comes because clients feel they've had a hand in creating the plan. The plan from the call hasn't just been forced upon them, without taking their needs into consideration. Instead, they've been involved and, through this involvement, clients feel comfortable proceeding with the plan.

Want your clients to engage, "buy in", and then follow the action plans you two create together?

Then you know what's needed.

You need questions - and lots of them. Questions are necessary so your coaching calls can remain conversational and never resemble lectures or monologues.

Who wants to listen to a monologue or a lecture, anyway?

Not your coaching clients.

Disagree?

Then it's time for you to meet Matt.

Meet "Matt"

Who's "Matt"?

Only a prime example of why your clients don't want you to give them a lecture or a monologue. Look at Matt and you'll see exactly why you must "come from curiosity" as a coach and engage your clients in a "coaching conversation".

Now, in discussing Matt, we've clearly changed his name (see the quotes above?). But apart from that, he's a real person.

What's important for you to know about Matt is that he was a very charismatic guy. We at ICC saw his charisma repeatedly during the time Matt was with us as a coach. He was, in short, a genuinely likable guy.

And yet...

Matt's coaching clients didn't like him.

Despite his charisma and likability.

Despite his tremendous level of experience too, in the field of real estate.

Wait, haven't we heard this story before?

Didn't we just read - in the last module - about another coach who had the same issues?

Yes, and her name was Amy.

Don't worry, we're keeping track of stories. And the story of Matt is different from that of Amy.

Remember how Amy stayed in PURE self-discovery coaching?

Well, Matt had the opposite problem.

Unlike Amy, he didn't do ANY self-discovery coaching. This meant that Matt never came from curiosity when talking with his coaching clients. He was "all business" and NOT in a good way either.

Again, please understand that Matt wasn't a bad guy. As we said, he had tremendous charisma.

But charisma couldn't stop Matt's clients from being irritated by his coaching. Many of them resented the fact that he rarely - if ever - asked them for any kind of feedback.

Matt's clients couldn't give much feedback because he left them little, if any, of that "breathing room" we described earlier.

Without room to "breathe", it's hardly a surprise that Matt's clients had problems. All they could do on the coaching calls with him was "inhale".

This might seem like a "good" problem to have. Especially compared to Amy's clients who lacked the "air" (i.e. tangible content) they wanted.

In Amy's case, her clients had none of that "air" and therefore felt suffocated. Matt's clients, having their "air", were still in trouble, though. After all, just think about what happens if you go scuba diving and only breathe in. Never exhaling to let out the "air" you're taking in.

That's the tragic sound of inhaling for too long without exhaling. Tragic, in both the scuba sense and in the coaching sense.

For the latter - coaching - your coaching relationships will also

"pop". Or, to put it another way, you'll soon "pop out" of the coaching profession since you won't have any clients.

Fortunately, Matt never reached that point. We were able to "save" him in time. But doing so was a brutal uphill battle.

Saving Matt

The challenge in "saving" Matt came from trying to correct his tendency to do coaching calls with pure content-based coaching. Matt's natural inclination was to get on the phone with clients, and then stifle them with "first, do this -- then, do this -- and then this, etc." Obviously those weren't Matt's literal words. But his approach was the same. Content. Content. Content. And NO real attempt at self-discovery coaching.

While Matt's approach was wrong, it's hard to blame him for only doing content-based coaching. The content-based approach probably felt more comfortable to him than self-discovery. He was likely more at ease since content-based coaching played to his vast level of experience as a real estate agent.

Matt may have been OK with content alone but his students definitely weren't. That's because his coaching approach didn't empower them to take action for themselves. In addition, Matt's approach never built any rapport between him and his students. Without such rapport, Matt's students felt that they never really got to know him.

That latter point on relationships is so important it bears repeating. As a coach, you do need to form a relationship with your clients. That's "relationship", in the sense of you being a partner, to some extent, in your coaching client's business.

Obviously, you don't have to go to their kid's birthday party. Yet you must be, to a degree, involved in a constructive coaching relationship with your clients. The kind of relationship that gives them more than just a lecture.

That's how Matt was, on his coaching calls.

> "You don't have to go that far in bonding with your coaching clients"

Confidential or Not?

But, you say - aren't coaching calls supposed to be confidential? Aren't the calls supposed to be completely private, so only the coach and student know what's been discussed? And if that's indeed the case - how do we at ICC know Matt wasn't developing relationships with his clients?

How do we know?

Matt's clients told us. That's how.

Time and again, Matt's clients would call up Brian (ICC's "head honcho") and complain about Matt's behavior on coaching calls.

Among the complaints, Matt's clients said that they felt like he was talking down to them. In addition, clients also complained that they were just expected to follow the steps Matt was giving on calls. Blindly follow along and don't ask questions. That's how Matt's clients saw his pure content-based coaching, and it annoyed them.

Hearing these complaints, we realized that Matt wasn't engaging, empowering, or creating a conversational atmosphere with his clients. His clients never had the chance to weigh in and express their concerns and confusion over content. If that dynamic had existed in Matt's coaching, a relationship could have been built with his clients.

Yet no such dynamic was present. Beyond that, Matt also never took to heart another fundamental idea in coaching.

It's the premise of simplicity versus ease.

Simplicity vs. Ease

Often the subject matter of what you're coaching clients to do is extremely simple. Yet that does NOT mean it's easy.

The difficult part is getting people to enter this new stretch. Getting them to "wade into the water" if you will.

The "water" being the new material or plan you're covering with a

client as their coach.

Notice how we're describing this as "wading", rather than "jumping". Our point is that your clients need to slowly enter the new material/ plan on a coaching call, at their own pace and at their own discretion.

Why not "jump in"? Or, if you're really bold, "chuck" your coaching clients headfirst into new material?

If you want to try that, knock yourself out. But chances are, you'll soon find that most - if not all - of your clients don't respond well to it.

This is because you're asking clients to enter the water at your pace, not theirs. When you do this, figuratively chucking them into the "water" - you run the risk of the "water" being too cold for your clients. And if the "water" seems too cold, your coaching clients will always feel it's too cold. It's their first impression, and first impressions, after all, are everything.

With a first impression of the water (coaching material) being too cold (not to their liking; not a fit), your client is likely to always feel that way.

Good luck changing their minds later on. You'd be better served by taking time at the start, staying "lazy" and asking questions. That's the self-discovery approach, by the way. And it's the key for getting your client's buy-in early on coaching material, thereby saving a lot of time down the road.

Pilots and Lost Passengers

OK, you get the idea here. By now, you're realizing the need to have a conversation with your clients, rather than a monologue or even worse - a webinar, where the client feels trapped.

How do you accomplish that? Beyond just the general idea of "asking questions" and "leaving space in the conversation"?

We'll see the "how" with our 6 core coaching questions.

Before that, it's important that you understand the overall principles of self-discovery coaching. As an analogy on why this is necessary,

consider airplane pilots. A pilot needs to know both the fundamentals of flight (Bernoulli's principle, etc.) and the practical parts as well (what shifts gears on the plane, etc.). Both parts are important and any pilot who takes off without a full awareness of either is putting themselves and their passengers at risk.

You may not fly planes, but you still have "passengers" (i.e. coaching clients). And those clients expect to reach their "destination" at the end of a coaching call.

Along the way, as a call progresses, clients may lose their "baggage" (in an emotional sense). Yet like airline passengers, your clients still expect to arrive safely at the end. You don't want to lose them too. Otherwise you'll probably lose them as clients, period.

Alright, enough talk.

Let's cover those fundamental principles of the coaching conversation. We're looking now at the overall mechanics of self-discovery coaching, with these mechanics forming a frame in which you can then ask the 6 core coaching questions.

Irony in Asking

Getting started, recall how you should always end your statements on a question. That way you'll be inviting your clients into the conversation.

While ending on a question is beneficial, it has an ironic side effect. The side effect is that in helping clients become comfortable, we as coaches often become uncomfortable.

What makes us uncomfortable? Our discomfort comes from a desire to get our ideas, especially the big ones, out. We want to share these ideas in full, with our clients.

But think back to what we said about "wading". It's the same principle here. If we do what's comfortable for us, sharing big ideas in full - we're essentially "chucking" our clients into the "water".

That said, you can still get huge ideas out. Don't get the sense that you should abandon the massive, "eighteen wheeler sized"

concepts you want to share with your coaching clients. Those ideas still matter and if they're any good, you'd be doing your clients a disservice by not sharing.

How then do you share huge ideas?

You do it by CHUNKING, instead of CHUCKING.

Chunk, Don't Chuck

Chu-N-k.

Chu-C-k.

Two words that are so close phonetically, yet so far apart in what they each imply. You already know about the first of these two words - chucking.

But what's this other one - what we've called "chunking"?

You can understand it by thinking about apples. You know, those fine fruits that are supposed to keep the doctor away - at least if you eat one a day.

At any rate, with an apple - you'd never try to swallow it whole. If you were a snake, you might. But we're not snakes - both in the reptile sense and (hopefully) in terms of how we do business too. No, we're human beings and we can't swallow an apple whole. It's not how we're wired.

When we eat an apple, we need to break it down into chunks. We can do this by biting off pieces of the apple. Or we can do it by cutting the apple into slices. Both approaches, though, involve breaking the apple down into smaller, more digestible chunks.

With apples in mind, think now about your coaching. And those big game-changer ideas you can't wait to share with your clients.

There's a clear "apples to apples" comparison to be made. Just as you'd chunk the apple, so too can you chunk your ideas for clients to "chew on" and properly "digest".

As coaches, chunking specifically means that we break down any of our ideas, thoughts, and action plans.

Breaking them down into segments/chunks.

With those segments.

Ending in question marks.

Which invite our clients.

Into the coaching conversation.

(Those last sentences on chunking were chunks, by the way - in case you missed it!)

How to Make Chunking Work

For chunking to work in coaching, it can't just be pieces. There's another essential component of it. Each of your chunks must end with questions to invite clients in. The questions signal the end of your turn and the start of the client's turn.

Speaking of questions, you should always keep your questions, especially the 6 core self-discovery questions, up in front of you. This way, you'll always know your next question.

Having the questions visible keeps you from "winging it". And you definitely don't want to "wing it" on questions. Nor do you want to have to think carefully and pause during the call. Your client should be the one having to pause and mentally "chew" on questions. Not you.

You can avoid being in such a position by having your questions prepared in advance.

Also, while we're on questions, remember that your client's answer to the next question is the solution. That is, each question brings you one step closer to the overall breakthroughs your clients are seeking. Questions then - corny as it might sound - are the answers.

You'll never reach the answers, however, without keeping the entire framework of the self-discovery method in front of you. Keeping it in view makes sense because you're trying to develop

a new behavior. And adopting any new behavior, over the long-term, takes time.

It's why, for example, we see 90-day diet plans and 60-day workout regimens. In each case, the underlying premise is that the new behavior producing the change needs time to stick.

The same goes for you in coaching - as you shed the "weight" of your old coaching style and "get in shape" to better serve your clients.

In that process, you'll have to give your new habit of self-discovery coaching some time to stick. This entails keeping its entire framework in full view. Seeing the framework whenever you do your coaching calls, until...

Until? Well, until the new behavior becomes so natural, that you'd shudder at the thought of coaching in any other way.

Matt?

Oh, and what about Matt?

You're probably wondering what happened to him. We mentioned before that we were able to "save" Matt in time. Yet we never explained how. Only that it was "brutal".

Want to know what happened?

Let's rewind and see how it went down.

What Happened to Matt?

When we last left our hero (Matt), it seemed like he was a goner.

After all, complaints from his clients were piling up like a stack of dirty laundry.

You might think then that Matt's days as a coach were numbered. That it would only be a matter of time until he lost them all. Until he became as "washed up" in coaching, as many actors are after their "big movie".

Fortunately, though, Matt didn't "wash up" as a coach. Instead, his

story has a happy ending.

We at ICC were able to "save" Matt by helping him see the need to change and take action toward that change. This involved ICC's leader (Brian Icenhower) working hands-on with Matt. Together Brian and Matt focused on the same material we've just covered here in our discussion. That is, they concentrated on helping Matt master the overall principles of self-discovery coaching. In addition, Brian and Matt also covered the specifics of self-discovery, with the 6 core questions.

And you know what? It worked.

Not at first. But over time. The results were apparent in the talking ratio between Matt and his clients. This ratio was the percent of time on a coaching call that Matt and his clients each talked.

With Brian's help, Matt was able to lower his percentage of talking. This indicated that he was talking less on coaching calls. Giving less of his usual "How-to" tutorials and less of the "monologues" as well.

Speaking Up

As Matt talked less, his clients talked more. This was evident since each client's percentage of talk time in a given call noticeably increased.

Curious what Matt's clients were talking about?

Naturally, we can't get too specific on what was said. There's that whole "respect for client privacy" thing.

What we can say, however, is that Matt's clients began taking a much greater interest and engaging more in the calls. Clients did so by offering their own solutions to challenges.

Matt's clients were now willing to offer solutions because he'd made them feel comfortable. Comfort on the clients' part came from a newfound sense that finding solutions was a "team sport". A collaborative effort where both parties (coach and client) could contribute.

Additionally, when a solution was finally chosen - Matt's clients didn't feel like it was shoved upon them. There was instead a sense of "buy-in", with clients more readily accepting the solution.

Having that "buy-in" enabled Matt to help his clients make real progress toward their goals. It also fostered a much stronger coach-client relationship. Matt stopped being "Professor Matt", in his client's eyes and he became "Coach Matt". Someone clients could truly look to for guidance and feel a definite connection with.

Percentages

Seeing Matt's example, you might wonder about proper percentages. What percentages of coach and student talk time were we shooting for exactly? Also, beyond Matt, what's the right overall balance of percentages between coach and student on a call?

The good news here is that it does NOT depend.

Unlike many of those other things you hear about. Where you try to get a clear answer from someone and they just say "it depends".

In place of "it depends", we can in fact give you specific percentages to shoot for with regard to coach-to-student talking. The percentage we advise are 40% (Coach) to 60% (Student).

Are there exceptions to that? Perhaps.

But as a general rule of thumb, this is what you want to shoot for. It's what allowed us to save Matt, after all. And it'll allow you to "save" yourself too.

Why It's Good to Fail As a Coach

In closing our story of Matt, here's something else for you to know. It's an important point that extends well beyond Matt and into your life as a coach too.

Starting with Matt, let's add that it's a good thing he did NOT succeed in his "here's what to do", "just give answers" one-sided approach.

"Really?"

Yeah it may sound weird to you. Almost as though we don't want our clients to succeed.

But just think about it. If Matt had *somehow* actually succeeded in his method ("Here's what to do") - he would STILL have had problems and lost clients.

The reason is that Matt's clients would ultimately not see him as being useful. So he wouldn't have had any job security.

Now the likelihood of success here is slim-to-none. Maybe a "one in a million" chance. Or a "black swan". The sort of event that's unlikely to ever happen because, as we've said - the #1 issue facing our clients is that they don't implement. They know WHAT to do but can't get themselves to do it.

Still...suppose Matt's clients had, again, *somehow* been different and beaten those odds.

What then?

In that case, Matt's clients wouldn't have had any reason to continue with him. Not after say, a few sessions. Clients would therefore have deserted Matt because he wasn't providing anything more than instructions (i.e. content).

Beyond Matt

Moving beyond Matt, let's look at some more aspects of our coaching conversation. These ideas will further help you to begin approaching your coaching calls from the perspective of self-discovery.

What we're about to cover will keep you from ONLY thinking in terms of giving "what-to-dos" and action steps on your calls. You'll also avoid ONLY thinking of the 6 core questions - seeing them, in the wrong light, as a set of static, detached questions.

Instead of getting tripped up by these mistakes, you'll stand strong. Meaning then that you'll be fully equipped both in asking questions and in knowing when to provide the necessary knowledge to your

coaching clients. And, in the best cases, you won't be providing any knowledge/answers yourself. For you'll have helped your clients to find it themselves.

Ready to do all that?

Then let's roll! On to more principles that will further aid you in your adoption of the self-discovery approach.

Of all the principles we could cover, we'll focus on just eight. Think of these as our "elite 8". It's sort of like the "March Madness" college basketball tournament. Where only the top eight get to advance. In the same way, the principles we'll be going over have been carefully assessed and have "earned" their right to be here. Those principles - the 8 keys to mastering self-discovery coaching - are as follows:

Key #1: "No Duh's"

Ever heard someone say "no duh!"

It's usually meant to show they already know what's been said. Or that's it's obvious.

In regular conversations, "no, duh!" can be downright annoying.

It's also an annoyance in coaching conversations. In the latter case, we're not talking about openly saying "no, duh!". We're referring instead to your tendency as a coach to just accept what your client says at face value.

You can't just think "no, duh!" and look at obvious things that are being said. You need to question it, reading between the lines on what your clients are saying, and really probing through it all.

That goes for your content too. You can't say "no duh!" again, when providing content, on that opposite side of the coaching equation. Any content that you provide should make sense based on the probing and digging that you've done on the self-discovery side. Otherwise you may be trying, with your content, to ram the proverbial square peg into a circular hole. Like the peg, the content

you provide just won't fit.

Confused by what we've said on "no, duh!". We don't want to give you this idea and then think "no duh!"

If you're confused, you can think about this idea as not assuming anything to be "obvious". Question and probe into what your client says. And do the same when thinking about the content you can then provide, in response to your client.

Key #2: Agree with a Capital "I"

No, we haven't suddenly lost our sense of how to spell.

We're referring instead to the need for you, as a coach, to get your own buy-in on the importance of self-discovery coaching.

You see buy-in isn't just something for your clients. With or without clients, the key to making any new behavior/solution last, PERIOD - is to get buy-in. So in this case, it's your OWN buy-in that's needed.

Buy-in happens on your side when you make a commitment. Commit yourself to becoming a master of the self-discovery method. Then work toward the talking rate we described before of 40%-60% coach-to-client. Will you get there? Perhaps, but you can at least hit 50%-50%.

Seriously.

Swear that you're not just going to feed your clients content. Swear it...and mean it!

Make that kind of commitment and agree to it - with a capital "I".

Key #3: Know Your C-to-C Ratio

Closely related to that last key is this next one - Key #3. With this one, the point is to know your C-to-C ratio ,the ratio of Coach to Client talking.

How do you get clear on what your C-to-C ratio is?

You play it by ear. Literally!

Record your coaching calls and then listen to them. Often, it'll be clear as day, just how much more (or less) you talk, compared to your clients.

If a few listens of your recordings doesn't clue you in, you may wish to have the recordings transcribed. This way, you can see - and even mathematically compute - the exact number of words you and your clients each spoke.

OK, maybe you don't want to go *that* far - with transcriptions and word counts. But you can at least keep in mind our guidance on the appropriate ratio. That ratio again, to use on your coaching calls, is 40% coach talking to 60% client talking. Or, written out in purely numerical terms - it's a C-to-C ratio of 2:3.

Key #4: Avoid the "Ticker Trap"

What's the "ticker trap"?

It's arguably your greatest enemy in adopting the self-discovery approach.

