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The Power of Specializing

Carving out your coaching niche

What is niche coaching and why is it important?
What are the benefits of a niche coaching business? Does niche coaching differ from life coaching, and in what ways?
How do you find the right client niche that fits you? Is special training required?
How do you package, price and market your niche client programs?
Join us as we look at the power of specialization in building your business and making a greater impact.

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Specialty Coaching

An idea whose time has come

By Pegotty Cooper, MBA, CDC
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Among those professionals who have been serving people grappling with life's situations in the 21st century, specialty coaching is an idea whose time has come! These professionals have embraced coaching as a new paradigm, a better tool, and a radically new approach to serve those individuals who struggle with personal challenges, the impact of which often reach far beyond themselves and may also impact the lives of family members for generations or cost billions of dollars in lost productivity annually.

The International Coach Federation (ICF) confirms what we all know: "Professional coaching can have a huge impact on people's lives through the benefits of fresh perspectives on personal challenges, greater personal effectiveness, and increased confidence."¹

"There is only one thing stronger than all the armies of the world, and that is an idea whose time has come."

- Victor Hugo

New Approaches

New coaching specialties often arise when a non-coach professional involved in serving clients in a particular industry notices that service gaps are not being adequately addressed to meet their clients' needs. In exploring new options, this professional might discover the value and potential impact of serving clients within the powerful framework of coaching.

This professional starts introducing coaching methods into their practice and finds their clients are making great strides in areas where they were previously stuck. In sharing their results with other colleagues, this professional often reports enviable results as well as increased satisfaction in their work.

This new awareness about the impact of coaching applied in an existing area of helping

can evolve from curiosity and desire for a few new tools into specialty training programs which promote best practices, standards and certifications. Most industries also typically have a long-standing method with special language, protocols, ethics, a scope of practice,

Specialty coaching can combine with other areas such as wellness, corporate, career and with demographics like age, gender or culture.

plus regulations on interacting with other professionals. Understanding the boundaries between the specialty coach and other professionals is an important element so that specialty coaching can find its place from which to build collaborative relationships.

This is a well-recognized pattern of evolution in most industries. New approaches to solving old problems can lead to breakthrough results.

Pragmatic Roles

Specialty coaches often begin with a more pragmatic emphasis. But the end goal is the more aspirational outcomes noted in the ICF Global Coaching Client Study. Pragmatic roles often include Educator, Thinking Partner, Resource, and Champion.

As Educator – In specialty coaching you are helping clients work within a

specific set of challenges or goals. To help clients get better outcomes in the process, you may have to help them see the bigger picture and educate them about options or pitfalls of going through the process or system. We are coaches, not advisors.

As Thinking Partner – Clients impacted by their situation are often operating from their reptilian brain. They need a voice of reason and a reminder about where they are going when they get overwhelmed; in other words, a Thinking Partner. We help them to think through options including how to maintain relationships with important support people and track the steps in their process.

As Resource – Specialty coaches help clients relate to other vital people. We identify and screen professionals as referrals who have specific roles in the process. We also curate resources like books, blogs, support networks, etc., which can inspire and inform.

As Champion – Our clients need a person who is “in their corner” helping them to explore how to make happen what they want to have happen, celebrating wins big and small, and helping them gain clarity, confidence, and courage for the journey.

Who is well suited for becoming a specialty coach? Some examples include established coaches who want to grow their practice and their impact by adding a specialty, human service professionals with specific expertise in an area such as a family mediator, social worker or therapist who desire to serve their clients with new skills, and those with “lived experience” in the specialty area who are ready to serve others in the non-clinical role of a professional coach.

Niches exist within specialty coaching based on a mix of skills, passions and expertise, combined with a specific segment of the market you can relate to and understand. Specialty coaching can

combine with other areas such as wellness, corporate, career and with demographics like age, gender or culture.

Our commitment to divorce coaching and recovery coaching as specialties arose from our individual journeys – we saw gaps in serving our clients. We believe people can experience heroic transformations despite the difficulties these two life challenges present in the 21st century.

Divorce Coaching

In America, there are 876,000 divorces a year.² According to a landmark study³, we are creating a culture of divorce that has an immediate impact on children, and even greater impact later when they form their own serious relationships. Bringing the transformational power of coaching to these circumstances can reverse this current situation, which could impact the family as the primary means of instilling values and ethics in our next generation.

The American Bar Association defines divorce coaching as a process “to help them [clients] make the best possible decisions for their future, based on

New approaches to solving old problems can lead to breakthrough results.

their particular interests, needs, and concerns.”⁴ Decisions are often made when the client is in an intense emotional state. Other professionals with whom the di-

voice client engages are generally ill equipped to deal with this thinking and try to convince or coerce the client into making different choices.

Critical decision points provide an excellent focus for client coaching and also high-value marketing opportunities. Being overwhelmed with getting

The pain points you use in your marketing should allow people to self-sort themselves into or out of your niche coaching.

organized for divorce, for example, is an excellent focus for a package of sessions designed to support the client in getting organized so they can move forward in the divorce process. In divorce coaching there are dozens of such opportunities, depending on the needs of your ideal (niche) clients.

Recovery Coaching

There are 60 million people in the U.S. who are identified as abusing substances; an additional 24 million people self-identify as being “in recovery.”⁵

The missing piece in both prevention and recovery has been a client-centered process for people to move past ineffective ways of coping, learned helplessness, and a “damaged” identity to recognizing their own strengths, resiliency and purpose. Coaching is that missing piece.

The aim of Professional Recovery Coaches is to help their clients to thrive in the Sobriety Zone by empowering them to connect to their “authentic selves” with a focus on physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual wholeness.

Recovery Coaching provides help and accountability to professionals, executives, students, families, and men and women who want to “cut back” on harmful use of drugs or alcohol, reduce stress, enhance healthy performance, rebuild their confidence in sobriety, or better respond to a loved one’s relapse.

Professional coaches, using prevention and recovery tools, assist their clients in renewing choice and preventing the losses associated with addiction; they offer a fresh approach for those in recovery to reconnect to their own deeper satisfaction and renewed possibilities.

Some may perceive that specialty coaching has diverted from the purity of coaching. The reality is that specialty coaches are masters of pragmatic care. This is based upon the aspirational belief that people can still *empower themselves* to become the best they can be despite modern challenges like addiction or divorce.

The idea of coaching is still yielding tremendous potential for human lives – and it continues to evolve in the service of realizing one’s personal and professional potential.

Notes

¹ “Benefits of Using a Coach.” ICF website <http://coachfederation.org/need/landing.cfm?ItemNumber=747>

² CDC National Center for Health Statistics National Marriage and Divorce Rate Trends: <http://1.usa.gov/1dMPvI2>

³ *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce: A 25 Year Landmark Study.* Judith Wasserstein, Julia M. Lewis and Sandra Blakeslee. 2000.

⁴ American Bar Association. http://www.americanbar.org/groups/dispute_resolution/resources/DisputeResolutionProcesses/divorce_coaching.html

⁵ Lawford, Christopher Kennedy (2014). *Recover to Live: Kick Any Habit, Manage Any Addiction.* Dallas, TX: BenBella Books, Inc.

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