

THE BUSINESS OF COACHING

EP #64

“Do I need a life coach?” You’re listening to Episode 64, with Rhiannon Bush

Welcome to the Do I need a life coach? Podcast. We’re here to discuss the ins- and outs- of the life coaching industry and give you tools to use, to see for yourself. I’m your host, Rhiannon Bush. Mother, management consultant and a passionate, certified life coach.

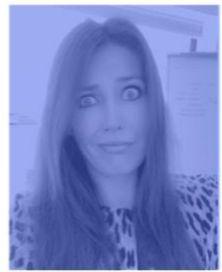
A friend was asking me about pricing for my services and how I come up with it. It got me thinking about the transition from being a sounding board for people I know – friends, family, and making it into a business where I charge money to have someone talk to me and help them move forward. It was a really weird feeling for me in the beginning and I think a lot of coaches go through similar things. So in this episode I’ll answer a few questions on niching, pricing and maintaining the integrity of the coach-client relationship with clear boundaries and professional expectations.

1. Niching

A "niche" in the context of life coaching refers to a specific area or demographic that a life coach specialises in or focuses on when providing their coaching services. Life coaches choose a niche for several reasons:

- 1. Expertise and Specialisation:** Life coaches often have specific expertise or experience in certain areas. Choosing a niche allows them to leverage their knowledge and skills to serve clients more effectively and be able to lead the client through the changes they want to experience because they’ve been there themselves. This can often verge on a mentor/coaching relationship because expertise can be provided. It’s always important to remember that if a coach is giving advice, this isn’t actually coaching but rather, mentoring, and before listening you want to make sure they’ve gotten the results you want. By specialising, the coach can help people solve a problem they’ve too experienced in the past.
- 2. Targeted Marketing:** Having a niche enables life coaches to tailor their marketing efforts and materials to a specific audience which helps them attract, and therefore help more people. This targeted approach makes it easier to attract potential clients who are looking for help in that specific area.
- 3. Differentiation:** In a competitive coaching market, having a niche helps coaches stand out. When you specialise, you become a unique service provider within your chosen field, and clients seeking help in that area are more likely to choose a specialist over a generalist. It also helps coaches narrow down their unique ability to serve clients that will be attracted to them and what they bring to the realm of coaching.





4. Deeper Impact: Focusing on a niche allows life coaches to make a deeper impact. They can develop a profound understanding of the challenges and opportunities within that niche and provide more meaningful support to their clients.
5. Client Attraction: Clients often prefer working with coaches who specialise in their particular needs. They are more likely to trust a coach who has a strong track record of helping clients with similar issues.
6. Higher Fees: Specialised coaching often commands higher fees. Clients are willing to pay more for the expertise and tailored solutions that a niche coach can offer. Again, as long as the coach gets results – either their own or by aiding their client well – to charge that.
7. Personal Passion: Many life coaches choose a niche that aligns with their personal passions and interests, and how they help clients move forward. This can lead to a more fulfilling and enjoyable coaching career and means they continually upskill in that area to remain relevant and personally invested.

Examples of life coaching niches include career coaching, relationship coaching, health and wellness coaching, leadership coaching, executive coaching, and more. Some coaches may further narrow their niches, such as career coaching for creatives, relationship coaching for couples, or health coaching for seniors.

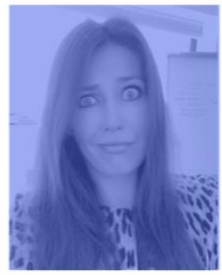
Ultimately, choosing a niche is a strategic decision that allows life coaches to grow a life coaching practice, and provide specialised support by attracting the right clients while focusing on areas that resonate with them personally and professionally.

2. Pricing. See Episode 53 on 'why life coaching is expensive' but I'd like to add to that today.

Pricing in the field of life coaching can be a complex and sometimes controversial subject. The way life coaches price their services is influenced by several factors, and the controversy often arises from varying perspectives on the value of coaching and the impact it has on clients. Here's an overview of how life coaches price their services and why it can be controversial:

1. Experience and Expertise: Coaches with more years of experience or specialised expertise often charge higher rates. This is because they bring a wealth of knowledge and insights to the coaching relationship and it's not about time, it's about impact and results.
2. Market Demand: Pricing can be influenced by supply and demand. In areas with high demand for coaching services and few qualified coaches, rates tend to be higher.
3. The type of Coaching: For instance, the specific niche or type of coaching can affect pricing like executive or leadership coaching typically commands higher fees than general life coaching.