This "trap" is set, like a hunter's beartrap, whenever you don't manage your time on a coaching call. With poor time management, the timer seems to "clamp down" on you, as a beartrap might. The timer "clamps down", by steadily ticking down the minutes till your coaching call must end. The closer you get to the end of the call, the more pressure you feel from the timer's ticking. Eventually, the "pain" from the ticker trap becomes so great that you grow desperate. You'll do anything to stop the "pain". Anything...so long as it gives you the sense of having had a "productive" coaching call.

In your desperation, you begin racing to spit out "How-to's". You go into the content-only mode. Changing from a coach into a professor.

By this point, what had been a coaching conversation - a dialogue - is now largely a monologue. Moving to a monologue often gives you a sense of "freedom" from the ticker trap. Yet any "freedom" you feel comes at the expense of your client.

Because as you "free" yourself from the "ticker trap" - you clamp down on your client. Making your client feel just as "trapped" and "restrained" as you felt.

Your client gets the sense of being "trapped/restrained" from their inability to now "move freely about" in the conversation. Your questions and the self-discovery approach had allowed the client to move freely before. But now that the conversation has bumbled into the "ticker trap", clients find themselves held in place. Trapped by their well-meaning coach (...you?) who's switched to giving them solutions - and NOT hearing them out.

See how sinister the "ticker trap" is?

Fortunately, like a real beartrap, you can avoid it and not take the bait. The way you avoid the "ticker trap" is by effectively managing your time on coaching calls. You can do that by beginning to steer questions harder, earlier on in a coaching call. This keeps you from having say 2 minutes left on a call and asking your client a question like, "So, do you think the answer is for you to make 10 sales calls, create a new CRM, and then add "x" new feature to your website?"

Imagine hearing that kind of question - out of nowhere - as a client. Wouldn't it feel like the coach was just dumping material on you? Dumping material to make themselves feel better, while "burying" you in the new material (if you were a coaching client).

Your clients don't want to be "buried alive" or "trapped" at the end of a coaching call. No, they want to "make it out alive". You do that, as we've said, by steering your questions harder, earlier. This means asking suggestions as questions (i.e. "steering" the questions). So if a client is starting to get close with their answers - you help them cross that threshold. You steer them, in the right direction. Acting like a tour guide, down the path of self-discovery.

If it's helpful, you can also think of yourself as being the bumpers at the bowling alley. Like those bumpers, your job is to keep coaching clients on track toward knocking down their challenges ("the bowling pins").

You act as "bumpers" by slowly steering your coaching calls down the path toward the solution(s). As you do, if your clients aren't moving fast enough toward discovering the answers for themselves - you then steer them harder.

In steering, you become like the concerned parent at a bowling alley. The parent who grimaces as they watch their child's ball move too slowly. Like any good parent in this situation, you're not just going to let your kid fail at bowling. So what do you do? You run out on the bowling lane and you push your son/daughter's bowling ball. Making it move faster. Maybe nudging the ball back on track too. And doing all that without slipping and falling on the slick floor of the bowling alley.

Now unless you're a bowling coach, you're probably NOT in a bowling alley. But hopefully this analogy and the others for Key #4 have driven the point home.

The bottom line is this - Avoid stepping in the "ticker trap", where your clients feel "buried alive" by a sudden shift to all content-based coaching. Do that through better time management on your calls, where your actions are comparable to the bowling lane (with steering) and the parent (with pushing the conversation to roll faster).

Key #5: Ask For a Book Report

Remember book reports?

They're a staple of most elementary, middle, and high schools.

If you went to school, chances are you've done a few. Probably grudgingly too, and the night before each one was due.

As a student, book reports may have seemed like "busy work" to you. After all, what's the point of you writing a book report on Romeo and Juliet? Romeo and Juliet are still going to fall in love, regardless of whether you write ten pages about it.

If that's how you felt as a student, we feel your pain. Fortunately, those days of book-induced "suffering" are probably over. In place

of "suffering", you're now in a position to get some "revenge" on your teachers.

This is, of course, INDIRECT "revenge" (in quotes). Please, do NOT actually go and do anything mean to your former instructors. No toilet-papering their houses or whatever else people do that's "mean" these days. That's NOT what we're saying here.

What's the "revenge" then? It's getting others to now do "book reports". Make them "enjoy" that process as much as you did. Only with a few distinctions.

First, books are gone! Good riddance, right?

In place of books, the material to be reported on is the content from your coaching calls.

Who's reporting on it?

That's your client's task. It's the assignment which you give them, at various points in the coaching call. Asking them for feedback.

This feedback serves the same purpose as a book report. That is, it tests to see whether the client (like a student) is actually familiar with the material.

Catch the similarity to book reports? Your teachers back in the day couldn't just ask you - have you read Romeo and Juliet? No, they had to have you prove it. Same thing here - for you as a coach.

You can't just ask your clients if they "get it". Or worse, assume they do get what you're telling them. No, you need to confirm it. And you do this through your coaching equivalent to book reports - by asking for detailed feedback at various points during a coaching call.

Notice how we're describing the feedback as "detailed"? Our point is that these are more than just simple "yes" or "no" questions. Your clients will need to actually stop and think about their answers.

So your questions, for example, would NOT be "Do you understand?" or "Does that make sense?" Those aren't "book report" style questions. Instead, for the coaching "book report", you'll want to

ask questions like - "What did you think about __ part?" or "What are your thoughts on __?"

Questions like these latter two are true "book report" questions because the questions don't lend themselves well to "B.S." answers. Either your clients are paying attention and can thus provide relevant answers to the questions, or they're not. There's really no middle ground here. Which is the whole point.

Key #6: Shake It Off

"Book reports" (Key #5) aren't just valuable to your clients. Turns out they also help you as a coach.

How's that?

Well, think about your tendency to slip into lecture mode (i.e. pure content-based coaching). It happens to the best of us. Whether that's you or us, as coaches at ICC.

Yes, you read that correctly. We at ICC, the very people who have criticized a pure "lecture" approach to coaching - we're still guilty of it.

Now to be fair, we don't always engage in the bad behavior ("lecturing"). In fact, we're usually quite good at holding back on providing just answers - so as to balance self-discovery coaching with content-based coaching. Yet we still have our "weak moments" from time to time. Those moments when we get "in the zone" during a coaching call. And in the heat of those moments, our natural tendency to provide answers can overpower our best efforts at self-discovery.

It's sort of like the healthy eater who hears a slice of black forest cake "calling" to them. Most times, the healthy eater can ignore the cake. But every now and then, the cake may triumph. When this happens, the solution isn't to mentally break down.

No, the healthy eater should instead recognize what's happened. Then they resolve to do better. And then they move forward, taking the first step, for example, by doing some extra situps to balance out the calories from the cake. Or taking the stairs up a few floors, rather than the elevator. Balancing out their efforts, to make up for the moment of weakness.

It's the same thing for us as coaches. If we slip, we can still make up for it. This is where "book reports" (from Key #5) come in. "Book reports" are the "extra situps" that we do after we've inadvertently "fattened" the coaching call with too much content.

In order to assign "book reports", though, we need to be self-aware. This means knowing that we're at risk of slipping into "lecture mode" and understanding the need to minimize this tendency.

Self-awareness also means that we're able to catch ourselves in the act. So we know when we're "misbehaving" as coaches, delivering too much content and not providing enough opportunities for self-discovery.

If we can gain self-awareness, as described here, we'll then be able to ask for "book reports" from our clients. This second step (requesting a "book report") will then help to equalize the coaching call. Balance can be achieved, as you ask your coaching client questions on what's been covered thus far in the call.

Another point here is that the more we find ourselves having to balance out calls with "book reports", the less we'll want to do it. As a result, we'll be far more inclined to include self-discovery in our coaching calls, in the first place. Self-discovery, with its questions, will become a habit for us - because we don't want the extra work of having to constantly be asking for "book reports". It'll be far easier for us to start from a place of self-discovery, mixing in content as appropriate, and going from there.

Key #7: Let Silence Do The Talking

Ever heard of Simon and Garfunkel? Depending on your age, these two 60's-era musicians are either icons you remember fondly today or they're just names to you.

Regardless, Simon and Garfunkel are worth considering now in the context of coaching.

Why?

Because they had an album entitled - "Sounds of Silence".

Think about the implications of that title. It implies that silence isn't just silence. To the contrary, silence has its own "sounds". At least according to Simon and Garfunkel.

Were they on to something? Absolutely. Silence *does* have clear "sounds". And we can hear those "sounds" too, even if we don't join Simon and Garfunkel in using marijuana.

For us, as coaches, silence "sounds" like a client silently thinking over their answer before they give it. It can also "sound" like a coaching client who's "lost" and struggling in silence to make sense of what we as coaches are saying.

There's a lot more that we can "hear" from silence too, if we'll just listen. But make sure that you *do* listen.

Resist the temptation to rush in if you ask a question and your coaching client doesn't respond. An awkward space may begin, creating an apparent "void" in the call. Yet you need to embrace this void. Don't *avoid* a void, racing to fill it in with your own words. Instead, listen for the "sounds" of silence.

You can also think about this scenario, with the silence, as a game of "chicken".

You're playing this game with your coaching clients, whenever there's a sudden silence during a coaching call. Like two people playing the game of "chicken", you and your client are each expecting the other person to give in. There's a sense that one of you must ultimately "swerve" at the last minute, steering away from a head-on collision with the other person.

Who will be the one to "swerve"? Don't let it be you. When silence comes during a coaching call and the game of "chicken" begins, hold your ground. Remain silent and let the pressure build.

Staying silent enables the magic of coaching to happen. The silence pushes your client to actually think. And in doing so, your client may be able to come up with their own solutions to a given problem on the call.

Even when this doesn't happen, you've still got your clients thinking for themselves. You've shown them that they can and should be an active partner in solving whatever challenges exist. This sets the right dynamic between coach and client, establishing that you're not just an "answer man".

Having your clients think for themselves also serves to empower them. For your clients see that they *can* come up with a solution themselves. Or they can at least get started toward one, independently of you.

Empowering your clients in this way is more than just the right thing to do. It's also the key to getting "buy-in" from your clients on new solutions. After all, like we said before, "if they author it, they own it".

Remember this and go forward, unafraid of silence. In fact, you should go a step further and actually create silence on purpose. Seek out opportunities to leave your client with a gaping void in the conversation, which they'll have to fill. Then be patient as your client works to fill the void for themselves. Silently sit back, listen to them work, and stay lazy.

Your coaching client probably won't enjoy the silence. Nor are they likely to enjoy the "mental aerobics" of filling in the silence. But does anyone who has a coach ever *initially* enjoy the work the coach gives them? For most people, this is a resounding "No". The average person with a coach is often annoyed or even angered by their coach's assignments.

Football players, for example, usually don't enjoy it - at first - when their coach makes them run laps. It's only months or years later, as they hold a Superbowl championship ring - for

example - that the appreciation comes. The player, in this case, can then look back and appreciate the hard work their coach forced them to do.

Take that lesson off the football field and adopt it into your coaching. Stay lazy, letting your clients work to fill in the moments of silence. Like the football players in our example, your clients will eventually praise you for making them work. They'll appreciate your efforts and feel a real relationship exists with you - beyond just content.

Key #8: No Holidays

No, we're not literally saying you shouldn't celebrate in December and during other holiday seasons. Our message is only that, as a coach, you can't take any holidays from working to master self-discovery coaching.

No holidays. No half days. No birthdays. No snow days.

At least not in the figurative sense, as you coach clients. Practice, practice, practice. That's the key!

Ok, those are our 8 keys. They are, if you'll recall, what's needed in order to master the self-discovery side of coaching.

Continuing on, let's cover a key difference in asking questions.

Short-Range Versus Big Picture

You know it's essential to be asking questions. What you might not realize, though, is that there are two distinct perspectives from which to ask coaching questions.

One perspective is the short-range. When you think of the short-range and tailor your questions that way, you're merely issue spotting. This may not seem bad to you, since you're still asking questions - as we've advised. Yet the dynamic of the call is not what it should be. Your call's dynamic is wrong because you're only looking at specific challenges in the short-range.

Your client will bring up these challenges, for example, by asking "How do I fill this out?" or "I don't know what to say when they say ____". Both of these challenges are clearly specified and, as a result, they're only addressing short-range issues.

The alternative to this first perspective is to address the big picture. Here, you're asking questions as a leader, rather than just an employee (in the short-range case) who serves a limited need.

The second perspective, big-picture coaching, entails helping your clients develop a long-term vision and a plan for going forward. You're coaching your clients beyond the short-range items and toward progress on far larger big picture matters.

Of these two perspectives - the short-range and the big picture - any guesses on which is better?

You don't need a coach to help you figure that one out. You probably see the distinctions and understand that big-picture coaching is better.

Why then do we as coaches frequently neglect the big picture, engaging instead in short-range coaching?

Why?

Because it's hard. You may find it a real challenge, getting your clients to think this way with the big picture. Clients won't want to do that because it means more work for them. A short-range perspective, with its issue spotting, will seem substantially easier. There's far less work when all you're addressing is what's present and in obvious view right now.

Knowing the extra work they'll have to do, your client will probably try to shift back into a short-range focus. Or they may try and delay any necessary work from the big picture.

In either case, we as coaches CANNOT appease our clients. We cannot give in to their requests to delay focusing on the big picture and any resulting work.

It's fine to answer their short-term questions, yet we CANNOT let our clients take their eyes off the big picture.

It doesn't matter either who you're coaching. Even if they're not the actual leader of an organization, your coaching client must STILL always think like a leader. And we do that by pulling them out of the day-to-day issues (of the short-range) and getting them refocused on the major issues (of the big picture) that need to be addressed. Away from micromanagement and into macro-management.

By now in this module, you know we're big on analogies. So here's another one on short-range versus big picture perspectives.

Think of these two perspectives as parts of an outline. We as coaches are trying to steer our clients toward the Roman numerals on the outline. And we're trying to get our clients to stop considering only the little lowercase "i's" in the outline.

Steer your clients with "Big Picture Coaching", as described here, and you'll find it tremendously worthwhile. That's because the more you can get clients to see the BIG PICTURE, the more you can get them to make big changes and see big results. Which, of course, is what we've been hired to do in the first place.

Our Own Big Picture

Speaking of the big picture - let's not lose sight of our own big picture as coaches. That is, what we're after in terms of success. And how we'll know when we're successful.

Now, success will vary tremendously. Still, there is a common big picture of what it looks like when we're successful in our coaching efforts. Our success shows up when we start engaging in self-discovery, making it a regular part of coaching calls and balancing it carefully with content-based coaching.

With the change, we'll start to hear a difference in client reactions. Clients will begin telling us, in essence, "that was a great call". They'll begin praising our calls like this, which is bound to make us feel great. Moreover, we'll begin to feel a true coaching relationship developing - one where we can make the difference we originally wanted to make as coaches. A relationship that fulfills our own personal sense of the big picture.

To help us get there - to the big picture we ourselves are shooting for - let's cover now those 6 questions. You know, those "mysterious" 6 core self-discovery questions we keep alluding to. No need to delay the inevitable. Instead, let's proceed on to cover the core questions. It's only right, now that you have a foundation on which to ask and appreciate these questions.

Join us now, in taking the plunge as we dive headfirst into those 6 core questions. It all starts with the next module. Suit up and we'll see you there! >>...

A Prescription for Successful Coaching:

The 6 Core Self-Discovery Questions

Looking to become a more successful coach? Look no further.

Here are the 6 core self-discovery questions, as featured in ICC's breakthrough book COACH. Read this sheet and think carefully about how you'll ask each of the 6 core questions on your next coaching call.

Then go the extra mile, for yourself and your coaching clients, by posting this sheet above your desk or wherever you do your coaching calls. That way you'll be sure to remember the questions and delight your clients, each and every time.

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MODULE 2

Core Self-Discovery Question #1

Going Under the Hood

Time to go under the hood.

In this module, the first of 6, we'll be looking at the mechanics of coaching. As we do, it's fitting to think of ourselves as "mechanics", looking "under the hood" of the coaching conversation.

Like a car mechanic, we also want to understand what drives our "vehicle" (the coaching conversation) forward.

On a general level, we already know that 6 core self-discovery questions are the key. But how exactly do those 6 questions, like pistons in a car, fire off in proper time? And, of course, what are the questions?

Here's where we get to all that. Starting now with the first of the 6 core self-discovery questions - the Catalyst Question.

The Catalyst Question

Our first question will be the "Catalyst Question".

> *The Catalyst Question:*
>
> **"What's the most important thing for us to talk about today?"**

That's the question.

Now here's another - why this one? Of all the questions we could use, why ask this particular question?

You might think it's obvious considering that this question asks about the "most important thing". But even if that seems apparent now, it's easy to lose sight of what's important when a coaching call begins.

Delivering The Laundry

Think about the way coaching calls often begin. In those early minutes, clients often want to give the coach (you) a laundry list of all they feel they've done since the last call.

To play on the "laundry list" phrase, it's like coaching clients are doing laundry delivery. That is, they're delivering "clean laundry" - all the things they've *supposedly* "accomplished" since the last call.

In a client's mind, this "clean laundry" is proof that they've put in actual work since the previous coaching session. It seems obvious (to them) that they've indeed done the work. For if no work had been done - it wouldn't be possible for the client to show off the "clean laundry" to you now.

Not so fast...

Hate to break it to you - and especially your client; but all that "clean laundry" still "stinks".

In fact, the "stench" is so bad that it "reeks". We're talking about a seriously awful smell here. One that "reeks" of inaction and procrastination. Topped off with the "stench" of FEAR.

Of all these foul "odors", it's FEAR that "smells" the worst.

Naturally, we're not talking about an actual smell. Yet it still makes sense to speak of "odors" because they say you can smell fear.

In your case as a coach, you can "smell" your client's fear of change. It's the fear they have of doing what's needed to make that change. Combined with a fear of being in pain from doing actual work.

Driven by their fear, what does your client do?

They invent "accomplishments" to show you that they've taken action since the last call. Yet as we've said and the quotes imply, these "accomplishments" count for little. Like a chocolate muffin, your client's "accomplishments" are basically "empty calories".

Obviously not everything your client says at the start of a coaching call will be "empty calories". It's likely that a small percentage of what they've done will indeed be advancing their goals. As a coach, you'll want to watch for that and avoid confusing "accomplishments" with true accomplishments.

Defining "Accomplishments"

To avoid confusion, you'll need to understand what constitutes meaningful, productive activity (a.k.a. true accomplishments).

We'll define that kind of activity as any efforts which help your clients to get more business. Getting more business is the goal here, in our definition, since it's usually what most business coaching clients want.

Despite wanting more business, however, most clients don't engage in meaningful, productive activity. Instead, they spend the vast majority of their time handling day-to-day business affairs. This usually means clients will have devoted their time to serving their existing customers. Working "in" their businesses, rather than "on" their businesses.

Customers deserve service of course. Nonetheless, we can't let our coaching clients forget the importance of doing activities that will get them more business. Doing those kind of activities - the business generating ones - is what produces real change.

