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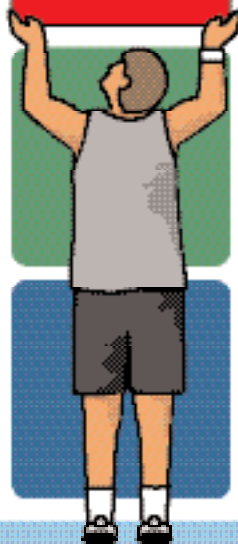
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Add a new dimension to your career and become an agent of change for new—and existing—clients.

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Lifestyle Coaching

For several years the growing field of coaching has been receiving a lot of publicity. In the fitness arena, through IDEA articles and conferences, you have been reading and hearing specifically about lifestyle or wellness coaching. Are you wondering whether coaching is an area you should branch into for career longevity and variety? Personally, I have found coaching very rewarding and

refreshingly challenging. It brings back memories of the start of my personal training practice in 1987. That practice grew slowly but steadily, and I believe coaching will experience the same slow but steady growth.

Coaching is the internal side of physical training; it helps clients make a mind-body connection that creates lasting change. What information do you need to become a professional lifestyle coach and

add this exciting new service to your business? Before you invest time and money in professional coach training, let's look at the definition of a "lifestyle coach" and examine six steps for adding lifestyle coaching services to your business.

What Is a Lifestyle Coach?

With information gleaned from interviews with four lifestyle coaches and my

own experience as a professional business and life coach, I have created this working definition of the lifestyle coach's role: *A professionally trained coach acts as a motivator, an educator and an accountability partner to support individuals in making lasting lifestyle changes that improve their physical and mental well-being.*

Coaching addresses the whole person, not just cardiovascular, strength or flexibility training. Coaching digs under the

surface of workout and nutrition plans to discover why a client is unhealthy, what behaviors led to the problem, what obstacles are in the way in daily life and how the client can make lasting behavior change. A lifestyle coach creates awareness by asking questions, backing a variety of strategies and options, and supporting action. With regard to the five stages of behavior change (precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action and maintenance), a coach continues to support appropriate “action” while simultaneously building a strong foundation in “contemplation” and “preparation.”

Understand the pros of becoming a coach; seek professional training; set your pricing; package your services; define your market; and promote your services.

1. Understand the Pros of Becoming a Coach

Being a coach has many advantages. The number-one benefit is that you realize you are no longer *the* responsible party for client results! A majority of personal training clients begin training with the attitude, “Tell me what to do. I don’t want to think. Just give me a program, and I’ll

of the many other advantages of becoming a coach:

- You gain an additional revenue stream.
 - You learn great communication, motivation and behavior change skills not taught in personal trainer certification courses.
 - You make the client responsible for results.
 - Because of your focus and training, you are more effective in teaching behavioral change.
 - You can operate a business from anywhere and work with clients all over the globe. (You can offer coaching in person or over the phone.)
 - You can work until the desired age of retirement with less physical strain.
 - Your work is more varied, and you can focus on more than just the physical aspect of wellness.
 - You open the door to sedentary clients.
 - You have more flexibility in work hours and shorter sessions—typically 30 minutes by phone.
 - You may find it easier and less uncomfortable to work with the opposite gender than you do during training.
- Do these advantages appeal to you? If so, you might want to consider coaching.

Even when you are an experienced coach, marketing is key.

A perfect analogy is that of a coach to a home builder. On the outside, a new home may be beautiful—perfect brick, landscaping, floor plan, etc. But the house’s ability to withstand storms and winds lies in the foundation, the framing and the fine details that the builder invested in beneath the exterior structure. The same is true of an individual on an exercise program with a personal trainer or a group exercise instructor. The program may be great, but the guarantee of long-term success depends on all the underlying factors and challenges of daily life—managing time, defining needs and goals, identifying obstacles and solutions, learning accountability, making commitments, delaying gratification and creating healthy boundaries. A lifestyle coach works to help clients create this strong and lasting foundation of awareness and change. During exercise sessions, the focus should be on the muscles worked and the proper execution of exercises. It is not possible to be completely effective as a coach *and* a personal trainer in the same session. Lifestyle coaching by phone allows clients to focus completely on behavior change and learning.

