

The Missing 12th Core Competence of Coaching

Empowering our coaching profession to be sustainable and have a greater impact on the world

Editors Note: We recently received the following open letter to the ICF president and the Global Standards Core Team.

By Sylvia Becker-Hill, MA, PCC

I've been a coach for almost 15 years, and I'm committed to the sustainability of the coaching profession. It is with a mix of sadness, concern and anger that I have witnessed growing trends that I believe are undermining the value and integrity of our business. As an active leader inside the ICF and PCAM, the statistics regarding coaching revenue and dropout rates – as well as the personal stories I've heard of suffering and frustration – are too alarming to ignore.

“When your business is dying, your mission is dying as well.”

Following are descriptions of trends that seem to be on the rise within our industry:

- Coaches under-price their coaching services, which undermines their own sense of value for themselves and for coaching, ultimately limiting their clients' potential for transformation. I firmly believe that any coach who charges less than \$100 an hour is hurting the industry, themselves AND their clients. The higher the investment in coaching, the higher the client's commitment, and therefore, the bigger the transformation.

- Coaches charge only hourly fees instead of offering packages priced according to the value of the transformations they provide. This invites comparisons to other industries and misrepresents the transformational aspects of coaching. It also overlooks the client's responsibility for his or her own role in that transformation.

- Coaches barter with other coaches or sell coaching sessions for a symbolic \$1, which undermines the credibility of the profession and their own sense of value for coaching. When coaches obtain the necessary 'paid' coaching hours to gain ICF credentialing this way, it seems like they are cheating and not fulfilling their requirements in the spirit in which the credentialing committee created the minimum paid

hours rule to begin with.

One reason I am able to identify these trends is because – except for the \$1 coaching swap – I've 'been there and done that' for many years. But I believe there is hope for all of us.

I am not writing to complain or blame but rather to point to the source of these trends, of which I've only mentioned a few, and to a potential solution – one that I strongly believe the ICF, as our main global association and peer community, can provide!

I believe one of the main reasons why so many coaches are unable to make



a secure, attractive and increasingly profitable living from their coaching practice is because of the unhealthy split between two identities. The first identity is that of coach, which for a lot of us means being 'someone who makes a transformational difference in other people's lives' and which some even consider to be a 'deeply-rooted spiritual calling.' The other identity is that of business owner, which – unfortunately for a lot of us – often translates into being 'someone who is only interested in making a profit,' and which some consider to be 'materialistic' instead of 'spiritual.'

There are a lot of reasons for this unhealthy split between these two identities. They include subconscious beliefs about money from family, culture, gender and religious backgrounds. These beliefs create deeply rooted, hardwired paradigms in our brains, resulting in unquestioned emotions and thought-patterns, leading to habits like fearing success as much as failure in our businesses or

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careers as coaches. Because of these subconscious beliefs, we may avoid marketing and sales, considering such activities to be uncomfortable, embarrassing or “dirty” and not caring much if our business is growing or not.

This may also explain the trend that has led coaches to invest a huge amount of money in their own training. While trying to become the best coaches possible, they add one new modality from a different coaching school each year, gaining credential after credential but rarely investing money in coaching for themselves. They also fail to spend any money on business growth, marketing or sales training!

The ICF’s 11 Core Competencies reflect this “split identity.”

Please, don’t get me wrong here. I LOVE THE 11 CORE COMPETENCIES! I admire the effort our founding fathers and mothers put into them and the work the international team had done to discuss them and define them, bridging cultural differences to define the essence of coaching and the spirit of what we do. I wouldn’t be teaching them myself as a coaching trainer and mentor coach if I didn’t love them!

BUT one core competency is missing...

The 12th core competency, which I propose naming “Business Skills,” would have the following sub categories:

- **Money:** create a healthy relationship with money, emotionally and mentally, plus learn the basics of money management.
- **Marketing:** define your brand and establish communication strategies for reaching your perfect niche and as many people as your business model will allow you to serve while maintaining integrity and high quality.
- **Sales:** facilitate professional coaching conversations which result in prospects being able to make an informed clear decision regarding their next step – one which results in a commitment to coaching or something else.



• **Business Building Skills:** choose the right business model for the type of business you want to create and for your current phase of development as a coach.

• **Leadership Skills:** choose the right support people – e.g. a virtual team, employees, business partners or joint venture partners – to grow your business and facilitate transformation to the communities you choose to touch.

As long as the ICF excludes these competencies from the list of core competencies, it reinforces the identity split between coach and business person. (This is true also for the smaller group of coaches who work as employees inside institutions and corporations. They too need a healthy relationship with money; otherwise they sell themselves short and are

will force coaching training schools to include these topics in their curricula. The next generation of coaches will get a better basic training, and practicing coaches will reevaluate their education strategies and start investing in becoming great business people as well as being great coaches.

When your business is thriving, your mission is thriving as well.

An increasing income in a coach’s bank account mirrors his or her growing contribution and the extent of the difference he or she is making in the world. For every coach who goes out of business, there are thousands of people somewhere in the world whose problems stay unsolved and whose dreams remain un-lived. The world needs us more than ever. The world deserves a group of confident profes-

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inappropriately reimbursed. They need to market themselves to have satisfying careers; they need to promote and sell coaching internally; they need an understanding of business and what their system needs in order to grow; and they need the above-mentioned leadership skills to partner with the right people and establish coaching cultures inside their systems. Though some details of the actual implementation are different, the essence of these competencies is the same!

If and when the ICF includes the requested 12th core competency, it

sional change agents who believe in what they have to offer, who have the courage to promote it, and who have the strategies to bring it into the world.

Please consider making 2012 the year in which the ICF, by adding the 12th core competency of business skills to our canon of core competencies, helps thousands of coaches heal their identity split and start a movement of powerful positive change on this planet.

Thank you for your attention. Here’s to our power to make a fulfilling living while making a difference.