As coaches, we're there to help our clients produce these changes. And we do that by refocusing clients on the activities that are in direct alignment with their goals. This helps our clients get on track to the results they want.

Refocusing Clients

The first step in refocusing our clients is to make sense of the activities they present at the start of a call. Of those activities, which ones are in alignment with their goals, and which aren't?

This is where the Catalyst Question comes in.

Here it is again, in case you've forgotten.

The Catalyst Question: "What's the most important thing for us to talk about today?"

We ask this question due to the limited time on calls with our clients. In that limited time, we need to cut through the day-to-day operations that our client will want to talk about. Instead of those day-to-day matters, we want to drill down on what the key issue is.

We're trying to find the specific "who", "what", or "how" that our coaching client is having difficulty with. What is it that's posing a challenge to them, as they attempt to take the necessary actions toward hitting their goals? Our Catalyst question will illuminate this challenge faced by our clients, whatever it is, in a timely manner.

Results Without Effort

Another point on the Catalyst Question is that it recognizes people's natural tendency to want results without effort.

Take quitting smoking, as an example (cough, cough).

Many smokers are adamant on their desire to quit. The number of would-be quitters is so great, in fact, that if you had a dollar for each of them....well, you'd probably have more money than the billion dollar tobacco companies.

Your fortunes would be far less, though, if you had a dollar for everyone who wants to go through the effort of actually quitting smoking. Those people who are willing to do what it takes to stop smoking for good. The ones who are going to quit now, rather than after that one last cigarette.

As this examples illustrates, most smokers desire the result (quitting) without the effort. You can't blame them, really. It's basic human nature to think we can disconnect results from the work leading to them.

And can we?

No. Life doesn't work that way. Not with smoking. And not in other arenas too - with everything from diets to making more calls (prospecting).

Ok, you say, but how does this idea of wanting work without effort relate to the Catalyst Question? Where's the relevance?

The answer is that the Catalyst Question helps our clients get clearer on what's keeping them from doing the right efforts (i.e. productive activities) that will lead to the results they want. With this clarity, our clients will be able to overcome their challenges. They won't face those challenges and then abandon their efforts, giving in to the natural tendency of wanting work without results.

In addition, with clarity from the Catalyst Question, our clients will get a better sense for how that natural human tendency could be confusing them. In other words, they'll be able to recognize cases where, consciously or not, a desire to avoid effort has led them into busy work. Cases where they've created the kind of laundry list we criticized earlier.

Classifying Obstacles

In order to ask the Catalyst Question effectively, you the coach must have an awareness of what obstacles your client might be facing. For simplicity, those obstacles can be classified into three categories.

"Categories" is an appropriate word too, as it's often used in classifying hurricanes. The connection is that your client's challenges threaten their business just as an actual hurricane would.

To help your clients brave the "storms" in their businesses; here are the three categories that most obstacles typically fall into --

Category #1: What?

Category #2: Who?

Category #3: How?

Each of these three categories serves as a type of Catalyst Question. When coaching, you can ask these latter questions (for each category) alongside the main Catalyst Question. This way you'll be able to narrow down what your client feels is most important to talk about. Then once you've done that, you can get clearer on the specific type of challenge they're facing.

"Guaca-MOLDY!"

The approach we've just described (with the Catalyst Question) will be invaluable to you - and your clients - on "bad days". Those are the terrible, horrible, no good, very bad days. The kind that are as "enjoyable" as an under-cooked hamburger with rotten milk poured on it....served with a side of "guaca-MOLDY" (i.e. guacamole with mold).

"Yuck!"

Yuck is right. And it's exactly what your clients will think, as they struggle through these "bad days". The silver lining, however, is that your clients have you. Regardless of how abysmal their days may be going, you can step in as the coach and make the day better.

Think of yourself then, as a "coaching superhero", since you're essentially "saving the day" for your clients. On their "bad days", you can swoop in like Superman and rescue your clients.

The superhero analogy does NOT mean, however, that you do everything for your clients. No, you "rescue" them, by empowering your clients to get themselves out of trouble.

In the analogy, it would be like Superman freeing a prisoner by guiding them to find the keys to their cell. This might seem weird because Superman isn't exactly a weakling.

With his super strength, he could easily smash down the door of the cell, helping the prisoner escape. Yet smashing down the door would be purely a solution. It wouldn't do anything to empower the prisoner going forward.

See the parallels to coaching? Even if you think the whole "coaching superhero" analogy is lame (and maybe, just maybe it is) - it's still relevant. The relevance is that when our clients feel "imprisoned" by their challenges, we can't just "smash down the door". That would be a solutions-only approach and pure content-based coaching. We must instead "save the day" by guiding. And it all starts with our self-discovery questions.

Let's return to those questions. Putting aside the superhero analogy and talking again about "bad days". The kind your clients face. Which you then serve as the "superhero" in helping them overcome.

"Bad Days"

"Bad days" relate to the Catalyst Question because they're precisely when the Catalyst Question proves most useful. Why? Because your client is in major pain. Maybe not literally, but certainly in a figurative sense. They'll come on a coaching call, sounding frustrated and confused. The cause of their discomfort here, is that they're having difficulty and don't know why. In other words, your client wants a result yet doesn't understand why they aren't successfully achieving it.

Lucky for them, we've got the key. As you might expect, the key in this case is the Catalyst Question and its "underlings" (What?, Who?, and How?). Asking along these lines allows our client to identify, for example, who or what is getting in their way.

There's a lot more to the Catalyst Question than that, however. Let's dig into the specifics of it more, by looking at the types of Catalyst Questions (our three categories) in more depth.

What?

This type of Catalyst Question relates to difficulty with an actual task. It includes issue spotting of the smaller things that stand

in a client's way. We're probing here about tasks too, those micro-level issues in play.

Thinking on the micro-level makes sense at this point because we've already focused our clients on the most important item for discussion. We did that through the primary Catalyst Question - "What's the most important thing for us to talk about today?"

Armed with this focus on what's most important, we logically probe into it with "What?" and its two friends - "Who?" and "How?"

Who?

Here, with "Who?", we're helping our clients identify issues that may exist with other people. These issues are often the result of communication breakdowns, those times when clients aren't on the "same page" with their associates (i.e. their colleagues, business partners, vendors, etc.).

Also, when discussing "Who?", it's helpful to focus this question around groups of people that your clients can easily consider. So you'll ask them about "Who?" it is - on their team, among those they work with, and often among your client's own clients/affiliates.

How?

Finally, there's "How?". With this last category of Catalyst Question, the emphasis is on how your client intends to turn the whole page.

With "page turning", in this case, signifying long-term change and perhaps transformation or evolution as well. Meaning your client isn't just hurdling a single, momentary obstacle. Instead, they're turning the "whole page" and understanding how to move forward in a lasting, meaningful way.

Interestingly, this question of "How?" often leads a coaching client to the mirror. Maybe not an actual mirror. But at least one in their minds. That's because "How?" can show a client that they're getting in their own way. For this reason, a sample "How?" question might be - "How are we going to change our behavior?".

Still, not all of your clients will end up "in front of the mirror" - realizing they've been holding themselves back. This is why overall, the "How?" question should be seen as relating to business planning and structuring. View the question in those terms and it won't get mired exclusively in correcting self-sabotage.

Naturally, we can't rule self-sabotage out, as something to correct. And it may still be to blame. But it would be a mistake not to begin at least, a bit more broadly. You could do that through - at least in the start - probing on "How?", with a question like, "How are we going to get that?".

Another good question would be - "How are we going to change our course of action?" This latter question works well because "our course of action" can mean either a client's ongoing self-sabotage or just their current business strategy.

Beware!

In asking the Catalyst Question and those "underlings" above (What?, Who?, and How?) - a word of warning.

Catalyst Questions can't be casual

Instead, the main one and those you ask in probing, need to ALL be piercing. Like a sharp jab to the ribs - if you will - that jolts your clients. Not in a bad way. But instead in the sense of making your clients focus on the issue. Helping them cut through to what's really important.

If you can cut to what's important, your client won't be able to - intentionally or not - sidetrack your coaching call. They won't have a chance to waste valuable time (or even the entire call) purely talking about the day-to-day activities.

Most of the "clean laundry" they have - that is, their busy work since the last call - won't even have a chance to be presented. They may try. Yet their efforts have little chance of success because the conversation has already been centered around what's important.

The Importance of the Important

With the important item established during a call, there's no reason for a client to then show off one of their supposed "accomplishments". Their "accomplishment" won't stand a chance because it'll have to be defended. The client will have to convincingly show how this particular thing relates to what they said was most important to talk about on the call. And the truly important thing(s) will relate directly to getting a client closer to the results they want. Results which, when we last checked, didn't include "busy work" like re-organizing your organized desktop or cleaning a spotless bathroom.

What's Your Excuse?

As we cut to the heart of the matter with the Catalyst Question, remember again that natural human tendency we covered earlier. The desire for results without the productive activities necessary to achieve those results. It's like how people can't go to Church because they need to mow the law. Or how, in a coaching client's case, they avoid productive activities by dwelling on day-to-day activities and creating new problems. All to justify the fact that the client can't deal with the productive activities they need to do. The day-to-day activities in their business provide the excuse here.

This point on the results without work tendency cannot be overemphasized. It's vital that you understand the tendency and then take preventative action against it.

Preventative action begins with the Catalyst Question. You'll deliver this question, like a preemptive military strike, at the start of each coaching call. Like the "strike", you're taking decisive action up front so your "enemy" - in this case, the results without work tendency - never even has a chance.

A preemptive strike? Sounds kind of extreme doesn't it?

Maybe. But think about what you're up against. You're "at war" against one of the most destructive human tendencies. That tendency is your "enemy" and it will stop at nothing to derail your coaching clients. The only hope you have of stopping this "enemy"

is to go on the offensive. Mounting an all-out "preemptive strike" by asking the Catalyst Question.

Productive From The Start

While we're on the Catalyst Question, here's a related tip - Don't burn the start of a coaching call on catching up with your client and building rapport. That stuff has its place, but you need to prioritize cutting to the chase. Why cut to the chase on your calls, A.S.A.P.?

It's simple really -

If you want a coaching call to be productive - it needs to begin that way. You need to begin "on the right foot", slicing to the heart of what's important.

As you "slice", don't worry about how your clients will react. Some clients could potentially find this "cut-to-the-chase" style rude. But you can't assume so. And frankly, it's not your job to be buddy-buddy with your clients. Don't confuse friendship with effectiveness. You're going to need to act like a tough coach from time-to-time as you refocus people on their best interests. Sorry, but that's just how it is.

So don't get caught in people pleasing. There's no room for that when it comes to the focus of the call. Your focus on any coaching call must be on the productive activities that are in direct alignment with your client's goals. If you deviate from that, occasionally during the call - that may be OK. But please, please, please...do NOT start the call on that path. If you do, you'll usually find it VERY hard - if not impossible - to regain your focus for the remainder of the call.

One of Many

Great as it is, the Catalyst Question is just one of our 6 core self-discovery questions. It can work wonders, of course. But there's more to self-discovery than just this first core question alone.

Let's head on to the next self-discovery question now. It's a good time to do that, too, as you're probably wondering what it is. Let there be no mystery on Question #2. Follow us into the next module and check it out >>...

Core Self-Discovery Question #2

No Denying

Next up for our 6 core self-discovery questions is the Probe Question. Before we dive into the specifics of this question, take a moment and recall the human tendency for denial.

We touched on this tendency in the last section, with our first of the self-discovery questions. In doing so, we used the idea of "clean laundry" to illustrate the busywork our coaching clients often create for themselves. The idea was that this "clean laundry" allows your client to deny to themselves and to you their coach, that they haven't actually done any productive work.

Our point in mentioning this again is to remind you of the fact that those you coach are often prone to denial. The denial may come with the "clean laundry" we mentioned. Or it may come simply with a client's desire to focus on a "problem" (in quotes) so as to dodge the real problem.

World Record-Holders

As an example of this second scenario - counterfeit "problems" - consider a sales team. And not just any sales team. No, this one is easily the "World's Laziest Sales Team". Not that they're recognized for this in say, the *Guinness Book of World Records*. But the sales team might as well be, at least in the eyes of their leader.

Looking at sales figures (i.e. "the numbers"), the leader of this sales team can only sigh. Or punch a wall. Why? Because the numbers are far below the standards of the leader and perhaps the industry as well. The sales figures "suck" in other words. And the team's leader, for their part, feels frustrated and angry.

"What the #$@% is wrong with my sales team?" the leader wonders.

"Why can't these [blank-ing] [blanks] do any better?"

The Easy Way Out

Unable to answer these questions, the sales team's leader takes the easy way out. That is, they avoid digging deep into the heart of the problem. Instead of deep searching to find out what's really to blame for the low sales - the team leader blames the poor performance on laziness. In their eyes, the members of the sales team would be succeeding if they weren't lazy.

Is laziness to blame? Is that the reason why the sales team is failing? Perhaps. But what if there's more to it than that?

This is where we come in as coaches.

Our job is to help coaching clients, like the team leader in this example, to dig deeper. We want them to engage in the necessary digging to find the true problem.

Getting To The Truth

Suppose our coaching client happens to be the leader from our example. The leader who's in charge of the "World's Laziest Sales Team".

When they come on a coaching call with us, our client (in this case) will cite laziness as the problem. They'll tell us all about how "lazy" and "unmotivated" the members of the sales team are. How the team members all "lack initiative" and "don't care" about making sales.

Hearing all this from our client, in the example, it would be easy for us to agree with them. Nodding our heads along and then beginning to advise the client on motivational strategies. Perhaps we'd point our client to some motivational tapes from well-known gurus. The kind of "pump-up" gurus who's names rhyme with "Sony Dobbins" or "Twig Twigler".

Not So Fast!

Before we side with our client, we need to question their explanation. This means assessing whether the low sales are really a result of laziness and apathy.

Are they?

No, not usually. This isn't to say that laziness or apathy can't possibly be valid explanations. Our point is just that there are often other underlying problems which may exist.

Those problems will only become apparent though, if we dig. Repeatedly. Using "why?" and as many different variations on it as possible.

A few of those variations would include:

- "What else?"
- "Tell me more about that?"
- "Is there anything else that might be causing that?"

Questions like the three above (i.e. the variations on "why") can certainly help us in digging. Yet such questions must take a backseat to our 6 core self-discovery questions. It's here that we come to Question #2, the Probe Question.

With Question #2, we're able to begin our process of digging. And we do that in an organized way which fits with both our previous core question (the Catalyst Question) and the 5 self-discovery questions still to come.

Ready to dig into digging? Then let's see how Question #2 starts off.

Question #2 - The Probe Question

First, here's Question #2, the probe question:

> *The Probe Question:*
>
> **"What Else About that...?"**

Now, here are some points on digging. These points will further your understanding of it. So you understand digging both with Question #2 and in the context of later self-discovery questions as well.

You Can't Dig Too Much

Really, we mean it. Strange as it might sound, you can't dig too much on your coaching calls. Dig. Dig. Dig. And then dig some more.

Dig so much that it's like, as the old expression goes, you're digging a hole to China. Except that unlike the expression, you wouldn't stop your hole in China. No, assuming your digging ever brought you (somehow) to Chinese soil, you'd keep on. Maybe after a visit to the Forbidden City in Beijing. Or a good bowl of REAL (not mall food court!) Chinese food. Something to fill your belly after all that digging. Nonetheless, once you'd chowed down - in this goofy analogy - you'd ditch your chopsticks and grab a shovel. Why? To continue digging.

From the analogy, you're hopefully clear on the need to keep digging. What you might be wondering, though, is whether it's really OK to dig as much as we're advocating. Surely you can eventually wear out your clients. Hitting an analogous bedrock, at which it's difficult or even impossible to keep digging. After all, don't reporters often ask too many questions? Plus look at the Greek philosopher Socrates. Wasn't Socrates, with his persistent asking of "Why?", ultimately killed?

Well yes, at least for Socrates. And yes, for the news reporters. But news reporters aren't coaches, and neither was Socrates. You, on the other hand, *are* a coach. Or at least you're trying to be, by reading this material and learning. So in your case, you really can't dig with questions too much.

So don't worry about it. Focus instead on what's likely to be your true problem when digging. Your problem will probably be not digging enough. That's what we at ICC have seen. In all our years of coaching, we have yet to see anyone dig too much. The vast majority of coaches are nearly always guilty of "under-digging".

Under-digging

This problem of "under-digging" occurs, in part, because many coaches have precisely the same concerns you might. They're worried about coming off as the nagging reporter or Socrates - with too many probing questions in either case.

If you can overcome these concerns, give yourself a pat on the back. It's commendable and will help you make progress on digging and as a coach. Nonetheless, you're not out of the proverbial woods just yet. Under-digging can still be a problem.

The issue now comes from your coaching clients. Your clients will likely feel uncomfortable with all the digging. It's going to seem foreign to them and even painful.

Not that you should stop , of course. But it's good to understand why this is the case.

The reason for your clients' discomfort is that they've probably never had an experience like this before. Chances are, you're the first one to engage them in the digging process.

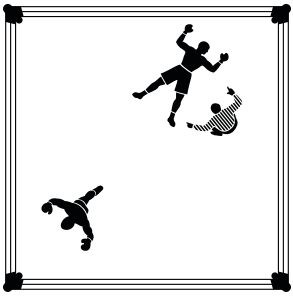
Why Digging Is a New Experience

In all likelihood, your Coaching client hasn't done any digging before because it would reveal the issues and problems which they find uncomfortable.

Why go through that? Why subject themselves - voluntarily - to all that discomfort? Your client doesn't see any need. So they haven't done it in the past.

And, just as importantly, they won't WANT to do it in the future either.

See what we're up against as coaches?



We're going "into the ring", if you will, to help our clients take down whatever problem(s) they're facing. Yet our clients are afraid to even step into the analogous boxing ring with us. They're scared witless because confronting the opponent (i.e. the problem) seems painful. Nobody wants to get punched in the face - whether we're talking literally or figuratively. It hurts nearly as much in both cases.

This explains then why our coaching clients will fight tooth and nail against our efforts as we try to dig. They'll resist us because of the perception of pain and a deep-rooted aversion to it.

Driven by the supposed pain, our clients will do anything to avoid it. Anything. From inventing "accomplishments" (as we've discussed) to dodging our probing questions to blaming circumstances. All that, plus a whole cadre of other pain-avoidance tactics - conscious or unconscious - that only the clients in their desperation can dream up.

Digging Leads To Progress

Painful as it may seem to clients, our digging will lead to progress.

If we just keep digging, we'll uncover the true sources of their challenges. This is precisely why we need to avoid backing off and instead keep digging - even when we begin to sense that our coaching clients are in "pain".

How can you tell when clients reach this point and feel "pain"?

One of the best indicators is a client's voice. Often the tone and the speed of their voice serves as a prime indicator of "pain". Clients convey "pain" here by talking faster while discussing problems. The change in pace reflects their understanding that our questions are leading toward a painful personal realization.