Here are six guidelines that can help you become a successful lifestyle coach:

do my best to follow it.” If they fail to see results, they often come back to the trainer and say, “This program doesn’t work, so I’m looking for another trainer.” Coaching places all the responsibility on the client. Clients set their own goals, come up with an accountability strategy and identify the areas where they need the most coaching. They learn to take ownership of their health and wellness.

“I found that once [personal] training clients left our session, they would go back to the same negative lifestyle that got them there in the first place,” says Judy Hill of Coaching4Fitness in Redmond, Washington. “I really wanted to get to the deeper side of what makes a person want to make changes and why so many people just don’t have the tools to get there. A lot of my clients need to change their lifestyle in order to make exercise work for them.”

Coaching clients learn how to motivate themselves and work through the daily obstacles that have historically gotten in the way of self-care. Coaches enjoy the progress they see toward lasting lifestyle change and become more effective at being agents of change. Following are a few

2. Seek Professional Training

To become a coach, you need training. Several companies provide excellent training for coaching. In most instances, the training is provided via telephone and the Internet. If you intend to offer lifestyle coaching (versus business or corporate coaching), you can choose an abbreviated training program that focuses only on lifestyle and wellness coaching skills; for example, the Wellcoaches® program, endorsed by the American College of Sports Medicine. If you desire to become accredited as a professional coach through the International Coaching Federation (ICF) and want to be trained in a myriad of coaching areas, you’ll need to opt for a longer, more expensive and more extensive training program, offered by various companies. I chose a 200-hour coach training program that afforded me additional credentials to coach successfully in

Where to Go for Training

The following associations and training companies offer coaching training or resources. Compare the different trainings to see which one seems most in line with what you need and the type of coaching you'd like to do.

ASSOCIATIONS

- **The Association of Fitness by Phone® Coaches** (888-714-4042; www.fitnessbyphone.com). Provides training for the Master Fitness by Phone Coach.
- **The International Coach Federation** (888-423-3131; www.coachfederation.org). A professional association of personal and business coaches that seeks to preserve the integrity of coaching around the globe. Offers yearly conferences. Membership: \$195 annually.
- **Coachville** (www.cvcommunity.com/public/home/). A community for coaching, coaches and coach training.

TRAINING

Coach U (800-48COACH, www.coachinc.com):

- Core Essentials Program™ (CEP), \$2,415. This training program offers beginning and intermediate courses to develop strong foundational and core coaching skills. This is a 77-hour program, and you get 15 months to complete the courses.
- Core Essentials Fast Track Program™, \$3,395 (early bird). The only difference between this and the CEP program above is that most of the 77 hours of training take place in person. The 6-day onsite program, augmented by online sessions, is limited to 24 participants.
- Advanced Coaching Program™, \$3,295 each (plus materials). This program, for Core Essentials graduates, is appropriate for personal coaches and corporate coaches seeking to become self-employed or to add coaching services to their current endeavors. This program is broad and will prepare an individual to coach many types of clients in many situations. The program provides 98 hours of additional training, giving you a total of 175 hours of coach training altogether; you are allowed 3 years to complete the full course.

Wellcoaches (866-WE-COACH, www.wellcoaches.com):

- Wellness Coach Training & Certification, \$795 (early bird). This program is designed to train health and fitness professionals to become wellness coaches and complete the wellness coach certification. This is a 10-week program with ten 90-minute live weekly teleclasses plus two 2-hour recorded lectures. Participants also have access to 10+ recordings of 90-minute demo sessions. Training manual is 150 pages and is available and downloadable online after you register.

The Cooper Institute for Aerobics Research (972-341-3200; www.cooperinst.org/crsinfo.asp, and click on "View the 2005 Course Catalog"):

- Coaching Healthy Behaviors, \$445. This 3-day onsite course in Dallas teaches core coaching skills and behavior change skills. Approximately 20 hours of training.

The Coaching Institute of North America (800-314-0481; www.coachinginstituteofnorthamerica.com):

- Life Coach & Weight Loss Coach Certification, \$485 (plus shipping) for self-study or \$620 (plus shipping) to learn with an instructor. This program trains coaches to help clients in their lives and to aid them in losing weight.

the business and corporate arena and to become accredited through the ICF. Lifestyle is only one of the areas in which I coach. I focus my expertise also on small businesses (my clients include personal trainers and studio owners), life coaching for women and leadership, and life balance for executives.

