



## Guest Speaker: Maximize your coaching potential Tips marketing professionals can use to become motivational coaches for their internal colleagues.

By Anne Scarlett, printed in *The Zweig A/E Marketing Letter*

By streamlining professional coaching approaches to create a realistic program of your own, AEC marketing professionals have the opportunity to provide informal coaching to internal colleagues. The more you elevate your own skills in the art of coaching, the more you will also be able to elevate others' marketing confidence, performance, and results.

Your current role already has multiple facets. Taking on a more structured, meaningful coaching role may require a shift—postponing, reducing, or altogether eliminating a few other responsibilities— in order to carve out time to coach a few promising internal coachees. When developing your coaching process, keep it simple and realistic.

### CONSIDER THESE STEPS, ESSENTIALLY IN THIS ORDER, AS A WAY TO SET THE PATH WITH EACH COACHEE:

**Consider others' perspectives.** If your firm has conducted a client perception survey, and/or received feedback regarding the coachee, then that data may help shape the developmental goals of the coachee. Let him or her reflect upon that feedback as a first step.

**Let coachee select his or her own goals.** It's up to the individual, alone, to identify his or her actual goals. Your role as a coach is to guide them towards achieving the marketing changes they've identified.

**Limit developmental goals to one or two.** Since coaching is not your full-time profession, ensure goals are germane to their marketing and career objectives. This focus will increase chances for success.

**Make sure to bridge the gap.** Once you've acknowledged both current and desired future states of the coachee's marketing goal(s), you then need to be highly specific. Just like any plan, you must determine: What needs to happen? Which resources are needed for support? When will it be completed? How will we measure progress and redirect if necessary?

**Don't overlook what needs to be unlearned.** Often, it seems that technical leaders and staff will set marketing developmental goals— i.e. increase closing success rates, become a better networker, grow more business with existing clients, make more warm calls and prospect 'touches,' improve presentation skills— and then concentrate solely on what they must do, rather than what they must stop doing! If any existing behaviors are counterproductive to future desired behaviors, then they must be unlearned while new behaviors are simultaneously being learned.

**Prepare library of trusted resources.** It's likely that some efforts required for their growth may go beyond your expertise, or may demand more time than you can spare. Have a list of resources (continuing education relating to marketing/ communication, books, online instructional programs, industry sources, consultants, other trusted colleagues) in order to make sound recommendations on additional resources. Take note: these resources will serve to enhance the coachee's skills and knowledge, which will in turn have a positive impact on his or her behavior towards achieving specific marketing goals.

**Conduct a cost/benefit analysis.** Bear in mind, total cost goes beyond the direct cost. What about costs that will be incurred should the coachee opt to not develop according to plan? Don't overlook lost opportunity, whether it be related to a promotion, keeping one's job, firm growth (or even firm survival), etc. Challenge your coachee about lost opportunity, so he can prudently consider what is at stake, and what rewards will come as a result of successful development. This honest dialogue will help seal the deal in terms of his commitment to development.

**Once this groundwork is complete, you need to make sure to remain committed and attentive to your coachees on a pre-determined, regular basis.** Perhaps it's for 30 minutes (over lunch?) weekly for one month, then bi-weekly for two additional months. They say that behavioral change is most likely to stick when it's practiced for 30 consecutive days. Since your coachee's developmental goals may not afford him or her the opportunity to execute daily, try a three-month commitment. Here are a few tips to make sure you are managing your own responsibilities in this coaching effort:

**Be patient and positive.** Sometimes it's two steps back, one step forward. Provided your coachee makes progress, all is well. Since we are a visual industry, you may want to create a graphic "timeline" to mark progress and milestones. For example, maybe in week three, he or she made five solid prospect "touches," but in week four, he or she resorted to only reactive marketing efforts, or none at all. Map everything— successes and drawbacks. Discuss challenges and barriers towards consistent growth towards achieving goal(s).

**Make sure they self-assess.** They will want to know your opinion, but always make sure they share their own perspective on their performance first. That self-awareness is imperative to sustain any long-term change.

**Build trust through sharing.** Coaching is a "relationship," and will be most productive when there's give and take. Feel free to share your own relevant, and perhaps even humbling, marketing stories. Divvy the time about 4:1, coachee to you.

**Establish format to ensure progress.** Begin each session by identifying topmost priorities to discuss. End each session with action steps to complete prior to the next meeting.

If you adjust your role to provide more marketing coaching to your colleagues, then your firm's marketing performance will surely reap greater success over time. Once your coaching "program" is solidified, your firm may opt to promote your internal "service" as a value add to retain existing staff and recruit new talent as well. Now that's an added bonus and a unique selling point for your firm!