The realization is that it's the client, themselves, who's the source of the problem(s) they're facing. It's them! Maybe not 100% absolutely, but in all likelihood the client is still the "majority stakeholder" in their problem. Meaning they have a bigger "share" of that problem than others.

Good luck, however, trying to openly and directly tell them this. Any efforts you might make to deliver your "findings" on where the problem lies are unlikely to succeed. Who wants to hear that "It's not [the jammed printer, the alarm clock, your assistant, etc.]...It's you!"

Maybe, just maybe you'll eventually coach someone who delights at hearing this. The kind of coaching client who wants you to openly tell them they're responsible for the problems they face.

Realistically, though, you probably won't come across this sort of coaching client. Those you work with are more likely to be of the responsibility-avoidance nature we've talked about here. This is why it's imperative for you to dig. Digging leads clients toward self-discovery. And when they self-discover the source of problems, rather than you telling them - the whole game changes.

Suddenly a client is more willing to accept the knowledge of their problem's true source. Their willingness comes from the client seeing themselves as the one who came to this conclusion. You the coach didn't do it for them. No, thinks the client, they were the one who realized it. The realization came from them instead of some other source. Thus, your client feels that their new-found sense of being responsible for the challenge is "kosher" and fit to "eat".

Breaking Ground

Up to now, we've spoken quite a bit about digging. Yet in a sense, we've barely "broken ground". For we've only covered digging in general terms. Let's change that now with an example. The following example will help you to more fully understand this notion of digging.

For the example, we'll focus on a certain infamous sales team.

Remember those guys? You know, the one who seemed to have the distinction of "World's Laziest Sales Team"? At least according to our coaching client in this earlier example.

Returning to this case with the sales team, we'll now add digging to the mix. That means we'll be applying the probing question - our second of the six core self-discovery questions.

What happens here when we engage in digging (i.e. probing) with Question #2?

Chances are, our client (the leader of the sales team) is going to realize that responsibility for the problem starts with them.

In this instance, the sales team is NOT purely to blame for the lack of sales. Naturally, the team is *a* contributor to the problem. (They're not called the "sales team" for nothing!) But who's leading the team? What "star" are its members figuratively looking to for guidance, as they "navigate"? It's the leader of the sales team - our client.

Unfortunately, the team's leader hasn't been much of a star. Rather than "shine" as an effective leader, they've "dropped the ball", so to speak, in a myriad of ways.

Reflecting on how they could "get on the ball", perhaps the leader realizes that they need to set expectations with their sales staff. Or maybe they need to meet with the team regularly, thereby holding the sales team's members accountable. Or, in a third case, maybe the sales team's leader sees that they need to do a better job of helping those on the team with issues that they face in day-to-day work.

Not the "Laziest"

Setting expectations, holding regular meetings, and helping with issues aren't the only things that the sales team's leader may realize are necessary for them to do. What the team leader will also realize, in all likelihood, is that their sales team isn't "the World's laziest". In fact, "laziness" really doesn't have a part here.

For argument's sake, maybe the sales team could be considered "lazy". Yet that's essentially irrelevant because it's not something the sales team's leader can directly control.

As coaches, we want to re-focus the team leader on what they have direct control over.

Of those things which they can control, is the leader doing their part? That's really what we're probing for with Question #2.

Gym Trainers

To further illustrate probing, think about people who work with a personal trainer. There's very little difference between them and your clients. Both are similar in the sense that they're NOT hiring you or the personal trainer to learn content.

In the trainer's case, no one's hiring them to learn the exercises. Not with all the free information available in books, magazines, and even on YouTube. Rather, the trainer is hired by a person who doesn't want to go to the gym. And the money this person pays the trainer is what holds them accountable.

Payment creates accountability because even the most unwilling person is going to have a hard time missing a workout after they've already sunk $$$ into hiring a trainer. Not only that, but once the person shows up - the trainer provides further accountability by compelling them to do the given exercises.

Accountability isn't just for personal trainers. As we've indicated, it's also highly relevant for you as a coach. The connection is that your

client comes to you in the same way an unwilling gym attendee would approach their trainer.

In your case, a coaching client probably doesn't want you to make them go to the gym. What they're hiring you for is, instead, to make them follow-through on the things they need to do. Clients want you to hold them accountable for this follow-through.

Are you up to the task? You'd better be. It's imperative that you hold your clients accountable to what they need to do. If you don't provide such accountability, you're NOT being an effective coach. In fact, you're not really being much of a coach, period. Instead, you're just being a buddy.

Buddies Versus Coaches

If you want to be your client's buddy, suit yourself. But don't confuse it with coaching. Being a buddy and being a coach are two VERY different things.

A buddy is someone, for example, who a client might go out to dinner with. A coach, on the other hand, is someone who the client would turn to if they went out with their buddy instead of doing the necessary work on their business. In this example, the coach would be brought in to hold the client accountable - making them complete the work they needed to.

The key to accountability is focus. We as coaches need to focus our clients on what matters. This begins with our earlier self-discovery question (Question #1). That first question starts focusing the client on what's really important. We then refine their focus with our probing in Question #2.

Directions When "Digging"

With probing, we've described it as a process of "digging". Digging is an apt description of it, as the process involves shoveling aside the figurative "dirt" (i.e. the issues) in the client's way.

All the same, don't just think of "digging" in its typical downward sense. We're digging down, of course, in pursuit of our client's

core problem. But we're also digging out horizontally, so as to find other problems too.

Horizontal digging means asking "What else?" This kind of questioning will reveal adjacent problems which relate to the core problem.

What kind of adjacent problems might you find? Our sales team example provides a good indicator of that. In the example, imagine we the coach probe both vertically and horizontally too.

With probing, suppose we eventually discover that one of the members of the "World's Laziest Sales Team" is the client's friend from high school. Their buddy in the truest sense of the word.

Then, guess what else we discover? Through our probing, horizontally now, we learn that this high school friend isn't exactly a sales superstar. In fact, the friend is so far behind on their sales quota that it's comical.

Selling Excuses

The only thing our client's friend seems capable of selling are excuses - on why they haven't met their numbers. Excuse after excuse after excuse. Week after week after week. Month after month after month. But fortunately, not year after year after year.

No, it hasn't gotten to that point yet, with years of excuses. For this non-performer has only been on the sales team a few months.

In that time, they've moved past being a beginner and are now a seasoned veteran. As a "vet", the non-performer (our client's friend) should be making their numbers. They should be able to do so, because they've received the same training as the rest of the sales team. Logically, if the the other members of the team - most of them at least - are making their numbers, our client's friend should be too. Yet that's not the case. Why?

Excellent question! And it's undoubtedly one which our coaching client has thought about.

In thinking about it, our client probably recognizes that their friend isn't helping the sales team. Moreover, it's likely that the client also recognizes that their friend should be held accountable.

Accountability, Or Else...

Accountability is needed or else the friend's low sales will set a poor precedent for others on the sales team. The team's other members will see that there's no real penalty for a lousy performance. Or, if penalties do exist, the penalties will be severely undermined and seem like a double-standard. The rest of the sale team will wonder why the "beloved" high school friend isn't penalized for missing quotas.

Think this is going to motivate the sales team? Not a chance. The lack of accountability is going to do just the opposite, poisoning and de-motivating the entire sales team. Turning this sales team into... "The World's Laziest".

Your Take

Reading this now, do you have any suggestions for our coaching client? Any ideas on what they could do to fix the issue of having supposedly the "World's Laziest Sales Team"?

Seems pretty obvious doesn't it? Our client needs to get tough with their high school buddy.

You realize that now of course. But it wasn't apparent before was it? Not until digging did we realize that the buddy was the issue.

Imagine if we hadn't tried to "dig". In that case, the client would have maintained that the challenge was solely with their sales team's "laziness". The client would never have come out and talked about their high school buddy. There was no reason to, and the client themselves would rather avoid this painful subject.

The moral of the story? Stay in "curiosity mode" with continued "digging"! It'll lead you to breakthroughs, as we've seen here with the sales team example. Plus, this approach also buys you time and it allows you to probe still deeper for even better options.

In the spirit of continued "digging", let's now look at some actual lines that you can use on your next coaching call.

What Do You Actually Say When Digging?

First and foremost, you can dig by asking your coaching clients three little words.

Those "magic words", phrased as a question, are the following -

"And what else?..."

This question is short and deceptively simple. Yet that's precisely what makes it so powerful. It's not big enough to seem intimidating. Yet it prods enough to begin the path to a breakthrough.

To make this question ("And what else?...") work to full effect, we at ICC recommend asking it more than once. Aim to use it three to five times as you're digging.

The idea is to constantly search for what else could be important in the coaching discussion. Think continually about what is - or could be - behind what you're hearing from your client.

To guide your search for "what else?", here are 3 big things to consider -

1) Problem or pattern?

Consider carefully whether the problem your client is wrestling with is a one-time thing or part of a pattern. If it's a one-time thing, your client may not have much to worry about. They may just need to get over this current Holiday Season, for example. Then, after that, the sales in their business will pick up. Yet suppose their business has struggled with sales for the last ten holiday seasons. Seems like there's kind of a pattern right?

Same goes outside of business, with not going to the gym. When it happens once, on a single day, it's probably not a huge deal. Ok, you missed a day - do better tomorrow, leave the office on time, and work out. But if the days of skipping the gym start adding up, then there's probably more in play than just a "crazy day" or a "lack of self-discipline".

So think about it, honestly, whether in these examples here or in those you encounter with your coaching clients. And probe to see whether their problem is one-time or indicative of a pattern.

2) Circumstances versus attitudes

Another major consideration for you, while probing, is the issue of circumstances versus attitudes. Here, you'll be assessing whether it's really the circumstances around your client (people, location, etc.) which need to change. Or if instead, the client needs to change how they respond to those circumstances.

Beyond that, you'll also be thinking about whether your client can even control their circumstances in the first place. If they lack such control, then how they respond becomes even more important.

To frame your thinking here, we've provided some points which make the idea of circumstances versus attitudes more concrete. They are -

- Is a situation change needed? Or is it instead a matter of your client changing the way they respond to the situation?
- What does your client expect from a particular situation? How well are those expectations serving your client?
- In the "worst case scenario" - where the circumstances around or affecting your client never change - how would they respond?

3) Other sides or angles

There's two sides to every story, as the saying goes. That's particularly true for the "story" your client has regarding their particular challenge.

The client's "story" is how they explain to themselves the challenge they're facing. Yet this "story" is nearly always one-sided. Meaning your client is only looking at their situation from a single angle and creating their "story" from that perspective.

What we need to do as coaches, is help each of our clients to view their situations from multiple angles. Our "digging" with core

question #2 allows this to happen. When we "dig" and seek out the other sides to the "story" behind your client's challenge - we're looking at things like:

- The events of the past
  - What's brought about this situation?
  - What else contributed to the challenge?
- Anticipation of the future
  - Looking ahead, where does your client see this challenge or situation going?
  - How would your client want things to turn out, in the best case scenario?
- How your client feels about it
  - How does your client feel, on a purely emotional level, as they reflect on the given issue/problem?
- What others think
  - In your client's mind, how do the people they work with (coworkers, clients, etc.) and those they care about (friends, family) see this?
  - If your client looks at this challenge/situation from another person's perspective - what do they see?

Digging - A Word of Warning

Earlier back, when we first introduced "digging", we made the point that you really can't dig too much. While that may be true, there's an important distinction we need to make. The distinction is between "digging" in the useful sense, as it's been discussed here, and asking leading questions.

What are leading questions?

Chances are, You already know these. If you've ever been in a courtroom or watched legal dramas on TV - you're already familiar with leading questions. An example would be the classic leading question, hated by people in courtrooms everywhere. It goes something like - "Why did you kill/steal/do ____?"

Ouch! It's painful just listening to that. The question hurts because it automatically assumes that the person being asked has in fact committed the crime (killing, theft, etc.).

In a courtroom, leading questions are usually obvious. Outside of that context, however, leading questions may not be as apparent. We see this issue as coaches with questions that go too far in leading our clients toward a desired answer. Often such questions are subtle and don't seem at first glance to be very leading. We may not even be aware of how forcefully we're pushing our clients. This is why we need to recognize the dangers of leading questions.

Recognition comes from knowing what leading questions sound like, in a coaching sense. So here are a few examples of such questions -

- Do you think there might be other ways to overcome this challenge?
- Can you honestly take on that responsibility too?
- Might there be any other ways you'd deal with this?

See the problem with these questions? And do you catch as well, how innocent these questions seem?

The questions may seem innocent, yet they're leading questions all the same. For they move clients toward a specific response and can ONLY be answered with a "Yes" or "No".

How do you avoid this?

Don't ask your coaching clients "yes"/"no" questions. That's a good place to start.

And then keeping going. Eschewing leading questions and instead using "panoramic questions".

Panoramic Questions

Panoramic questions are critical to your success when probing. These questions will contribute to your success because they lack

a simple "yes"/"no" answer. This gives our coaching clients a wide range of possible answers. We as coaches can then identify what's most important to our clients - something which we would NOT have been able to do with just "yes"/"no" questions.

Another point on Panoramic questions is that they're essentially "reverse leading questions". Rather than us leading our client toward a specific answer, the client is now the one doing the leading. They're leading us to what they feel is most important to cover. A client can do this because they're not being asked "straitjacket questions", which confine them to a narrow range of possible responses.

In addition, the questions we're asking aren't automatically pushing an assumption on our clients without questioning it. We're not asking them, in other words, the coaching equivalent of "why did you kill your wife?" We're assuming nothing and leaving our clients plenty of room for a wide range of answers. That's the approach to take and you do it, when digging, through the use of panoramic questions.

This Section...And What Else?

Speaking of "panoramic", we've certainly covered a wide range of things in this section. Our overall aim in the section was teaching you Core Question #2 of the 6 self-discovery questions. Yet in doing so, we've gone on quite the journey. From that earlier example of a certain inglorious sales team, to Core Question #2 itself ("What else about that"), and into all of the analogies, metaphors, and other odds/ends that helped you learn this question.

That's all behind us now, though. We're past it and ready to dive into Core Question #3. This next question may surprise you, with what it's asking and what the question entails. Rather than spoil the surprise for you, we'll save it for the next section. Join us there and see Core Question #3 for yourself...>

MODULE 4

Core Self-Discovery Question #3

The Pinpoint Question

The Pinpoint Question. It's the third of our six core self-discovery questions. As a coach, you'll be asking this question on your coaching calls after you've worked through the Catalyst Question (Core Self-Discovery Question #1) and the Probe Question (Core Self-Discovery Question #2).

Those first two questions, if you'll recall were -

1) "What's the most important thing for us to talk about today?" (The Catalyst Question)

2) "What else about that?" (The Probe Question)

Also, as a reminder, each of these questions has their own set of related sub-questions. The sub-questions reinforce each of the 6 core questions.

We saw this in the previous section for example, when questioning whether a client's problem was a one-time thing or part of a pattern. In that case, the sub-question of "one-time problem or pattern" probed in a very specific way. Whatever answer came from it would offer a valuable new perspective from which to probe in general. Also, given how specific the question was, it wouldn't make sense to start there. Rather, we'd be best off starting our probing in a general way, with the open-ended and delightfully simple - "What else about that?"

See how this works? We start by engaging our clients in a general way, with a broad-based question. Then we explore areas around each question with the supporting sub-questions.

The Pinpoint Question works in the same way. Like the other core self-discovery questions, it too comes with a set of sub-questions.

What Does It Pinpoint?

Let's see what's involved here with the Pinpoint Question.

A good place to begin would be with the name. Why's it called the Pinpoint Question? What exactly is this question pinpointing?

Glad you asked. The answer is that it's pinpointing the main issue your client is struggling with.

You can see how by looking at the Pinpoint Question. Here it is...

The Pinpoint Question:

"What's the MAIN Issue here for YOU?"

That's our pinpoint question. And no, we haven't accidentally capitalized just the words "Main" and "You". Those two words are in all caps to illustrate their importance, relative to the other words in the question. We're not just asking "What's the issue here?" Instead, we're working to pinpoint the MAIN issue for our client specifically (i.e. "YOU").

Why Pinpoint?

Pinpointing is necessary because the previous self-discovery questions (#1 and #2), though powerful, aren't enough. When we

ask those first two, we'll get our coaching client into "self-discovery mode" - which is great. But they won't go far enough in the self-discovery process. Meaning our client will in all likelihood be giving us symptoms of their challenge.

Symptoms have their place, sure. But it's not here. What we want is to diagnose the main issue - the problem at the heart of it all. And this main issue/problem needs to be one that our client CAN control. No sense, for example, pinpointing rainy days as the main problem since your client - though a "rain maker" professionally - probably can't literally make it rain.

Pinpointing then is all about what they (our clients) have the power to control. Thinking in those terms, we're seeking the main issue that (1) the symptoms a client has described originate from, and (2) the client has the power to actually do something about.

What Pinpointing Looks Like

You got a hint of what that looks like in our previous section. The previous section used the "World's Laziest Sales Team" example to convey the importance of probing.

Think back and you'll recall where we left off in that example. It was at the point where we the coach and our client, the sales team's leader, had made an important discovery.

We'd identified the issue of the high school buddy. Through probing, it had then become clear that this friend of the team's leader, from their high school days, was a negative influence on the sales team overall.

As the team's worst performer (in terms of sales), the high school buddy was setting a bad example. The team's leader, for their part, was further contributing to the problem by failing to take appropriate action.

Does all that sound familiar? It was where we'd left things in the last section, with Question #2 and that seemingly "lazy" sales team.

Don't Stop...Fight On!

Reviewing this example, it sounds like we'd made some real progress. Despite the supposed progress, however, it would be a mistake for us as coaches to leave things where they were at the end of Question #2's example.

Stopping there wouldn't do our client, the team leader, any good. That's because they'd still regard the high school buddy as ONE part of their challenge. One part they'd rather avoid too.

Our goal in coaching this client (in the example) is to keep them from avoiding the issue of the high school buddy. Not only that, we want them to recognize on their own that this issue is likely the core problem.

Getting our client to this point probably won't be easy. In fact, it's a good bet that they'll be figuratively "kicking and screaming" as we force them to confront this painful issue head-on. That process of finding the true pain and getting our client to face it directly is what Question #3 (the Pinpoint Question) is all about.

Painful, Until You Realize...

The Pinpoint question may be painful (at least for our clients), but just think of what you can accomplish with it.

In the sales team example, the Pinpoint Question would lead us to real breakthroughs. We the coach AND our client would both recognize the high school friend as the main problem. Then, beyond that, we'd also be able to find some possible solutions to this issue.

Solutions would be possible if we focus our client on something that's in their power to control. The client would then be able to work out things they might do to solve the problem.

Considering what they might do, our client might decide to start holding weekly meetings for their sales team. At these meetings, the team's members would have to show what they actually did compared to the expectations. Any members of the team who didn't perform would then face some sort of penalty.

The penalty would help to ensure that the team's members were meeting expectations and doing the necessary activities.

Enforcement Is Everything

Whatever penalty the team leader used, it would need to be FULLY enforced. For EVERYONE on the sales team. Including, of course, the team leader's high school buddy.

