

# APPENDIX

## COACHING FOR INFLUENCE

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Coaching is one of the most significant methods for gaining influence over others. While usual discussions of coaching focus on the “helping others” aspect, which is, of course, important, little focus has been given to the concept of coaching for influence.

The interest in coaching has been rising over the past five years, and coaching is being hailed as one of the hottest human service fields. This growth is expected to continue as more corporations are employing coaches to boost employee productivity and results. There are coaches for everything: relationships, business, writing, peak performance, wellness, and fitness; you name it, there is someone who coaches it.

Though you have likely heard of coaching, I don’t expect you’ll have heard of it treated in the way we cover it here.

Appropriate for a book on subliminal persuasion, coaching is a form of subliminal persuasion and one that nobody wants you to know.

Consider it this way: As a coach, you have ethically and directly moved yourself into a position of influence over your clients. They are, essentially, seeking your advice and guidance because they want to change their behavior or have a strong desire to believe that their life experience could be improved from what it is today.

Dave Lakhani's book, *Persuasion: The Art of Getting What You Want*, identifies three necessary preconditions for effective persuasion: motivation, participation, and reward. Coaching clients are motivated to interact; this is demonstrated by them seeking out coaching in the first place, or they are motivated to interact because it is a requirement for their job. Either way, they are motivated. Coaching demands huge participation, as the client is called upon to behave differently, going toward the changes he wants to make. Reward comes from changes in the self-concept and resulting feedback from the environment. Combined, the coaching relationship is a fertile place for persuasion.

While all coaches must be ethical and have integrity, it is also important that coaches be comfortable with the amount of influence they have over their clients. I have been coaching and consulting for more than eight years, and I know, undoubtedly, that I have (and continue to have) influence over all the clients I've ever worked with—even years later.

How do I know?

I know from the e-mails they send me, the acknowledgments they give me, and how their lives are changed from our work

together. It's very common for me to receive e-mails from clients with whom I haven't spoken in years and they refer to a recent life event and explain, "I took action because I could hear you in my head saying I should do this."

In psychology, this is referred to as *introjection*, where the patient has absorbed the qualities of the therapist to further support the patient's self-concept. Another way of thinking about introjection is as a form of persuasion. When a client has introjected your message, it means that she is continually influenced by it. What would that kind of influence mean for your business? Imagine if you could have this kind of influence over your clients, years and years later? How would it be if they e-mailed you and said, "I just knew I needed to take this action because I heard you in my head, telling me it was a good idea?"

Introjection also occurs in coaching, as the client begins to embody the traits and qualities of the coach. If the client has come to coaching to improve time management, presumably the coach is an expert on time management. If the coaching is effective, the client gradually adopts new behaviors under the guidance and direction of the coach. (Sounds like persuasion, doesn't it?)

As a coach, you are in a position of authority and *gurudom* over your clients. The clients have sought you out because you are an expert and well-known in your field. They are naturally predisposed to follow what you say, especially when they have the additional motivation to get their money's worth from working with you.

As I've stated previously, all coaches must be ethical and have integrity. They must be outcome-focused and goal- and time-oriented. This means they treat their clients respectfully and

honestly, while being on track to guiding the client to a particular outcome in a certain amount of time. The focus on ethicality, outcome, and goal achievement are the basic foundations of persuasion. You cannot persuade in the long term if you do not focus on these factors throughout the relationship.

Another element of the coaching relationship is accountability, which refers to making mutual commitments and meeting them. This is a key component of the coaching relationship, which is based on accountability, support, and structure. The coach provides a framework for the client to change, and then supports and guides the change process.

During a period of change, it is expected that the client will adopt new beliefs and new ways of thinking. The coach acts as a mentor to help smooth these changes so they are less jarring. The coach functions as a sounding board for the client, identifying key patterns and behaviors that are supporting the change, and those that are hampering the change.

Coaches will often use humor to deepen the relationship. They are often likable and worth emulating. Their persona is one that supports their professional identity. They will often share appropriate stories about themselves and their own lives, which functions to increase the level of empathy clients feel, leading to even more influence with these clients.

The most effective coaches are actively influencing their clients, all the time. While the standard line about coaching is that “The Client leads, the Coach follows,” this is not truly the case. If the client were leading the coaching sessions, very little would happen. The sessions would be focused on the client swirling around in his thoughts and processes, the very same ones he came to coaching to change. A better analogy is that the coach

is driving the sessions, and the client points out scenic turns and probable rest stops along the way.

