

Join The Tribe!

Building your business by making a difference

By C.J. Hayden, MCC, CPCC

If you're a typical self-employed coach, you entered the coaching profession with a desire to help people and make a contribution. Without much prior experience in marketing and sales, you then set out to learn about building a coaching practice.

But what happened next was that you found yourself surrounded by advice on how to write “killer copy,” build a “massive e-mail list,” “overcome objections” from potential clients, “crush the competition” with your value proposition, and create a “six figure business.” Everywhere you turned, experts were telling you to focus on promotion, persuasion, and profit.

And a little voice inside you began to ask, “What does any of this have to do with why I became a coach?” Good question.

The Path of Sustainability

You do deserve to earn a living. When you earn a good living at coaching, you are able to keep doing it, and that means you'll help more people and be able to contribute more. So profit is not a



dirty word; it's essential to your mission.

To build a profitable business, you need to use both promotion and persuasion. But do you want to promote solely your own success? Is your income the only thing you want to persuade people to contribute to? Or is there perhaps something more, something bigger, something more sustainable than each of us promoting our own aims and trying to persuade others to give to us?

What if you could instead pro-

mote making the world a better place, and have that result in getting more clients? Or persuade others to contribute to a good cause, and at the same time produce more business for yourself? Would these seem to you like more worthwhile uses of promotion and persuasion?

The good news is that you can do exactly this. All around you, coaches are already following this more authentic, holistic, sustainable path to business-building.

Serving your Coaching “Tribe”

Author Seth Godin chose the word “tribe” to describe how the best kind of marketing is actually a form of leadership. He defines a tribe as a group of people connected to one another, to a leader, and to an idea that inspires their passion. When you show your commitment to an issue, others who care about it naturally want to do business with you.

“You have a passion, a unique message, something that you can share like no one else,” says Marcia Bench in Arizona, founder of the Career Coach Institute, and author of *Become an Inspirational Thought Leader*. “The time has come for you to not only share it, but to attract to yourself a community of followers that are also passionate about this cause or problem or dream – and want to join you in its fulfillment.”

When you choose to coach only those who are in your tribe, however you define them, this becomes a powerful market niche. It allows

put on this earth for a purpose,” she says, “and the sooner we can put our unique talents to work, the sooner we can realize our true potential. Working with a coach can help people with disabilities shift their thinking from frustration to hope,

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from dread to anticipation, and from hopelessness to hopefulness.”

In Ontario, Canada, Donna Karlin coaches global executives and political leaders. Donna says, “Coaching leaders in government gives me a sense of making a difference while, at the same time, validating my role as a coach. I help clients bridge the gap between where they currently are and where they want to be, and

When you attend an event, you’ll be spending time with like-minded souls. When you speak to a group, you’ll find a receptive audience of people who share your values.

“Joining groups of changemakers has been the single most beneficial tactic I’ve used to build my coaching practice,” says California leadership coach Sara Ellis Conant. “Ninety percent of my clients have come from meetings of like-minded people. The business opportunities are greatest when I’m a presenter, but I meet clients simply by attending.”

Choosing a coaching niche that directly benefits a population or issue you care deeply about is one approach to engaging your tribe. Another is cause marketing, where you raise funds or awareness for a cause, attracting the interest of others who support it.

Ann Ranson in Texas, the president of Bottom Line Marketing, coaches and consults with organizations that want to “do well by doing good.” Says Ranson, “When you develop strategic marketing partnerships with nonprofit organizations, you demonstrate your belief in social responsibility and can extend your marketing and sales reach without increasing your budget.”

Getting more by giving back

Instead of working with your tribe by coaching them, you might choose to align with them in other ways, such as pro bono work, volunteering or philanthropy.

“There is no shortage of possible projects you could undertake to uplift your community while uplifting yourself and your business at the

“Targeting your tribe as a coaching niche can make marketing activities like networking and public speaking rewarding and enjoyable instead of challenging and uncomfortable.”

you to attract clients by promoting the ideas you and they are both passionate about, instead of simply promoting your own business.

Monica J. Foster in North Carolina coaches people with disabilities and chronic illnesses. “We were all

how that translates to better serving Canada and its people.”

Targeting your tribe as a coaching niche can make marketing activities like networking and public speaking rewarding and enjoyable instead of challenging and uncomfortable.

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same time,” says California business coach Caterina Rando, founder of the nonprofit A Good Deed Tea. “When you give back to the community, you also feed your soul, participate in a great opportunity for personal growth, and have a lot of fun.”

Giving time or money to a cause you care about connects you with other supporters, attracts the attention of a wider audience or the media, and allows you to use your skills of persuasion to enroll people in something larger than your business.

In Alberta, Canada, Martha Willson coaches professionals in career transition, and serves on the board of Volunteer Calgary. She says, “By volunteering, I’ve gained skills, con-

fidence, friends, an expanded world view, and the certainty that individuals can and do make a difference.”

Charles Brook in London, England, is founder and managing director of The Performance Coach, which dedicates 10-15 percent of profits to charities each year. “At my coaching firm, we delight in donating a significant portion of profit to charities we believe make a difference in the world,” says Brook.

Making the shift

Perhaps you are skeptical of making a shift like this in your coaching practice. You may wonder, “If I focus on making a difference instead of just on making a living, can my busi-

ness still be successful?” Try this experiment. Sit down at your computer for an hour and Google the following: The Coach Initiative, Coaching the Global Village, Coaching and Philanthropy Project, International Coach Federation Foundation, Laura Whitworth Prison Project, Mirus Coaching for Social Change, and SupportTED. Do you recognize the names of the successful coaches attached to these initiatives? Is it possible they know something you don’t about the true source of success?

The shift to a sustainable way of doing business that benefits everyone – not just the business owner – is already underway. Maybe you should join the tribe.

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