Even the buddy would need to be held accountable and penalized for sub-par performance. This way the entire sales force would see that no one was exempt from the expectations/goals and the penalty.

The high school friend would then need to shape up. Otherwise they'd be penalized and probably fired too, for failing to keep pace with the requirements.

Penalizing and firing a close friend like this might be a challenge for the team leader. And it's a good bet their buddy wouldn't go quietly. They'd probably put up a good fight. With strong appeals to friendship, for example -

"Oh come on, we've known each other since high school..."

Or by criticizing the team leader's new-found motivation and drive -

"You know you've really changed...And it's NOT for the better..."

Wow! Talk about a bitter pill for your client (the team leader) to swallow. And this is precisely why they don't want to even go near this issue of the high school buddy in the first place. It's just too painful. Like touching the electrified "third rail" of a subway train track.

Keep Calm and Coach On

With our coaching, and the Pinpoint Question - our client can now confidently hold the line. Their friend (or now ex-friend) may hurl accusations at them, but the team leader will stand their ground.

No exceptions means...No exceptions. Everyone on the sales team meets the given requirements or they're penalized and then potentially fired too.

Will the high school friend then shape up or quit? That's up to them. Maybe they do, maybe they don't. We can't be sure. What we do know, however, is that our client (the leader of sales team) has done what's in their power to remedy the issue.

Let's go beyond the example now and look at what else is involved with Question # 3. Especially as you begin to incorporate it on your coaching calls right now.

MAIN + YOU

Like we said, this question is all about what is the MAIN problem and then what YOU (as in our coaching client) can do about it

Once we get started here - in Question #3 - we then need to keep digging. Digging is necessary, of course, because we're getting into actual pain with the client. Your client is going to want to swerve so as to avoid the pain. But you must stay on target and focus on the painful area.

The more you do that (focus on the pain), the harder and harder it will become. You'll face client resistance and it may seem like you're "being a jerk". Yet you're not "being a jerk". No, definitely not. Because all that resistance is actually good. It means you're being a coach. You're asking the hard questions, and in this case (with Question #3), that means pinpointing your client's true pain.

After The Pinpoint Question

To help you stay on target, even as your client tries to swerve and dodge the pain; here are two reliable sub-questions. Ask these sub-questions to dig even deeper after asking the initial pinpointing question (Core Self-discovery Question #3).

Your two sub-questions here are:

1) "Right, but what can you control?"

2) "OK, but is that really going to solve the problem?"

See what we're doing with these two sub-questions? Each sub-question acknowledges what the client has said and then pushes onward anyhow.

Speaking of pushing onward, you also need to push onward - beyond just these two sub-questions. Dig deeper still by examining the client's pain from two additional angles.

Additional Angles

The first of these additional angles involves "band-aids". Your pinpointing here will be aimed at moving your client away from using "band-aids" to solve their pain.

"Band-aids" in this figurative sense are the temporary, quick-fixes that your client may use or consider using to remedy the pain they have. In place of band-aids, you want to refocus your client on lasting cures. You can do that by asking questions like:

1) What would it look like to conquer this once and for all?
2) What do you believe about your own ability to change in this area?

After you've looked at "band-aids" versus lasting cures; you'll also want to dig for what drives your client's result or behavior. This is the second of our additional angles when pinpointing (with Core Self-discovery Question #3).

Explore this second angle and you and your client can achieve a better understanding of where the energy behind their results/behaviors originates. Some questions to help you at this point include:

1) What causes you to respond this way?
2) What do you gain from responding this way?
3) What does it give you that you need?

Think you can ask questions like these? Silly question, right? Of course you can. Any coach can. Yet many coaches don't.

Why Don't They?

Why?

Part of it is a lack of knowledge. Not knowing how to pinpoint or that it's even necessary. Fortunately, we're past that. You know all about pinpointing as a result of reading this section. So knowledge won't be an issue.

Instead, your challenge could be the one that coaches knowledgeable on pinpointing all struggle with. The challenge is to keep pinpointing even as your client resists. Even as they swerve to avoid your questions. Even as they attempt "verbal jiu-jitsu" to escape confronting their core pain. And yes, even as they imply - indirectly or perhaps directly - that you're "being a jerk" with the pinpointing.

Even amid all of that, press on. Press on with pressing on your client's core pain. For this is where the "magic" begins to happen in coaching. It's the transformational moment. That point where, metaphorically-speaking, pressure turns coal into diamonds. The diamonds won't come, however, if the pressure eases off. The same holds for coaching too. If you want relationships with your clients that are as valuable as diamonds, then stay on target and continue pinpointing.

Next Stop...

By now, it's probably clear to you why pinpointing is necessary. Hopefully it makes so much sense to you that you're actually sick of hearing about it. If so, you can relax. Take comfort now in knowing that we're done pinpointing your attention on pinpointing. All that's behind us. It's in the proverbial rear-view mirror now.

On the road ahead, our next stop is Core Self-discovery Question #4. This question is the *fourth* of our six overarching questions when doing self-discovery.

If this next question is the fourth of six total, why do we call it the Finish Line Question? Wouldn't that be a better name for Question #6, the last one? Maybe, but we beg to differ. Will you? Find out in the next section, with Question #4...>>

Core Self-Discovery Question #4

What's With The Name?

In our last section we ended by pondering why this next question (#4) is called the Finish Line Question. Why use the term "finish line" for Question #4 when there are still two more core self-discovery questions to come? Let's see why right now.

We'll begin by considering where you're at when you reach Question #4. By the time you're ready to ask a client this question, the two of you are in a very different place than when the coaching call began. You and your client are, as the saying goes, "not in Kansas anymore".

Like a Kansas tornado, you've began by blowing past your clients "clean laundry" - that busy work they consider to be "productive activities". Your first question, the Catalyst Question, did that. It hung the client's "clean laundry" out to dry and focused your coaching call on what was most important to discuss.

Continuing on, you then used the second core self-discovery question. This was the Probing Question. It worked to further "devastate" your

client's efforts at denial. Naturally, you weren't physically destroying anything with Question #2. But your efforts probably seemed just as dramatic to your client, as you engaged in relentless digging.

The digging led you seamlessly into Question #3. Now you were pinpointing the true source of their challenge, that pain which lies at the heart of it all.

The Pinpoint Question (#3) was, if you'll recall, one of the most pivotal points in a coaching call. We described this question and the pressure that comes with it, as comparable to how pressure turns coal into diamonds.

Yes, Question #3 was that powerful. Yet it was also painful, remember? Painful for your client, in having to truly "face the music" and see how they were responsible for the challenge. And painful for you too, since you probably didn't want to "be a jerk" as your client resisted the pinpointing.

But you did it! (We hope?) And you got through Question #3. Arriving now to stand on the brink of Question #4.

Where's Your Client?

Ok, that's where you are. But where's your client?

Assuming you asked these first three questions correctly, your client will be right alongside you. So you'll both be heading toward Question #4 together.

The only problem is that your client will likely be VERY unhappy at this point. Their unhappiness stems from your questions, which have led the client to see that the things they'll have to do - to remedy their problem - are going to be uncomfortable.

Image-wise, it's like you've taken a client up to 30,000 feet in a plane and are now ready to skydive. The two of you (coach and client) are standing by the door of the plane and your client is looking down.

Like jumping from the plane, your client is also going to have to do uncomfortable things. And by this point, they're well aware of it. Any wonder your client isn't happy right now, as Question #4 begins?

Painful Yet Worthwhile

Changing our ways is difficult and rarely fun. It's necessary though. We as coaches know that. So do our clients, at least deep down they do. But how do we make them see the necessity of changing? How do we, in other words, make them see that it's painful, but worthwhile all the same?

The key is to now, with this fourth question, switch gears to happiness. With our next question, we're going to move our client to being happy (or happier at least) by reminding them of what's on the other side. We'll show the client what awaits them if they reach...the Finish Line.

Can you see now where this question gets its name? It addresses the finish line from our client's perspective, rather than our own.

Assessing The Finish Line Question

Here's the Finish Line Question, so you can see exactly what we're asking the client -

The Finish Line Question =

"What's your ideal end goal here?"

With this question, we're refocusing our client on pleasure rather than pain. We want them to think about how much pleasure they'll derive from achieving their ideal end goal.

If our client can just concentrate on this pleasure, they'll have a strong enough "why?" to drive them. Their "why?" will be the achievement of their ideal end goal and all of the pleasure that achievement will bring.

Armed with this "why?", a client will then be able to do those things that are difficult and painful, but ultimately necessary. The client's vision of future pleasure becomes a kind of "magnet" that pulls them onward. As this happens, the client becomes more willing to trade short-term pain for long-term pleasure.

Back To The Gym

This may all sound abstract to you, so here's an example to illustrate it. Think about working out at the gym.

Wait, the gym?

Haven't we used that example before?

Sure. But there's no harm in using it again. For the gym is one of the best illustrations of an activity few people enjoy.

Think about it and you'll realize that most people don't honestly enjoy going to the gym. There are exceptions, of course. People who work out at the gym so much, that it's like they live there. Yet the vast majority of us aren't like that.

When we go to the gym, we often do so with gritted teeth and eyes that scream "Get me out of here!". We don't want to go to the gym, in other words. We'd rather avoid the gym and the pain that will come from working out there.

Aversions and Chocolate Cake

How can we overcome our inner aversion to the gym? The answer lies in thinking along the same lines as our coaching clients. If we can just remember our own "finish line", we'll have less difficulty in starting or going more often to the gym.

Our sense of the "finish line" will enable us, like our coaching clients, to willingly trade short-term pain for pleasure later on.

In the case of going to the gym, perhaps we look forward to eventually having rock solid abs or being in shape for a particular event/season (a wedding, summer, etc.). We might even be looking forward to something far more basic. Here, it might be that we're in the gym on a particular day just so we'll be able to enjoy a slice of chocolate cake later.

Chocolate cake may not be the best long-term "why?" for going

to the gym. But it can get the job done, just as these others (abs, an event/season) do. The key, though, is to have a sense of the pleasure that awaits you - whatever it is - if you'll only do what's seemingly "painful" now.

What Are They Fighting For?

Your coaching client also needs to have a sense of upcoming pleasure. They probably won't have the same pleasures in mind as you, and that's fine. Yet they must nonetheless have a sense of pleasures that await them - if they make the pain-now, pleasure-later trade.

Knowing all that, we as coaches will therefore ask our clients the Finish Line Question. Our goal with this question is to remind our clients of what they're "fighting for".

Our Finish Line Question and its related sub-questions, make this happen. These questions (the main one and the sub-questions) cause clients to realize, as we do at the gym, that it's all worthwhile. All of it. Whether it's arm curls and sit-ups at the gym - for us. Or whether it's an extra hour of cold calls and holding employees accountable - in our client's case. All of the pain from these activities is worthwhile because of what it leads to later.

The challenge, though, is to consistently remember why it's all worthwhile. That goes for us with the gym and with our coaching clients as well.

It can be hard to keep the upcoming pleasure, that "why?" in mind amid a busy schedule and constant "fires" that need to be put out at work. If only we and our clients could have the same perspective of a runner in a race.

Those Lucky Runners

Those running a race are the lucky ones. Why? Because they can literally see the finish line and the pleasure it holds for them.

There's no question in a runner's mind that delicious food and a sports massage await them after the race. These pleasures lie

after the finish line and the runner can see it with their own eyes.

With pleasure in sight, problems during the race like cramps and dehydration become worthwhile. These problems are worth fighting through in their runner's mind. The actual finish line that they can see is too compelling to ignore. It "magnetically" pulls the runners onward over the problems and eventually into the pleasure.

See why runners are so lucky? They don't need a figurative finish line in their minds. The one they can see in the real world will be just fine.

We can envy runners and their literal finish line, sure. But we shouldn't count ourselves out. Our finish line and that of our coaching client may be less apparent. Yet these latter finish lines can still be seen. We just have to know how to look for them.

Coming Full-Circle

All of this discussion brings us back to the start (no pun intended) with the Finish Line Question (Core Self-discovery Question #4). We've covered this question so far in a purely conceptual sense. Shifting gears, let's now address the mechanics of it. In doing so, we'll examine what to say with the Finish Line Question and how to say it.

As we begin this discussion of mechanics, here's something essential. Never just show your client the "finish line". If you do that, your client is unlikely to form much of an attachment to the "finish line". They won't feel that the "finish line" has a seemingly magnetic hold, pulling them onward.

To create attachment and give the "finish line" its motivating power; STOP playing "show and tell" with it. Instead of that ineffective approach, you should work to sell the "finish line" to your coaching client. Make them mentally buy it. If you can do that, your client will, figuratively-speaking, own the "finish line". They'll see the "finish line" as their own vision and motivation - not something that belongs to someone else. When that happens, the "finish line" can become a true source of motivation for them.

Selling The "Finish Line"

Selling the "finish line" to your clients is the goal and questions are how you get there. Asking your client questions enables you to make the "sale" because it helps you attach your client to the "finish line".

The attachment that happens here is on an emotional level. This means you're digging deep into your client's emotions. Your questions are making the client think of how emotionally satisfying the finish line will be. You want them to see what the "finish line" result will do for them and perhaps their career, their family, and their income as well.

Making It Personal

A good way to help your clients see all the pleasure that awaits is by asking them how crossing the "finish line" will feel on a personal level.

In the "lazy" sales team example, we'd do this by asking the team leader how they'd feel knowing that they'd "saved" the team by getting tough with the high school friend.

In this instance, saving the team (i.e. getting it back on track to success) is the "finish line". And getting tough with the high school buddy is an obstacle on the way to finishing.

Engagement = Breakthrough

If we can get the client engaged in answering our questions around it - a breakthrough is probably on the way. That's because the client will be forced to think.

Surprisingly, they've probably NEVER done that. In most cases, your coaching client has never really stopped to think about why it's worth it to do the seemingly "unthinkable" and take the necessary actions. So when you cause them to think for the first time, your client will most likely become engaged.

It's here, as we said, where breakthroughs can happen. Breakthroughs become possible because the client will begin to get self-motivated. They'll feel an inner drive that makes it easier to follow through on doing what must be done.

All of this happens, by the way, through self-discovery. Meaning the client discovers their source of motivation (i.e. the "finish line") themselves. Our role is merely to ask them questions that bring about the self-discovery.

Repetitive? We Beg To Differ

While we're talking about self-discovery, here's a word of warning for you. Don't fall into the trap of worrying that clients will find your self-discovery questions repetitive.

It may seem that way to you, as you dig and dig...and dig some more. But think about what you're accomplishing by asking questions. You're teaching those you coach to self-discover their own problems.

The self-discovery happens because your clients start to look at their problems internally. As they do, clients dive down to the core issue and what they can control. From there, some clients may also take the next step and identify their own "finish line".

We can see this if we return (yet again!) to the "Lazy Sales Team" example. What might await the team leader as their "finish line"? Beyond just the inner satisfaction of having turned the team's performance around.

What other things might await the team leader at their "finish line"? A few of those could include bonuses (a.k.a. $$$), promotion to a higher position in the leader's company, and a happier overall work environment.

Enjoyment Costs

Enjoyable as these "finish line" pleasures are, they do come at a cost. By now, you probably realize that. Hopefully you see - as the team leader must - that there's going to be short-term pain before the finish line.

In the team leader's case, their short-term pain will come from uncomfortable conversations with the buddy and other team members. It'll probably be painful at least initially to have "the talk" with the sales team.

What's "the talk"? It's the meeting the team leader will likely call. The one where the entire team comes into the conference room and the team leader gets the "fun" of announcing -

"We now have sales goals and I'll be holding all of you accountable to them."

Sounds like a "fun" meeting doesn't it? No, definitely not. It sounds instead like the sort of meeting no one wants to call or sit through.

And it isn't just the meeting either. The team leader and the team members too, will probably feel afterward as though "nothing is the same". Collectively, they'll feel as though there's been - to use some Star Wars lingo - a "disturbance in the force".

This is all to say, in plain English, that the post-meeting changes are going to feel unnatural and painful. At least initially.

But doesn't going to the gym feel painful in those first few sessions? And doesn't quitting smoking feel painful in those first few cigarette-less days? And doesn't [insert your own change!] also feel painful at the start too?

Yes, Yes, and Yes. There's almost always some sort of initial pain when making big, necessary changes. But...well, you know the drill. The "finish line" pleasures make it all worthwhile, right?

Make Them See It

How, though, do we get our client to see this? Not just in the "yeah,

I get it" sense. But in the sense where the "finish line" is so real to them, that it lights a proverbial "fire under their @#$".

You know that self-discovery is the key to this. Plus, you've already gotten some questions earlier in this section to help you on that. Let's go a step further in helping you become adept at guiding your clients to their personal "finish lines".

We can do that, for starters, by wrapping up the sales team example. Here, we might guide the team leader toward their "finish line" with a question like -

"Suppose we were holding your sales team accountable at weekly meetings and holding them to penalties - and production numbers increased so everyone met their sales goals on a regular basis... How would that feel to you (your coaching client)?"

A question like that would be ideal as a "finish line" in the sales team example. Looking beyond that example, what follows are more "finish line"-related questions. These are sub-questions, stemming from the main Finish Line Question (Core Self-discovery Question #4).

Like all sub-questions, these next ones that we'll cover for #4, help to expand and elaborate the primary core question.

Alright, here we go, with the sub-questions for the Finish Line Question.

Sub-Questions For The Finish Line Question

First, some basic ones. These will get your client's emotions moving, as they begin to think about their "finish line". Ask questions like -

1) What do you want?

2) What's the objective here?

3) What do you gain from this?

4) What's exciting to you about this?

5) What's holding you back?

Ok, with those basic questions, you'll be off to a solid start. From there, we can get much more specific too. Going now into questions that drill down to explore the client's goal and their future.

The first "drilling" questions focus on the goal (i.e. the "finish line") itself. Here are two that you can ask your coaching client -

1) Where do you want to be with this in the next three to six months?

2) Of all the possible outcomes, what do you see as the best possible one?

From these first questions, your coaching client can begin developing their sense of the "finish line". Once they have a sense of it, you can employ a second set of questions to help your client become personally attached to their "finish line". The attachment comes about because your client begins picturing how enjoyable it will be to have reached their "finish line".

The second set of questions consists of the following:

1) Suppose we're having a call just like this one, only it's six months or even a year from now, and you achieved your goal. Picture that scenario and tell me what's going on?

2) Now suppose you actually achieve your goal. Describe what it's like for you to have been successful in achieving this goal.

3) What does achieving this goal signify for you, personally? How does it impact your life?

4) On an emotional level, what kind of emotions would you experience as a result of achieving this goal?

Wrap-Up

Ok, those questions (above) can get you started. Using them, you'll be able to "drill"/dig deep into your client's sense of the "finish line". As you do, your client will begin to see the "finish line" more

clearly. And with clarity, they'll realize, on an emotional level, just how enjoyable reaching it will be.