This is an important distinction, because you must be willing to exert influence if you are going to coach others. You must be comfortable accepting a certain level of responsibility for this other person's life, and find a way to be directive, guiding, and supportive, all at the same time.

Conversely, if you want to gain greater influence over others, offer to coach them in your processes and methods. Every business does something very well. These areas of strength are the very ones that should be turned into a coaching program for your clients.

Remember, your clients are often struggling with the very same issues you have. They have concerns about sales, marketing, budgets, and finding good employees. If you have a process or method that would improve your customer's business, you have an obligation to share your process with customers who would be interested.

While your product may be widget X, you can move your company into a position of influence with your clients by coaching them on how to get the most value from widget X. Offer training on using widget X to achieve goal Y. Guide them in how to use and benefit from your product or service, and they will purchase more of it.

If you want to influence, you must have opinions, and share them. If one brand of product is inferior, and your client is considering purchasing that brand, share your opinion. Give your client the full facts necessary to make a good decision.

One of the best ways to retain clients for the long term is to position yourself not as a provider of a service or product, but

as a coach, mentor, and adviser for life. This elevates you from the realm of being a commodity, just like every other service or product provider out there, to an exalted status, where you have the best interests of your customer in mind and at heart. As a trusted adviser and coach, you will help the client make good decisions, which, naturally, will include considerations of your product or service as well.

To position yourself as a coach or adviser, you must be willing to be creative. Find new uses for your product or service, and share these with your customers. Provide structure, guidance, and feedback where appropriate. Follow up once every few months and make sure your product or service is still meeting their needs. Provide them with good information and recommendations for ancillary products or services. Connect them with your preferred resources. Make referrals.

When you make the shift toward trusted adviser, you have the opportunity to know your clients more deeply and interact with them more personally. The more you know your clients and the more deeply you interact with them, the greater your level of influence over them. The more you demonstrate that you care about them, as people, the more willing they will be to do business with you, and to refer their family, friends, and associates.

Coaching is a powerful process. It taps into the needs we all have for growth, improvement, and expansion, and that goes both ways. Coaching changes clients, and coaching changes coaches.

Remember, all business is about relationships. Using a coaching framework for interaction is an effective and persuasive method for building relationships. If you enter every professional conversation looking to coach the listener to his own best

outcome, your conversations will be powerful, meaningful, and potentially life-changing. By using tools such as deep listening, asking questions, using curiosity, and empathy, you will be moving yourself into a position of influence within the conversation. Offering appropriate recommendations will further cement your position of influence—and these recommendations can be just about anything. If you are talking about baseball, you can make a recommendation about baseball. If you are talking about movies, you can make a recommendation about movies.

By giving a solid recommendation about any relevant aspect of the conversation, you have begun the process of positioning yourself as a trusted adviser. Not that all of your client conversations should be about baseball or movies (unless these are your business areas, of course), but the idea is that good recommendations and communication in one area can carry over into others. This means that if clients see you as a resource in one area, they will be more likely to search for ways in which you can be a resource in other areas, as well.

We all are looking for a place to belong, a community, and a warm place to call *home*. Using these coaching-for-influence strategies will help you gather a group of your own people—those who value and appreciate the same things as you, and, who also just happen to be customers of your business. When you can create this feeling of warmth, support, and home, you have turned your occasional customers into raving fans.

As I've said, all businesses can add a coaching component. It may take some thought about how and what you would coach your clients on, but adopting a coaching stance will move you into a position of influence with your clients. And more influence means more money.

One of the biggest complaints of coaching programs is that they are time-intensive and resource-heavy. This need not be the case. There are several methods for developing an effective and profitable coaching program for online use. The outcome of these programs is to present your clients with directed learning activities, feedback, structure, and a chance to practice new behaviors.

There are many poorly designed coaching programs out there. These lead to customer frustration and dissatisfaction, which can ruin your company's prospects and brand.

On the other hand, adding a well-designed and well-implemented coaching component to your marketing and sales process can have huge benefits. A helpful and focused program will result in happier customers and higher profits. Your customers will feel that you truly care about them, refund requests will diminish, and your customers will refer others to you.

Given these benefits, it's not the question of whether you can afford to add a coaching program. The question is: Can you afford not to?

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