A word of wisdom: If you want to be taken seriously as a coach, go for a program with some real meat in it. Don't opt for the 1- or 2-day workshop that promises "all the skills you need for just \$99."

3. Set Your Pricing

Once you are trained as a coach, you need to figure out what to charge for your services. As in the personal training industry, fees in the field of coaching can vary greatly, owing to factors such as training, experience and market demand. Fees also depend on whether the coach is offering lifestyle or corporate coaching.

Lifestyle Coaching. Many lifestyle coaches charge fees comparable to their personal training rates. I have spoken to lifestyle coaches who charge \$35–\$100 per hour. Personal trainers who charge more than \$100 per hour for their training services may charge this much or more for coaching.

Business Coaching. Business and corporate coaches trained through in-depth programs charge \$100–\$500 per hour depending on the client (business versus individual). Will companies pay to have you coach their employees? Poor health and wellness affects employee performance, which increases healthcare costs and reduces productivity. Providing lifestyle coaching to company employees will make a lasting difference to healthcare costs and productivity. It is an investment I predict companies will make in the future as they learn more about coaching and its effectiveness.

Personally, my coaching fees are \$200–\$250 per hour for individuals and \$300 and up for businesses and corporations. Since I am not currently accepting new personal training clients, I do not have fee conflicts.

I have found that the key to making money as a lifestyle coach *and* a personal trainer is to charge comparable fees for both services. It is important to under-

stand that coaching is not your ticket to making six figures overnight. Some programs promise an income of your dreams once you become a lifestyle coach. They say clients will flock to you, creating an instant waiting list. Don't believe it. It took effort, planning, perseverance, money, time and marketing to build a fitness business. It will require the same to build a lifestyle coaching business. Some coaches make money in the six-figure range right now, but many of them work in the corporate and business arena. They did the work, made the right contacts and are enjoying their success.

4. Package Your Services

Before offering coaching, carefully consider how to package your services. My perception is that many fitness professionals have been misled by thinking they can charge one fee for personal training and another, much higher fee for coaching

significantly higher fee for coaching.

In what ways can you bring coaching to existing or new clients? These packaging ideas can help get your lifestyle coaching practice up and running:

- Offer coaching to existing clientele in a separate, add-on package: weekly 30-minute sessions by phone.
- For new or existing clients, create combination packages that mix coaching and personal training. For example, offer one personal training session and one coaching session per week; alternate one training session with one coaching session each week for a set number of weeks; or offer three training sessions followed by 6 weeks of weekly coaching. Use your creativity here!
- Start all new clients with four coaching sessions, then add personal training sessions.
- For clients on maintenance, offer

Fees in the field of coaching can vary greatly.

and that clients will just fall in line. However, it doesn't work. If clients pay \$75 per hour for a 1-hour personal training session, most of them will be very resistant to paying \$75 for a half-hour coaching session. As far as they are concerned, the rates should be comparable, i.e., \$40–\$45 for a half-hour coaching session.

I tried charging two very different rates for different services 3 years ago and found zero interest in coaching among my personal training clientele. I realized that for existing clients I would have to sell coaching as an add-on package at a rate comparable to personal training. However, I now have all the personal training clients I want and am selling only coaching to my new clients. Within the coaching packages, I can incorporate a physical assessment and program design every quarter. Clients who have been personal training with me for years and are paying lower training rates than newer clients do pay a

weekly coaching with a monthly or bi-monthly training session.

Note that some face-to-face contact is desirable for many clients. With this in mind, you might opt to offer the coaching intake session in person so you can meet and get to know each other. However, I've worked with many coaching clients who are out of state and have never met me in person. They were referred, have read my articles or were impressed with my training and biography,

which are posted on my website.

5. Define Your Market

After you decide you want to coach, think about *whom* you'd like to coach. As in personal training, it's helpful to choose a target clientele.

Describe Your Perfect Client. Before you set up a strategy to promote your skills as a lifestyle coach, define your ideal coaching client. What type

of personality is a fit for you and your coaching services? Do you want to coach men, women or both? Spend some time determining your target market. This exercise will prove invaluable when it comes to promoting your lifestyle coaching services.