This realization can then make it easier for a client to go through the initial pain(s) required to reach the "finish line". A client will be more willing to confront such pain because they know precisely why it's worthwhile. Their "why?" is the "finish line". And you've helped them to see and feel it with the Finish Line Question (Core Self-discovery Question #4) and its related sub-questions.

While the Finish Line Question can be tremendously helpful to your clients, it won't be enough.

Make sure you don't stop at this point. Stopping now will leave your client in a precarious state. They'll see the "finish line" yet lack a sense of what's needed to get there. This lack of clarity on the client's part exists after Question #4. They see a gap between the future, where the "finish line" awaits, and the present, where they are now. Between those two points (future and present) are the uncomfortable activities our client needs to do to get to their desired result.

Which Uncomfortable Activities?

Which uncomfortable activities are we referring to?

Oh, right! We "forgot" about all that, didn't we (wink, wink).

Of course we did, and that was kind of the point. Think back and you'll recall that we'd previously drilled with our questions to the real problem. But then, before we'd agreed on a course of action - i.e. which uncomfortable activities to do - we'd jumped ahead to look at the finish line. So we shifted onto the future and left out how to get there.

Was this a careless mistake on our part, as coaches? Hardly. Remember, we wanted to get the client revved up and motivated first, before going into the details of what "painful" activities they'd need to engage in.

Our approach is akin to the idea of a "spoonful of sugar to help the medicine go down". We gave our client a taste of the "sugar" with

the Finish Line Question. Having done that, it's now time to address the "medicine" that they'll need to take to solve their challenges.

Our next core question (#5) will cover this. It signals our shift now into getting our clients to self-discover what goes in the gap between the present and their future, "finish line".

As we make the shift, please remember that this process is called self-discovery. So it's NOT the time to begin giving your coaching client content. Stay curious and in full "self-discovery mode". This entails only using questions and NEVER having your statements end with periods.

Periods in particular, are the "devil". Avoid them because they disrupt the dynamic of your coaching call. When you end a statement on a period, it leads your client to ask you questions. If this happens enough, you'll probably lose the client too. So be mindful of the need to avoid periods. Instead of periods, make your client work by ending all of your statements at this point as questions.

With that in mind, let's head on to Core Self-discovery Question #5. This is, as they say in show business, the "moment you've all been waiting for". Why? Because it's the point in our self-discovery process when we can see both the future awaiting our clients and much of the road to it. Follow us into the next section for a look at how that road might appear...>>

Core Self-Discovery Question #5

It's Not About You

A coaching call isn't about you. Or at least it's not supposed to be. Instead, your client is supposed to be the focus of the call.

As a coach, chances are you already know this. So it's not exactly an earth-shattering premise. What might surprise you, though, is that you do need to openly talk about yourself on the call. In fact, there's a definite point in the call when the conversation will be all about you.

What do we mean?

We're referring to what happens in Core Self-discovery Question #5. This question is called the Support Question. Here's what it looks like -

The Support Question =

"What's the Best Way I Can Help You?"

Eight words. That's the length of this question. Yet those eight words certainly pack a punch don't they? In just that short space, two big things are accomplished.

Making Our Entrance

First, we make our "official entrance" into the coaching conversation.

Naturally, we've always been in the call, guiding our client with questions. Yet even with the questions, we never spoke openly about ourselves. The coaching call's focus was 100% on the client. The client was the only recognized party in the coaching conversation taking place on the call.

Now, though, it's time for you to also be recognized as part of that conversation. The way to accomplish this is with that eight-word powerhouse, the Support Question. It lets you enter the coaching conversation in a logical way.

Logically, it makes sense that the conversation would turn to how you can help. That's because the client is now considering what they'll need to do to reach their "finish line". So, being the good coach you are, you want to help them.

Not only that, you want to help the client reach their "finish line" in the best way possible. This ties into the other big thing that the Support Question accomplishes. The question focuses your client on the best way you can help them. It assumes as a given that you can help your client. Which you can...provided you're NOT doing the call inebriated and slurring every other word.

So yes, you can help the client. But what's the best way of helping them?

How Best To Help

That question (how best to help) isn't for you. It's for your client. They need to be the one mulling it over. Actually, "mulling" is too soft a word. Your client needs to "immerse" themselves in the question, thinking seriously about the best way for you to help them.

As they give it serious thought, your clients will have to think for themselves. They won't be able to just passively receive help from you. You're there to help them, sure. But the client needs to give you a sense of what the best way would be.

Why are we doing this? Can't we just tell the client what we see as the best way of helping them? No, not at all.

One reason would be that we don't want to blindly guess and then end up NOT helping our client in the best way possible. There's more to it, though, than just this reason.

Another reason we pose the "how best" question (i.e. The Support Question) is to make our clients work. They need to be working throughout the coaching call, thinking for themselves at each stage. This is how you ensure a client is engaged on the call. It's also how your client self-discovers their way to a breakthrough, "authoring and owning" solutions.

Orange Juice

As far as solutions go, you the coach probably have plenty. One or more of them could be exactly what your coaching client needs. In other words, you might be clear on the best way to help them.

But if the solution comes directly out of your mouth, what you suggest will seem counterfeit to the client. It'll "taste" to them, like orange juice with 10% juice and 90% added ingredients.

Who wants to "drink" that? Not your client. They want more actual "juice" and it has to be "home-made" - coming in large part from them. Otherwise the "drink" won't satisfy your client's "thirst" and they probably won't order it (or your coaching) again.

All that's a long way of reminding you to please, make your clients work. Yes, we talked about this way back earlier in the text. But we're mentioning it again precisely because of that. We don't want you to lose sight of the need to make your clients work, thinking for themselves. Nor do we want you to lose sight of this "author it, own it" concept.

Clear?

Let's go on then and cover some sub-questions for the Support Question (Question #5). As with our earlier sub-questions, these next ones are connected to Core Self-discovery Question (#5) and enrich it.

Softening The Support Question

We'll start on these sub-questions for Question #5 with two that soften the core question. By "soften", we mean that these sub-questions "soften the blow" to your client's senses as they realize you're not just going to help them any old way. That realization can be an unpleasant one for many coaching clients. As such, the following two questions can make your client more comfortable -

1) Just to clarify my understanding, what's the best way I can help you?

2) So I can best assist you - what do you want from ME here?

Speaking Up

In addition to our so-called "softening" questions, we'll also ask sub-questions that get our clients to speak up before receiving help. We ask sub-questions of this second sort so that our clients don't just "coast" by, receiving immediate help from us. This goes back to our point previously on making your clients work and think for themselves. The appropriate sub-questions along these lines are -

1) You know, that's an excellent question. And I have a number of ideas which I'll be sharing with you. Before we do that, though, what are your initial thoughts?

2) All of that sounds good. In addition, is there anything else you could try here?

Working Backward

Next up, with the sub-questions for #5, we're going to focus on working back from the goal to the present. Working backward means that the following sub-questions will "dig" deep to find out how our client can go from their present reality to their longed-for "finish line". We're looking to find out how the client can do it, so we'll then be able to support them in their efforts. The sub-questions here are -

1) "How's your motivation to pursue this goal right now - compared to where it was half an hour ago?"

2) "What difference does your current level of motivation make, as you assess the obstacles in your path to reaching this goal?"

3) "What's one step - just one step - you could take right now to get started in heading toward your ideal future?"

Change From Within

Another way we "dig" is with sub-questions focused on inner change. That means we're "digging" down and probing how our client could change themselves to achieve the outcome(s) they want.

In this way, we want the client to consider how they can - as Gandhi said - "be the change you wish to see".

Your coaching client may not have to fast for weeks like Gandhi to achieve their own goals. Yet they'll still need to take action of some sort.

What action exactly? Ask these sub-questions to find out -

1) What might change about you, personally, which would then bring about a change in your situation?

2) Ok, let's say this situation/challenge can help you to grow as a person and a business owner. Assuming it can, what do you see as the opportunity here?

3) I'm sure you've heard that saying, "what doesn't kill you, makes you stronger". Thinking about that, how could you turn this challenge into a defining moment, so you'll look back on it with pride?

4) Let's talk about your "inner demons" - those being doubts, fears, and other so-called "head trash". Which of those do you believe are preventing you from getting ahead?

    a) What would need to happen for you to be rid of all those "inner demons"?

5) Imagine you're working to your full potential, at the peak of your abilities. If that's the case, what are you going to do?

Options

We can "dig" as well, around Question #5, with sub-questions on options. When we "dig" in this next way, we're asking the client to be very specific on what their options are for taking action. We want them to lay out what they see as all of the options. And we help them do it, through these next sub-questions -

1) Tell me, what are six ways you could tackle this challenge?

2) OK, that's a good start. Now, give me another option.

3) Nice, now what else could you do?

4) OK, so what you mentioned so far as your options are.... [Say your client's options, which they've just given you in #1-#3, above]. Now, with those options in mind, which do you want to pursue?

Obstacles? What Obstacles?

Finally, in "digging" around Question #5, we have one last set of sub-questions. You'll ask these final types of sub-questions in order to identify what your client views as the obstacles in their way to the "finish line".

These obstacles complete the picture you've been forming with all the sub-questions for Question #5. Asking these next sub-questions, you'll be able to see the obstacles, in the client's mind. From there, you'll be able to step into the coaching conversation logically, providing the right kind of help to your client - and basing that help on both the obstacles they tell you and all of the other insights you've gained in this section (#5).

Ready for this last group of sub-questions? Here goes -

1) If changing were easy, you'd already have made the change without my help. Since you haven't, what's making it difficult?

2) What's holding you back and preventing you from getting to your goal?

3) What are you lacking that's needed in order to achieve your goal?

4) I've heard you tell me a number of times that your finances are a roadblock in all this. Let's say they weren't and you had no financial constraints - then what would you do?

5) One of the obstacles you keep talking about is a lack of time. You know your schedule and your routines better than I do, so tell me - what are four ways you could get the time you need?

6) What could you change about the time-frame you have or the objectives you're pursuing, so as to achieve what you want?

7) Think about the resources you have available. Of those, which ones could you leverage to overcome this challenge?

8) Consider your network of contacts. Of the people in your network, who could you turn to for help with this issue?

Sick Of It All

Whew! That was certainly a lot of sub-questions, wasn't it. So many in fact that you're probably sick of hearing that word - "sub-questions".

No need then to make you gag on any more sub-questions, at least in respect to Core Self-discovery Question #5. We're done discussing that core question anyway and are ready to move on.

The next thing we'll be covering is the sixth core self-discovery question. Of all the core questions, this upcoming one (#6) is by far the simplest and most direct one. Let's see why...>>

Core Self-Discovery Question #6

Getting Laser-Focused

Alright, we're now on Question #6, the last of our core self-discovery questions. It's here that you and your coaching client figure out the exact details of what the client is going to do. The two of you accomplish that by getting laser-focused on what needs to be done and when it needs to be done by. Those two elements (what to do and when) are essential to execution by the client of the action(s) that will bring about the changes/results they want.

Given that this sixth question leads to the client executing (i.e. doing/following through), we've named this last question (Question #6) the Execution Question.

Here's what you'll be saying when you ask your client the Execution Question -

The Execution Question =

"What do you need to do...by when?"

Specific, isn't it? Indeed, but it's the "right kind of specific". Meaning you're getting specific with your client from a collaborative standpoint. So you're NOT just giving the client YOUR sense of what they specifically need to do and a deadline for doing it. Instead, you're collaborating with your client and working to have them author the solution.

Defining "Collaboration"

Collaboration is key to the Execution Question. Yet the same can be said about our previous question, the Support Question (#5). To keep you from getting confused, it's important to understand what collaboration means for each respective question (#5 and #6).

The difference is that with the Support Question, you and your client collaborate to develop a general solution. Then, after your client has arrived at their sense of a general solution, you zoom in on the solution's details. What's it specifically going to take to make this happen? We help our clients determine that by asking them the Execution Question.

Hammer Time!

In asking this latter question on execution, we want to hammer out specific actions and steps. We want to reach a point where the client's next steps, after the call, are clear. Achieving such clarity means we can eventually say to our client:

"We want to do ___ by ___(time). So you're going to do ___ by ____(time)."

We can't make a statement like that, however, until after we've collaborated with our client - using the Execution Question. Collaborating in this way ensures we'll get the client's agreement on the means of execution.

Agreement comes because we're NOT telling our client what to do. We're NEVER, if you'll recall, telling them anything. We ask questions instead.

In this case (Question #6), our questions are based around "what do you need to do...by when?" Then, once we've guided our client to the specifics, we can repeat or summarize what they're going to do, rather than telling them what to do.

Now, Question #6 may be the last of our six coaching questions - but that doesn't mean it's the last one we ask. NO! Like the five questions before it - Question #6 comes complete with "digging"/"drilling" questions too.

Let's get into those questions now. As we do, the idea is that you'll be going deeper, after the Execution Question (#6) to clarify and expand that core question.

Burrowing

Two questions allowing you to burrow down on an even deeper level, are the following -

1) "So there's no confusion - what exactly are you agreeing to do?"

2) "What do you see when you think about being fully dedicated to this?"

For the questions above, notice how they both cover "What?" That was, if you'll recall, one of our three "digging" areas within Question #1. So if we see "what" here - the other 2 (Who? and How?) can't be far behind.

And, as it turns out, that's indeed the case. We do in fact use "Who?" and "How?" while burrowing deep on Question #6. Together, "What?", "Who?", and "How?" allow us to see next steps clearly with our coaching client. We gain clarity as a result of now knowing the following -

1) The "What?" - "What activities do you (i.e. your coaching client) need to do or stop?"

2) The "Who?" - "What expectations do you need to manage?"

3) The "How?" - "What habits do you need to set or break?"

In Theory And In Practice

Ok, all this sounds good in theory. But how well does it work in the so-called real world, with actual coaching questions?

Glad you asked. Let's see how it looks, in practice, when we apply Question #6 and its sub-questions. To do that, we'll pay one last visit to our coaching client with the "Lazy Sales Team".

Actually, by this point we probably shouldn't call the sales team "lazy". Maybe "Not-so-lazy", since by now, on the coaching call, the real issue will be very clear to our client. And it's NOT laziness!

Anyway, for our sales team example, Question #6 marks the point on the coaching call when we discuss what the team leader needs to do. What do they need to do, and when do they need to do it by?

Answers to these questions will emerge on the call through a collaborative back-and-forth discussion with our coaching client, the sales team leader.

The "To-Do" List

Here's some of the "to-do's" we might come up with, in our collaborative efforts -

1) Schedule a meeting -- Our coaching client will schedule a meeting of their sales team to discuss production expectations. Scheduling means the team leader sets a time for the meeting and sends out the necessary emails to invite people to the meeting

2) Determine production expectations -- Before the meeting, the team leader will determine what the production expectations will be. This knowledge thereby prepares them for the meeting.

3) Hold the meeting -- The team leader holds the meeting and talks to their sales team about the problem. In doing so, the team leader explains the issue of poor sales. The leader also points out that this issue is partially their own fault - because they haven't helped the team members get focused on the activities that they need to do to get the results that everyone on the team wants.

4) Confirm expectations -- While still at the meeting, the team leader makes sure everyone present (i.e. their ENTIRE sales team) is clear on the expectations that have been laid out at the meeting.

5) Hold more meetings -- After the initial meeting, our client (the team leader) continues having meetings with their sales team to review each member of the team's performance.

6) Make corrections -- If (or when) members of the sales team don't meet their sales numbers/targets, the team leader will have to step in and correct the situation.

...And All By Next Week?

Now, for these 6 action items, our client will have done all of them by next week's coaching call, right?

No, of course not.

Everything we've worked out with our client - those six items - is too extensive to fit in just the one week or so span between coaching calls. Even if it's two weeks between calls, that's still not enough time. The reason is that this "recipe for change", which we've just created with our client (the sales team leader) is going to be a seismic shift. And those things usually don't happen overnight. Nor, in our case, can such shifts be conveniently squeezed in between two coaching calls. It takes time and we must be aware of that.

Remember Chunking?

In addition, we also need to recognize that "seismic shifts" don't happen unless they're presented in manageable chunks.

Remember what we said about chunking in regards to eating an apple? If you'll recall, we'd said that unless you were "unusual" - say, a python or a circus performer - you'd never eat an apple whole. Instead, the idea was that you'd cut the apple into at least a few chunks. Then with the chunks, you'd be able to eat the entire apple.

Your clients' "seismic shifts" are no different. Huge change for them won't happen unless we first break down the desired change and the actions to achieve it. Breaking everything down into bite-sized chunks for our client to do in specific time-frames

And this isn't optional either. It's not like chunking is a sometimes thing. We must chunk or the desired change and the steps to achieve it will NEVER get carried out.

Chunking In Practice

In our sales team example, we could chunk things down by having our client do just three things by next week's call. Those things would be -

1) Set the meeting date and send out an email to all the sales team's members, telling them the meeting time and location.

2) Create an agenda for the meeting, covering all the key points from this coaching call (i.e. the one in progress), along with what the client themselves wants to say.

3) Prepare the production expectations that will be presented at the meeting and also how the client's sales force will report those expectations.

See what we're doing here? We're chunking this down into bite-sized chunks through action steps.

And it doesn't end with just this call. We keep chunking on next week's coaching call too. The chunking we do at that point - on the next call - comes at the end of the call too. When we're covering Question #6 of our core self-discovery questions.

Wait, does that mean?...

Yup! If you guessed that we repeat the six self-discovery questions on the next call...well, "good on you" as folks in Australia say.

Yes, it's true. All of the questions get covered again. We work through the questions once more on the next call, proceeding in exactly the same manner as we've just done. In that process, we're again working to keep our coaching client focused on productive activities. Questions are how we do this. And as we question - if we find that our client had any problems with their actions; we'll once again help them to self-discover the solution to those problems.

Round Two

Here's how it would look during "Round Two" (i.e. the second coaching call) with our client who has a "Lazy Sales Team".

This time around, we find the team leader facing the challenge of an irate sales team. Turns out, many of the team's members aren't exactly thrilled by the idea of tracking their sales numbers. Those team members who oppose tracking view it as bureaucracy and a waste of time.

What's our team leader to do?

We don't know...yet! But we will know, after we work through the self-discovery process with them.

That process commences here, as the team leader describes their team's reaction to tracking. Hearing their response, we'd ask (as coaches) - "What else about that?" And we'd seek to determine whether the problem they've described relates to WHAT (we're having them do), WHO, or HOW.

Since this is Call #2 with our coaching client in the example, this is probably NOT a WHAT problem. That's because we've discussed WHAT on our last call (i.e. call #1 in the sales team example). For this reason, on the second coaching call we'll need to dig at what else could be the matter.

Questions And Commentary

To give you a sense of the second coaching call in our example, here's roughly what it might look like. What follows are basic questions, adapted from our core questions framework, accompanied by some commentary.

1) What's the main issue here for you?

2) What else about that?

From these first two core questions (above) and any related sub-questions, we learn that our client, the team leader, needs to get those on their team to report their sales figures.

3) What can you do to get them to report their numbers?

With this question, we turn the client inward - to look at what they can personally do to make the team comply.

4) What will it look like if they report their numbers?

For #4, we're having the team leader imagine their finish line. The one that they'll reach if the team reports its numbers.

5) What's the best way I can help you here?

As usual for the fifth question area, we enter logically and in a way that still makes our clients work.

6) What do you specifically need to do to get your sales team to report their numbers. And by when?

Perhaps the team leader needs to show their sales team how good it will be to report their numbers and reach the finish line. Maybe that's the issue and people on the team don't fully realize what they'll get by doing the uncomfortable job of reporting their numbers. Maybe. Or maybe there are other things the team leader needs to do. Either way, their next steps get worked out on this final question.

"But Wait, There's More!"

With Question #6 of the six core self-discovery questions having been covered, you might expect this to be the end of our discussion. It would seem that we've covered all that you need to know on self-discovery. Yet that's not the case.

As they say in the infomercials, "But wait, there's more...". And yes, there *is* more. More material for us to cover in this text. Rest assured, that it's NOT a scary amount of additional material. But it's enough that you definitely don't want to skip what's to come, or worse, go on your next coaching call without at least a basic knowledge of it.

In the next section, for example, you'll be getting insights on goal setting and how to help your clients do it effectively. It's big stuff, no question. And if you learn it, you'll be able to help your client bring about more of the positive, "seismic shifts" that they need.

Positive "seismic shifts"? Enough said, right? On to the next section...>>

Rudder-less Boats

"A boat without a rudder".

Know anyone like that?

Not boats, of course, but people. The kind who just "drift" along aimlessly in life. Without a clear direction. Lacking a "rudder" to personally steer their lives with. And ultimately steered by whatever outside forces they encounter.

Again, do you know anyone like that? Maybe you do.

And maybe - just maybe - you coach them.

Indeed, there's a good chance that some or even all of your coaching clients are comparable to "rudder-less boats". Depending on the client, they may be closer to having a "rudder" than others. Yet they still "drift" in parts and lack a definite, fully-developed means of "steering".

Helping Your Clients "Steer"

How do you help your clients "steer"? How do you give them their analogous "rudder"? You can start with the self-discovery questions. As we've seen, the six core questions and their sub-questions can definitely give your clients direction. Ask the questions as we've indicated, and much of the "steering" will take care of itself.

Much of the steering...but not all of it. We alluded to this at the close of the last section - on the Execution Question (Question #6). If you'll recall, we mentioned that you still had more to add to your coaching arsenal - beyond the self-discovery questions. And, if you have a particularly good memory (or just look back a few pages) - you'll also see one of the other things needed in your coaching arsenal.

Goal setting.

It was one of the things we said you needed. A prerequisite, if you will, for being a truly effective coach.

Goals matter because without them, your coaching client is like...

... "A boat without a rudder".

Why Discuss Goals?

Still, you may wonder why we need to talk about goals. After all, doesn't a coaching client already have them? Isn't that what they come to us for - to help them achieve those goals?

Sure, no argument there. Your client probably does have their own goals. And yes, achieving their goals is undoubtedly the client's motivation in hiring us.

Nonetheless, we still need to cover goals and goal setting here.

Why?

Two reasons.

The first is so we can be absolutely clear and "on the same page" with our client - on what it is that they're firmly resolved to achieving. What goal is it that we're coaching them toward?

Whatever that goal is, write it down. Get the goal specifically defined in writing so it can be the "rudder" for both your client and you. One to two sentences is fine for this. And make it clear. You don't want the goal statement to be, for example, about "artificially facilitating business development within a nexus of economically viable hubs".

Artificially Facilitating Business Development Within A Nexus Of Economically Viable Hubs

Um....Stupid question here, but what the heck does that even mean?

Your guess is as good as ours. Such phrases could make sense to those who write them. Those business "visionaries", if you will. And please, no disrespect to them. But goal statements like that, which lack immediate clarity, probably aren't going to do you and your coaching client much good. It's far better to push for clarity with your goal statements.

This way, your client - for their part - can "chart their course" more clearly. The written goal statement will be a further part of their "rudder".

Ocean Tides

With a clear, written goal statement from your client - you as a coach will also be guided. In your case, the goal statement will keep you from inadvertently pulling your client, like the ocean tides, toward a particular objective.

You need guidance, despite already having the self-discovery questions we've discussed. Those questions will keep you from guessing about much of the call and how it should go. Yet you still run the risk of incorrectly setting the agenda for a coaching call. Unless, of course, you've set goals with your client and you have those goals defined in writing, with a short, clear statement.

Ok, so that's one reason why it's necessary for us to discuss goals and goal setting here, in this section. Along with that first reason, goal setting also matters because our clients may not have effectively

set their own goals. In fact, they may be utterly clueless on how to even set goals. Unaware that there's actually a very specific system for determining one's goals.

Lucky for our clients, we know that system. And we'll be covering it now, so you can help your coaching clients to set goals in the most effective way possible.

Our System For Setting Goals

Of all the goal-setting systems out there, this particular one is undoubtedly the *smart*-est. And that's not just our opinion either. No, definitely not. The reason is that this goal-setting system is literally called the S.M.A.R.T. method.

As it's an abbreviation, here's what S.M.A.R.T. stands for -

S - SPECIFIC
M - MEASURABLE
A - ATTAINABLE
R - RELEVANT
T - TIME-SPECIFIC

Oh, and just so we're clear - this method ain't exactly new. Unlike many coaches and trainers, we're NOT going to take credit for something that's already known and established.

So no, we didn't have a sudden "flash of genius" and suddenly come up with S.M.A.R.T. This method of goal setting has been around so long, so many years, that it might even seem *stupid* to mention now.

Maybe, but here's the thing - just knowing an abbreviation won't do you any good. Nor will it do you any good to have even a few written descriptions of what each letter in S.M.A.R.T. means, in greater depth.

All that's good, but it's not very actionable is it? It gives you some food for thought - but then you have to do the work of figuring out how to incorporate S.M.A.R.T. into your coaching calls.

Plus, nearly all discussions of the S.M.A.R.T. method aren't tackling it alongside the core self-discovery framework we've discussed. With this in mind, our discussion now of the S.M.A.R.T. Method doesn't seem so *stupid.* And this is all assuming you've already heard of S.M.A.R.T. Which might not be the case.

Applying S.M.A.R.T.

Enough talk though. Let's cut to the chase and see exactly how you can apply the S.M.A.R.T. Method on your coaching calls.

How do you incorporate the S.M.A.R.T. method on calls with your clients? It's simple really. You ask questions, like in the other areas we've covered. That same question-based process, where you stay curious, remains the key.

To help you succeed with the S.M.A.R.T. method, here are questions and guidance on each of the letters in the abbreviation. We'll kick this off as a high school sports team might, with some spirit and cheering.

"Gimme an S!"

S - Specific

Getting specific about goals means that your coaching client is crystal clear on what they want to achieve. Questions to help them in this area include -

- What is it that you specifically want to achieve?
- Jump ahead and think about achieving your goal. What's it look like at that point?
- What do you think is a realistic deadline for achieving the goal(s) you've stated?
    - By the deadline, what will you specifically have achieved?

"Gimme an M!"

M - Measurable

Measurable means that you and your clients have a clear means of measuring their progress toward achieving the given goal(s). To help your client make their goals measurable, ask questions like the following -

- For this goal you have, how can you define it so that you have a clearer basis on which to measure your progress?
- If more sales are your goal, how do quantify that?
    - How many "more sales" do you need exactly?
- You talked about wanting to become a "top producer" - what exactly does that mean?
    - How will you know when you're a "top producer"?
    - What stats and numbers will prove it?

"Gimme an A!"

A - Actionable

The "A" in S.M.A.R.T. stands for actionable. When we focus on it, our aim is to have clients consider the attainability of the goal(s) they set. We want them to think, really think, about whether each goal is something they can realistically achieve themselves. We'll get our clients thinking in this direction through questions such as -

- How likely is it that you'll be able to achieve this goal?
- Given your current abilities, are you at the point where this is indeed possible?
- What could possibly get in the way of you achieving this goal?
- Who else must you depend on to achieve this goal?
    - How can you re-frame your goal, so as to no longer be dependent?

"Gimme an R!"

R - Relevant

Goals are relevant when your client gives a __[*four letter expletive*]__ about them.

Yeah, we're talking about those kind of goals - the ones that your client not only cares about, but will follow through on as well. How do we identify *those* kind of goals? We'll do it by asking questions along the lines of -

- What makes this goal relevant to you?
- Why do you care about achieving this?
- How important is achieving this goal for you, on a scale from one to ten?
- What are you prepared to do without in order to pursue this goal?

"Gimme a T!"

T - Time-specific

Nothing gets people moving like a deadline. With that in mind, your client should incorporate deadlines into their goal-setting. Any goals they set must have a clear time in which those goals are to be achieved. This time-specific component of goal-setting can be handled with the following questions -

- When are you planning to get started?
- When exactly is it that you'll achieve this?
- What's the specific deadline you have for reaching your goal?

"What's that Spell?"

S.M.A.R.T.

How are we going to set goals with our clients?

With the S.M.A.R.T. method.

Fired Up!

With all that cheering we just did you're probably fired up right now. Ready to go out and rock your next coaching call. Hang on for just a minute longer, though. We still have another BIG chunk of material for you to learn. That material lies in our next section.

Among the things to be covered, you'll be learning how to troubleshoot. This means you'll see what to do when, as a coach, you (and NOT your client) run into problems. How do *you* handle those often harsh, "road bumps" in your own efforts as a coach? It's all ahead. Stay tuned!...>

MODULE 9 Troubleshooting

What You Can Expect

Ready to learn troubleshooting? If you're coming straight from the last section, you probably are. In that case, you're eager to learn how to troubleshoot on your coaching calls - when you the coach hit problems of your own. As promised, we'll be talking all about troubleshooting in this section.

Along the way, be mindful that we're no longer speaking purely in terms of self-discovery coaching. Pure self-discovery has been our focus so far, but that's about to change. For the troubleshooting ideas and strategies that we'll cover are applicable to both self-discovery and content-based coaching. This means that you'll learn what to do when a coaching call isn't going well (i.e. troubleshooting) while also gaining deeper insights into how self-discovery and content-based coaching fit together.

Now without further ado, let's proceed. Turning to troubleshooting and how to do it when you as a coach experience challenges with your clients.

We begin with a look at one of the most important considerations when troubleshooting.

Client Routines

First, look at the people you coach. As you do, it's important to think about how those you coach conduct themselves each day - in business and in life. Reflect on your client's routine conduct and you'll be able to avoid problems rooted in a lack of understanding between you and the client. Instead of problems, you'll be "on the same page" and able to coach more effectively.

To get you started on this, here are some questions. Ask these to clarify your understanding of how a client conducts themselves on a regular basis.

- When it comes to delegating tasks - where are you at, on a scale from one to ten?
- How often do you take time to plan and reflect?
- When provided with outside resources - how effective are you at taking and using them effectively?
- What's a typical day/week look like for you?
- Do you typically struggle with procrastination, delaying things that you know need to be done?
- How supportive are your home and work environments - in helping you advance toward your goals?
- When you start a given project, how likely are you to finish it?
- As you interact with others (coworkers, friends, employees, coaches etc.), do you tend to communicate too much or too little?

For the questions above, you should aim to ask them on your first few coaching calls with a client. This way you'll begin on the "right foot" with the client and avoid being "out of step" with them.

Nonetheless, don't "kick yourself" (i.e. despair) if you haven't asked questions like those above, and you're already well into coaching one or more of your clients. If you're at that point, you can still ask the questions above or you can come up with similar ones. Asking in this case can only help, whether in overcoming coaching difficulties you face or simply in deepening your understanding of clients.

Resistance

Another way we can troubleshoot, working through challenges we face while coaching, is to assess whether resistance truly exists. In other words, is our client truly the source of the resistance or difficulties we're facing as coaches?

It could indeed be that the client, and possibly other forces as well, are responsible for the resistance. But we can't just blindly assume that's the case. No, we need to actively think about it. That means looking not only at the client, but also at the "other forces" we alluded to.

What exactly are these "other forces"?

"Other Forces"

We're referring here to those things in a client's life that weigh them down and/or hold them back.

As an analogy, you can think of these negative forces as puppies.

What's the connection, you ask?

The connection is that a puppy dog often weighs its owner down.

Apologies if you're an animal lover reading this. But the fact remains that there's more to having a puppy than just coddling it and thinking how cute it is.

If you own a puppy, you also need to take care of it. And that requires heaps of time, money, and attention.

Plus, there are plenty of moments when the puppy doesn't look so cute. Times when you'd rather kick it than coddle it. Not that you would kick it, of course. But you may want to, when returning home for example, to find that the "darling" puppy has "feasted" on sofa cushions - while turning your living room into a bathroom.

Our point in all this isn't to make you hate puppies. Rather, the idea is that a puppy dog symbolizes those forces in your client's life which can weigh them down.

These forces don't have to be 100% negative either. After all, puppies aren't always destroying homes and enraging their owners. Yet puppies still weigh their owners down, in terms of what they require (time, attention, money, etc.) and what an owner can't do because they have a puppy (live in certain apartment buildings, go to certain places, etc.).

Beyond their owners, a puppy can also negatively impact non-owners too. In this case, the pup's barking could keep neighbors up at night. Or a non-owner could find the animal nipping at their heels. Either case furthers our analogy of those forces which can weigh down or hold back your coaching clients - keeping clients from achieving their goals.

Having explained it in-depth, our "puppies" analogy may seem clear to you now. Unfortunately, though, the real-life "puppies" your clients struggle with won't be nearly as clear. In fact, you may have absolutely no clarity whatsoever on what "puppies" weigh down and impede your clients' progress.

What's a coach to do in this case?

Ask Questions

Ask questions, of course.

Question your client so as to discover the "puppies".

To help you in that, here are some reliable "puppy-revealing" questions -

- What is it that prevents you from achieving what you want?
- What is it that's stopping you from going all-out to reach your goal?
- What do you see as sources of "weight" slowing you down?
- Are there certain things that you feel burdened by or resigned toward?
- What are some things that seem to continually aggravate you?

Counteract The Negative

Once you've identified the negative forces ("puppies") weighing down one of your clients, it's time to take action. Time for you to counteract those negative forces, so they no longer serve as sources of resistance - blocking both your client and your efforts in helping the client.

The key to counteracting the negative lies with its opposite - the positive.

Meaning you have your client identify those forces in their life which fill them with a sense of energy and aliveness. If your client can articulate those positive forces, they can then work to add more of the positive forces, while reducing the negative forces.

For the positive forces, let's use an analogy that's as off-beat and unusual as the one we employed in describing negative forces. On the positive side, we'll say that these forces are analogous to vacations.

Vacations are a fitting analogy because in most cases, a vacation is an enjoyable experience for those who take it. So enjoyable are vacations, in fact, that most people crave more of them.

What makes vacations so enjoyable?

There's obvious stuff like the destination and the hotel.

Then there's also a second and arguably greater reason. And that's the feeling of actually being on vacation. What's better than this feeling - a "vacation high" if you will - where you feel fresh and relaxed for the first time in a long, long time?

It's a great feeling - one that certainly beats the negative feelings that come from those "puppies" (i.e. negative forces) in life.

The goal then is to have your coaching client take more "vacations". That is, your clients should fill their lives with more of the things which, like a vacation, inspire them and motivate them to keep pushing toward the achievement of their goals.

Crazy Talk?

If you're confused and don't understand the analogies we've just used ("puppies" / "vacations"), here's what we're saying in nice and clear terms -

1) Have your client identify the negative forces slowing them down or blocking them entirely. Asking questions enables your client to do this.

2) Have your client identify the positive forces lifting them up, rejuvenating them, and filling them with the energy needed to press onward their goals. Once more, questions are the keys to this.

3) Determine with your client, using still more questions - how they can increase the positive forces, while reducing the negative forces.

How's that?

Are you clearer on what we're getting at?

Assuming you are, let's move on.

Identifying Positive Forces

Up next, let's look at how you can help your clients identify the positive forces in their lives.

How do you do that? With questions, of course.

To get you started, here are some initial questions you can ask -

- What fills you with a sense of excitement and aliveness?
- What are the things that you consider to be most uplifting?
- What causes you to get up each day and press on, even when the going gets tough?
- What media (movies, music, books, etc.) or experiences (travel, exercise, volunteering, etc.) cause you to feel alive and inspired?

Beyond Relaxation

The questions above, though useful, are NOT the only ones you should ask. You'll need to ask others too, whenever you're identifying the positive forces that impact your clients.

Additional questions are necessary because positive forces are NOT always purely relaxing things. Sometimes, coaching clients may be inspired toward action by those things which fill them with a sense of urgency.

In this case, a client's feelings are of urgency, rather than calm relaxation. The sense of urgency can then push the client toward doing those positive things which will lead them to achieve their goals.

To help you and your clients identify these urgency-related positive forces, here are two quick questions -

- What fills you with a sense of urgency and the desire to take immediate and decisive action?
- What is it that provides you with a "kick in the pants" to get moving?

With the questions we've covered - on positive and negative forces - your coaching client should be able to identify where

such forces exist in their lives. The next step is to determine how your client can increase the amount of positive forces while decreasing the amount of negative ones. As usual, we'll be helping our client on this through the use of questions.

On the negative side, here are questions to ask - in the interest of removing or reducing negative forces.

- What one thing could you do - now or in the immediate future - that would reduce the burden on you?
- [*For an issue facing your client*] - What part of that could you get rid of altogether, or at least reduce so it has little-to-no impact on you?

Next, on the positive side, here are a few questions that will allow your client to increase the things which lift them up and energize them.

- What might you do to surround yourself with more of the things which give you a boost and inspire you?
- What could you do to feel more excited and more motivated in working toward your goals?

Back To The Big Picture

Ok, that does it for our discussion on positive and negative forces. Let's "zoom out" now, in the sense of focusing once more on the big picture.

If you'll recall, we'd gotten into talking about positive and negative forces from the standpoint of troubleshooting. Troubleshooting meant working through those challenges we often face while coaching. Positive and negative forces were part of troubleshooting, because they can contribute to the resistance we face when trying to help our clients. Accordingly, we need to identify the positive and negative forces - as we've just done.

As we continue to troubleshoot, it's necessary to consider whether we've fully engaged our coaching clients. Engagement matters because without it clients can easily become resistant or at least detached to some extent.

How To Engage

How do we engage our clients? The questions we've covered throughout this entire text will certainly do that. Still, in the interest of troubleshooting now - let's go one step further. Let's expand your arsenal with a list of some specific engagement-focused things you can do. The following list will be particularly useful at those points when a client's lack of engagement is derailing your efforts to coach them.

Here's the list of engagement-focused things you can do -

- Use visual displays/graphics whenever you get the chance
- Challenge your client's beliefs or how they think
- Position yourself so you have something that your clients need or desire
- Bring fresh ideas into the discussion
- Tell stories from your personal life - showing for example a time when you made the same mistake they did
- Address your client by name
- Take a more active interest in what your client has to say
- Convey to your client that you have at least a basic awareness of their business or the situation they're in
- Add humor where appropriate to spice up the coaching conversation
- As appropriate, look for ways to "game-ify" (create a game around) the things you and your client are covering on the coaching call, along with what the client themselves needs to do

Looking Inward

Our discussion of engagement is a natural transition into the second thing to examine when troubleshooting.