Establish a Niche. If you feel strongly about coaching a specific group, create a special market for yourself from the beginning. Gail Parmer, coach and wellness advisor for StoudtAdvisors in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, has created

a niche in wellness coaching by focusing on women in menopause. Kate Larsen of Winning Lifestyles Inc. in Minneapolis markets to type A working professionals who are "stuck" in some area of their lives. AnJenette Afridi, MA, of Got Coached® in Easton, Connecticut, focuses on peak-performance strategies for executives. I'm still in the process of better defining my coaching niche. Currently, my focuses are small-business coaching for better performance; weight loss; and physical well-

ness and work-life balance for women.

6. Promote Your Services

With a target market in mind, it's time to let your would-be clients know about your coaching services! Even when you are an experienced coach, marketing is key. "You must always do marketing, even when your business is flourishing," says Afridi. Decide on your clientele and get out there!

Try the following marketing strategies and see "Market Coaching to a Different Clientele" on page 37 for a starting point.

Educate Your Current Clients

Some of your current personal training clients may be interested in your new coaching services, although many, or all, will likely be resistant to the idea. Why? Because they are unfamiliar with coaching and don't understand how effectively it works. If you intend to con-

tinue personal training, comfort them up front by letting them know coaching is an additional service you will be offering to better serve their needs and improve their success at making lasting behavior change. Mention coaching to each client during a

training session; provide a handout that describes lifestyle coaching in depth and lists packages and prices.

If you manage or work at a fitness center, aggressively get the word out. You have a built-in clientele who could provide you with immediate coaching clients. Offer free 30-minute “What Is Lifestyle Coaching?” talks and give attendees informational handouts to take home. You might also consider holding drawings at these talks and offering the winners three free coaching sessions.

Network

Another strategy is networking. Hill decided to tell everyone she knew about her new services as a coach. If you are currently a personal trainer, act as if you were just now going into business. In effect, you are starting a new business or a completely new service that few people understand. Coaching is intangible and more difficult to sell. Where can you network?

- chambers of commerce
- coaching organizations
- women’s clubs
- church functions
- social functions
- fitness centers
- with other fitness professionals

Begin Speaking or Writing

If you enjoy speaking or writing, use one of these vehicles to spread the word about coaching. You will have great opportunities to educate the community on lifestyle coaching and its long-term benefits. How can you begin?

- Call and mail local groups, and volunteer to speak for 30 minutes about health and fitness. Include coaching in your speech. Come up with several topics and titles before you make your calls. Schedule as many speaking opportunities as possible.
- Begin a fitness column in your local paper.
- Start your own one-page monthly or bimonthly newsletter and create an e-mail list to spread your message. Ask for approval from everyone on your list before you send your first newsletter.

Look Forward to a Bright Future

Adding coaching to my services has opened a whole new world to me. The process of spending 200 hours training to be a coach and examining my own life has

Market Coaching to a Different Clientele

Many trainers and group exercise instructors struggle with getting the word out about their coaching services. I quickly learned a valuable lesson, which Kate Larsen of Winning Lifestyles Inc. in Minneapolis agrees with: I needed an entirely different clientele for coaching than I currently had for personal training. Why? Many (80%) of my existing training clients had type B personalities; that is, they were the type that says, “Design a program for me and make me do my workout.” These clients were externally motivated rather than internally driven by values. If they did not see me every week, their training suffered because they lacked the skills necessary to continue on their own. They were not interested in the self-responsibility and hard work required for coaching. So I needed a new approach.

I decided the coaching clients I desired were the motivated, type A personalities who were stuck in a rut personally and professionally and wanted to move forward—clients who desired physical wellness and were interested in learning the skills necessary to change and maintain motivation for the long term. This statement defined my ideal coaching clientele. Larsen found her existing personal training clients “very resistant” to coaching. She decided to open a new market and look for people with a different attitude. The attitude of both her personal training clients and mine was, Why pay more for coaching if I’m already getting it for free?

Judy Hill of Coaching4Fitness in Redmond, Washington, says that the only resistance she finds with new clients “is the fact that it is phone coaching. A lot of people don’t understand how well this works and would rather be doing something physically. Lifestyle coaching is still a relatively new process, so it can be difficult to get the word out to the public on exactly what it is.”

yielded tremendous benefits. It has given me the perfect vehicle to do what I feel most strongly about: Make a lasting difference in the lives of the people who seek personal and physical wellness. Hire a coach for 90 days and learn firsthand the synergy of working with a professionally trained coach. You will not comprehend its benefits until you experience the process.

If coaching is right for you and your business, begin the fun and challenging path of learning new skills in the areas of relating, communicating and motivating.

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