Recall how the first thing to examine was the client. We looked at how the problems we face could rest with the person we're coaching. Not necessarily in the "finger-pointing" sense, where we'd explicitly blame our client. But more in the sense of us as coaches not understanding our client's day-to-day routines or the outside forces (positive and negative) that impact them. And, not engaging the client either.

The next thing to examine in troubleshooting - after assessing how the problem could rest with the client - is whether we, as coaches, are the true explanation. Or, to put it more simply, are the problems we're facing coming directly from the way we're coaching?

Maybe they are. And that's precisely why we need to look in the proverbial mirror, and assess what mistakes we might be making as coaches. For if we can identify our own coaching mistakes, we can then "regain our footing", if you will, on the call.

Out On The Ice

As an image of what we're doing here - in looking at our own coaching mistakes - consider a person who's slipping and sliding on an icy surface. That's us! Like the person on the ice, we seem to "slip" and "slide" about on those coaching calls that don't go well. Our goal on such calls is to "skate" through, gracefully reaching the end of the call. But on those difficult calls, it's like we keep falling on the ice.

The ice and the conditions around it could be the source of our problems. This would be analogous to how the coaching client could be the source of the difficulty. Perhaps they are the source, but we need to also look at ourselves.

In the ice analogy, looking at ourselves means considering, for example, whether we're trying to "skate" yet wearing tennis shoes. If that's the case in the analogy, no wonder we keep slipping and sliding around. In the same way, if we're making certain coaching mistakes - no wonder a coaching call isn't going well.

Coaching Mistakes

What are those coaching mistakes? The ones we must root out while troubleshooting, so as to get a coaching call back on track?

We can start with the mistakes coaches often make when asking clients questions. For simplicity's sake, we've arranged these mistakes into a handy list. Our list includes both the mistakes and solutions for each.

Our list of mistakes when asking questions is as follows:

1) Giving your client questions that show them what you think (your opinion) of what they've said

What a "great" way to let your client respond independently! Actually, it's not. Not even close. These kind of questions, which contain your opinion inside, will kill any independence on the client's part. Rather than responding independently, your client will instead answer the questions based on your opinion and not their own.

How to correct this mistake: Keep the questions in a client's "world", by framing things in the words they've used.

2) Not digging deep enough for the cure

Maybe there's only one immediate culprit to blame for your client's difficulties. Maybe. But if you remember the example of the sales team - the example we've practically beaten to death; you'll know that there's more to a client's problems than meets the eye. This is why it's a cardinal sin to not dig deep down as we ask questions.

How to correct this mistake: Stop thinking that there's a single "silver bullet", some simple thing you can immediately identify that explains all of your client's headaches. Instead, use your questions to dig, dig, and dig some more.

3) Using questions that are "closed" or focused on a specific solution

Asking "closed" questions is a mistake because it doesn't encourage your client to speak up with an answer/solution.

Also, on a related note, you should avoid questions which focus on a specific solution. These kind of questions give your client an answer, while "disguising" that answer inside the question.

The "disguise", however, usually proves ineffective. Most clients just aren't fooled by it. They'll see through to the thinly-veiled solution/answer you've just handed them. And, to your chagrin, clients will then take this answer or at least be inclined toward it.

How to correct this mistake: Stay curious and refrain from "closed" questions. Seek instead to open your questions up, thereby encouraging your client to contribute their own independent answers.

4) Asking unfocused questions

Questions can be too focused, as we've seen with the leading questions in the previous mistake. Yet you can also make the opposite error too. Asking questions that are unfocused and just seem to ramble on.

"Ramble on" may work for Led Zeppelin, as the title for one of their rock songs; but it won't work for you as a coach when asking your client questions. If you "ramble on" with your questions, your client may become confused, frustrated, or just stop being engaged.

Fortunately, this mistake is among the easier ones to fix.

How to correct this mistake: Wait. Gather your thoughts. And then speak.

5) Interrupting and not interrupting

Interrupting is a double-edged sword in coaching. Interrupt your client too much and the interruptions will, like a "sword", cut down your coaching efforts. Your client won't want to work with your since you clearly don't care for what they have to say.

At the same time, though, not interrupting is also a problem. In this latter case, interruptions can actually serve as an effective "sword" that cuts through the "fat" and "excess" on a call. Here, you can get a call refocused and back on what matters through interruptions. If that is, you have the chutzpah to interrupt.

How to correct this mistake: If you're interrupting too much, pause as your client is speaking. Wait until they're done and as you do, simply count slowly to three. Then if the client's truly done talking, it'll be your turn to speak.

If, on the other hand, you need to interrupt more - work to do more of it, as appropriate, on your coaching calls. Don't swing a full 180-degrees into being an interruption "monster". But understand that you can and should interrupt when it makes sense. And there are definitely times for that.

Spilling Over

Unfortunately, the mistakes we've just covered are not the only ones a coach can make. There's a plethora of other mistakes too. These mistakes, in turn, extend well beyond just asking questions, spilling over into other areas of coaching.

In the interest of troubleshooting and having smoother calls, here are some of the other coaching mistakes -

1) Trying to do coaching calls in a noisy or distracting environment

If you're at home with the TV up at full volume and your kids screaming...well, you might not want to ALSO try coaching. Just a thought. Since your client will probably hear the noises and find it terribly distracting. Not that they'll tell you. Not in most cases at least. But your client will still be distracted and it will impact their responses on the call.

2) Not respecting your time and other people's time too

What a concept! You mean it's NOT a good idea to cancel coaching calls at the last minute? Or that you as a coach need to be mindful of how you're using your time? Yes on both accounts.

First, respect your time. That means not squandering it or letting others do that for you. Stay focused and on track. Then do the same for others, respecting their time.

While we're on this idea of respecting people's time, let's state the obvious - Don't cancel on your coaching clients at the last minute. Seriously. That kind of behavior is unprofessional in the eyes of your clients. And it's counterproductive to your own efforts, since you're unable to be structured and organized.

You can still cancel calls, of course. But try to do it weeks ahead of time.

As guidance on canceling calls, consider what we do at ICC. In our case, we'll typically send our clients emails one month or more ahead of a cancellation or change in plans. That way our clients know and can plan accordingly.

Planning isn't just about dates on the calendar either. To truly plan ahead, in a way that respects everyone's time (yours and that of other people too), you need to also plan out the calls themselves. This entails scripting your calls in advance. So you know exactly what's going to be covered on each call and you avoid wasting time trying to figure out what a call's agenda should be. There's no "winging it", in other words.

3) Getting frustrated with clients who seem lacking in motivation

You know what's frustrating? Diligently coaching a client, really working, to fire them up. And then...finding the client as unmotivated and uninspired as ever.

Pretty darn frustrating isn't it? But you can't let the frustration get to you. You need to maintain your composure, even when it seems like your client is utterly lacking in motivation. Even when they also seem to lack confidence, skill, and knowledge too.

At times like these, hard as it may be, the key is to RELAX!!

Relax, and understand that your client is NOT "uncoachable". You can still work with them and help them.

You'll only be able to do that, though, if you change your outlook. So in place of frustration, you'll need to take a relaxed and healthy

outlook on your clients - even those frustrating and seemingly "uncoachable" ones.

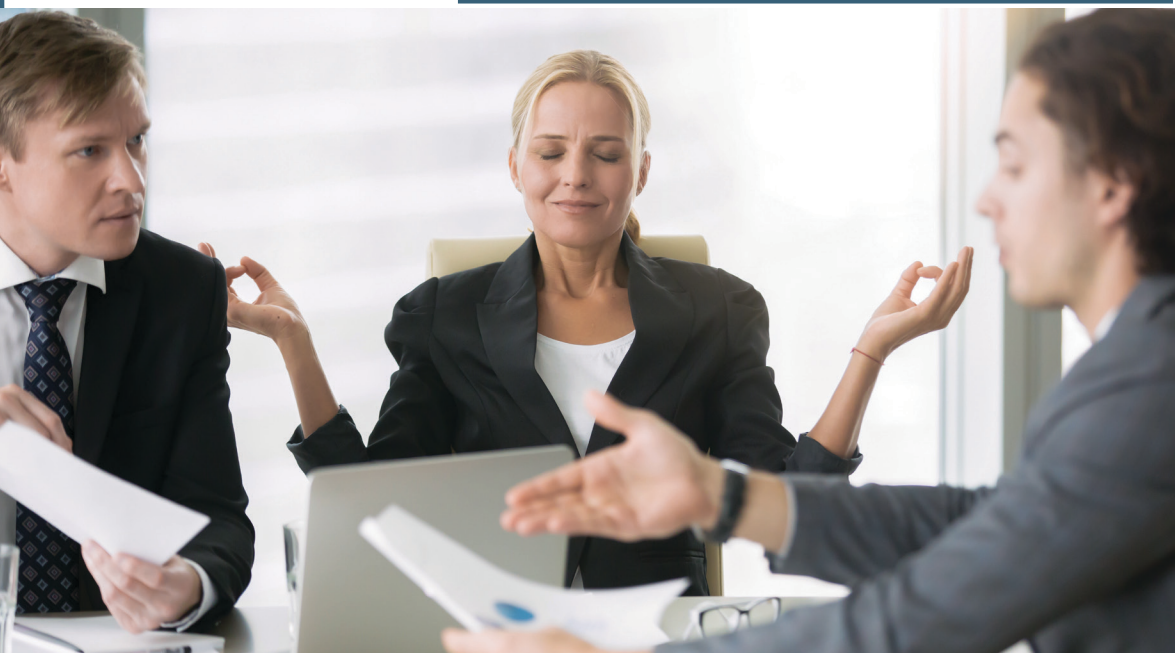
The Right Outlook

What does this relaxed, healthy outlook consist of?

Funny you should ask. It's actually the topic of our next section. In that next section, the conclusion of this text, we'll cover the right outlook for coaching frustrating clients. And we'll also be giving you a few more "golden nuggets" to enrich your coaching efforts....>>

NOTES

CONCLUSION



Frustration

Frustrating, isn't it?

Trying to coach people who just don't get it. You know the type. They're the "uncoachable" ones. The clients you have who seem unable to make any significant progress toward their goals.

What is it with them? As a coach, you're probably at a loss. Surely, after all you've done to coach them - these clients should be achieving what they want. Or at the very least, they should be further along.

And yet...there they are. The "uncoachable" clients, looking as "uncoachable" as ever.

Frustrating isn't it?

Sure. And you have every reason to be frustrated. But amid your frustration, it's worth considering who else might be frustrated.

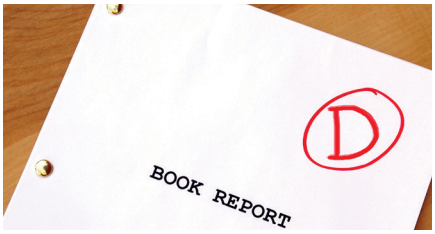
The "who else" would be your "uncoachable" clients. Put yourself in their shoes for a moment. Imagine the frustration these clients probably feel. Imagine what it's like for them to feel as though they're not making significant progress in reaching their goals.

Frustrating isn't it?

Sure. And it'll stay that way until you, the coach, change how you view these "uncoachable" clients.

From "Uncoachable" to "Coachable"

The change comes with the relaxed and healthy outlook we alluded to in the previous module. Adopt this outlook and the whole game changes. Suddenly the "uncoachable" start looking a whole lot more coachable.



Why?

Because you realize that these clients are the ones who need you the most.

As an analogy, the situation is comparable to a student struggling in math class. The kind of student who earns a "D" on so many assignments that people think their name is "D".

Is this student "unteachable"?

Of course not.

But imagine if the math teacher took such a view. Resigning themselves to the idea that this particular student in their math class just couldn't be helped.

Scary isn't it? To think of what could happen to the student in this case. If the math teacher - whom the student trusted and looked to for guidance - essentially gave up on them.

As a coach, your situation is comparable to that math teacher.

Knowing that, what are you going to do?

Are you going to resign yourself to the "uncoachable" idea? Or will you keep going?

Hopefully you'll keep going.

But going on can be difficult. Frustrating too.

So how do you hang in there?

Excitement

You can start with the change in your outlook. To make that change, begin by ridding yourself of any thoughts that your clients may be "uncoachable". In place of those negative, counterproductive thoughts - adopt a new outlook. The new outlook will be one of excitement.

Excitement over what?

Over what you can enjoy if you're able to succeed with these "uncoachable" clients. Think about that for a moment. Just imagine how satisfied you'll feel after having persevered in helping those who supposedly can't be helped. You'll feel as great, or even better, than a track star coming from behind to finish in first place. Talk about an incredible feeling. The kind which positively electrifies you.

Want to enjoy that feeling of supreme satisfaction?

It's well within your reach.

But to get there, to reach this coach's equivalent of the "Finish Line" - you'll need to change your outlook. Changing it, as we've said, from one of frustration, over your supposed "blockhead" clients, to one of excitement, over what awaits when you ultimately triumph in helping these clients.

Success On Steroids

Curious what awaits you at your coaching "finish line"?

Well, there's that feeling of supreme satisfaction which we keep talking about. There's also the obvious tangible stuff (income,

referrals, more clients etc.). And then, arguably best of all, there's the opportunity to enjoy "success on steroids".

"Success on steroids" means that you're able to live vicariously through your clients' successes. That goes for both your dream clients and those "uncoachable" ones. Whenever either of them win, you the coach get to share in their victories.

It's no different than a basketball coach, for example, getting to share in their team's victory on the court. You probably won't be popping bottles of champagne with your clients, as a basketball coach might - following a major win. But you'll still be able to enjoy your client's successes. Living vicariously through success after success after success after...

...You get the idea. Your clients collectively are going to have many, many, many successes. So many that the number of client successes vastly exceeds your own. This is what we refer to as "success on steroids".

It's a worthwhile destination, wouldn't you say? Because let's face it, you can only achieve so much on your own. You can only sell so much real estate, for example. Or win so many awards. Or achieve whatever else you're after. Whatever it is...you can only achieve so much of it on your own. There's a limit in other words, on what you the individual alone can achieve.

But imagine if it's not just you. Imagine if the achievements are coming from other people. As in your coaching clients. Imagine what it feels like to have all of your successes and then ALSO get to share in the successes of your clients.

That's a lot of success isn't it? So much success that you might need an aircraft hangar to hold it all. As opposed to just a trophy case, which might be enough to hold your own successes.

"It Ain't All Sunshine and Rainbows"

Even with all the successes, though - there will still be plenty of disappointment and failure. Meaning that you as a coach won't have only "sunny days" and only "smooth sailing" in your work with clients.

You know that, of course. And reading this now, you're probably in total understanding that when coaching ,"it ain't all sunshine and rainbows", as they say.

But can you keep this sense of perspective when you're in the heat of "battle" as a coach? When you're "fighting" alongside your clients, trying to help them win out. Giving it your all and things just aren't working. Or the client seems unmotivated. Or you'd rather be off doing something else. At all of these moments and many others. Moments when you begin to wonder why even bother. When the clouds of doubt begin to circle in your mind and you forget yourself for a moment. Questioning for a split second whether you're meant to be coaching.

In those moments, hold to the vision we've described here. Draw inspiration and renewed strength as a coach by reminding yourself of what coaching is all about. Recalling the idea of "success on steroids". And the incredible electrifying feeling that comes from winning out with your "uncoachable" clients.

Think too about those clients themselves. How they feel amid continual frustration and self-doubt. Remembering how these "uncoachable" clients are looking to you, even if they don't admit it. They're counting on you to show up, bring your "A" game and deliver.

Will you?

Absolutely. Many pages before, at the start of this text, your ability to perform might have been in doubt. In question. Uncertain. But now, having reached the end, with this conclusion section; let there be no question whatsoever.

You're ready.

Why You're Ready

Why?

Because of everything we've covered. Everything in this entire text.

From page one up to this point, you've been carefully learning what's needed to coach more effectively. Recognizing, for example, the distinct difference between self-discovery and content-based coaching. Learning too, the need to "stay lazy" and dig deep for your client's pains. And, of course, we can't forget the questions. ALL of the questions. All six of our core questions, along with the myriad of sub-questions for each. Those questions alone are enough to greatly assist most coaches. But we didn't stop there, did we? No, you've also been provided with conceptual material on the mechanics of coaching, along with actionable material on goal setting. And topping it all off, like a cherry on an ice-cream sundae - you learned various methods for troubleshooting, on those "bad days" that affect all coaches.

Having covered ALL of that, we can safely say that you're ready.

Ready to go out and help your coaching clients achieve what they're after.

Take confidence in that.

And go now to do what you do best.

That thing which you love doing, deep down.

Go now and....

COACH!

The 6 Core Self-Discovery Questions

01 The Catalyst Question

"What's the most important thing for us to talk about today?"

The clock is ticking as you begin your coaching call. Ask the catalyst question and you'll get down to business ASAP, not wasting any precious time. Using this question, you re-focus your client on what the key issue is for the call. Refocusing in this way cuts through the day-to-day "noise" in the client's world and trains their attention on what really matters.

02 The Probe Question

"What else about that...?"

With Question #2, you begin the process of digging down to find the truth of what really "ails" your client. Ask this question once and then continue asking it in different ways - the more the merrier. That's the key to digging. You dig and you dig and you dig and you dig and you...

03 The Pinpoint Question

"What's the MAIN issue here for YOU?"

Ahh the Pinpoint Question! It's powerful "medicine" because it gets your client beyond merely thinking about the "symptoms" of their challenge. In place of the "symptoms", the pinpoint question allows the client and you as coach to pinpoint the MAIN issue. What's that MAIN issue for your client specifically? You'll find out by pinpointing it with this powerful "tonic" of a question.

04 The Finish Line Question

"What's your ideal end goal here?"

"A spoonful of sugar makes the medicine go down." Really? Then here's where you as a coach give your client that "spoonful". Ask the finish line question to "sweeten" your client's outlook on what's ahead for them. Using this question, you'll get the client focused on the reward (i.e. the "finish line") that's waiting for them, if they make the needed changes. Get their minds on the pleasure of the finish line and NOT on all of the "pain" required to get there. When you do, your client will find it easier to do what's needed now to reach their "finish line" later on.

05 The Support Question

"What's the best way I can help you?"

Like a surgeon's knife, this question accomplishes big things despite its tiny size. First, the Support Question brings you officially into the coaching conversation as a recognized participant. Not only that, the Support Question also focuses your client on the best way you can help them. When you client thinks in those terms - of how you can help - they'll feel a sense of ownership toward the solution you provide and they'll want to apply it.

06 The Execution Question

"What do you need to do... by when?"

By this point in the coaching call, you're practically at the end. Your client will have arrived at their sense of a general solution. All that remains is for you to now zoom in on the solution's details. Hammer out those details with the help of Question #6 and your client's next moves, after the call, become abundantly clear.

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