4. **Session Format:** The format of coaching sessions matters. One-on-one, in-person coaching sessions are usually more expensive than group coaching or online sessions.
5. **Geographic Location:** Coaching fees can vary significantly by location. Coaches in major cities or affluent areas may charge more due to higher living costs and the perception of what their prospective clients are willing to pay.
6. **Clientele:** Coaches working with corporate clients or businesses may charge higher rates than those working with individuals, especially when the results are perceived to yield a higher-value return and especially when that return can be equated to a monetary value.
7. **Results and Testimonials:** Coaches with a track record of achieving positive results for clients can justify higher pricing, especially when backed by client testimonials. This is also because the higher esteemed a coach is, and justifiably by their proven track record, that coach only has so many hours in a day. And therefore a way of best utilising their time is by working with higher-value clients.

Now let's flip it and talk about the controversial side to coaching. Let's start with perceived value. The value of coaching is subjective, and potential clients might not fully understand what coaching entails, which is why I started this podcast. This is because it can lead to misconceptions about the cost-effectiveness of coaching services. At the end of the day, the client is ultimately responsible for their results but that's not to say there are some unethical and poor performing coaches out there.

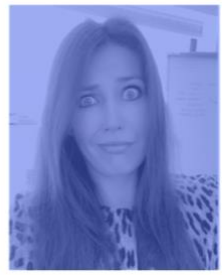
There's also a lack of regulation but as I've spoken about, I personally appreciate this about the coaching industry. Coaching is largely unregulated, which means anyone can call themselves a coach. But guess what... coaching isn't rocket science and if you're listening to this, you're resourceful. So while yes, this lack of regulation can lead to a wide range of quality and pricing issues in the industry, this happens in many industries that are regulated. Trust yourself, do your due diligence and allow the industry to move along at a much faster pace, than if it was heavily regulated and beauracatic.

Price gouging can occur. Some coaches may charge exorbitant fees, exploiting clients who are in vulnerable or desperate situations. This has led to negative perceptions of the industry. Again, avoiding this is why I started this podcast.

Affordability: High coaching fees can make coaching services inaccessible to many who may benefit from them. This has raised questions about inclusivity and social responsibility within the coaching field. But I would make the argument that there are very competent and effective coaches available. If you want coaching badly enough, you'll find someone who is willing to help you. Some coaches are willing to work for free, which I hate, because it devalues it completely, but don't get me started on that.

There's a scepticism regarding the effectiveness of life coaching in some circles. This scepticism can extend to pricing, with some believing that coaches charge too much for unproven services. I'd say coaching is the most effective form of mental health service I've ever seen and





experienced. And.. like all mental health offerings, the belief the client has in the work and the coach's ability makes a significant difference to the outcome and the results.

Consumer confusion. The coaching industry includes various types of coaches, from life coaches to business coaches and health coaches. This diversity can create confusion for clients when it comes to pricing and expectations and who to see for what problem. Underlying this, the coaching tools themselves are the same. Just utilised (hopefully) by coaches who have proven experience in particular areas and who target specific problems to help their clients with.

Ethical issues can arise if coaches charge high fees and promise miraculous results without a clear understanding of the client's needs or potential to achieve those results. Coaches shouldn't promise anything and clients need to understand that they're ultimately responsible. The coach is merely a navigator, aiding their journey onwards and upwards.

To mitigate these issues, professional coaching organisations, like the International Coach Federation (ICF), have established ethical guidelines and standards for coaching practices and pricing. However, controversy remains, and prospective clients are encouraged to do their due diligence when selecting a life coach, considering factors beyond price, such as qualifications, experience, your rapport, and the coach's ability to meet your specific needs.

3. Complexities and blurred lines

In its commercial form, life coaching is a service provided by a coach to clients in exchange for a fee. This is a clear commercial arrangement where clients pay for the coach's time, expertise, and guidance. Many life coaches run coaching businesses with a profit motive. They aim to earn a living or generate income from their coaching services as they should, they paid for their training and starting a business is not easy, and the more money they have the more people they can help, and commercial coaching should involve a formal contract or coaching agreement that outline the terms of the coaching relationship, including payment, session duration, and confidentiality. If you're looking for a coach don't be afraid to ask these questions. You want to know what you're paying for and what you'll get from the exchange.

A fundamental aspect of life coaching is to help individuals grow, overcome challenges, and achieve their goals. This social dimension reflects the desire to contribute positively to people's lives. Coaches often approach their work with empathy, compassion, and a genuine interest in their clients' well-being. This social element focuses on supporting clients in their personal development. This is often felt as an intrinsic reward for the coach from helping others, such as the satisfaction of seeing clients succeed and achieve their objectives. It's an incredibly rewarding and gratifying thing to be able to help somebody. It's beautiful and as humans, we can get this from the simplest transactions, or from our work.

Clients may be in vulnerable positions, seeking guidance during difficult life transitions. Coaches need to be aware of the power dynamic and avoid exploiting clients emotionally or financially or overpromising results in their marketing to attract clients, leading to unrealistic expectations.





This can be especially problematic when driven by commercial interests. The social contract of coaching implies that clients have autonomy in setting their goals. True coaches means that the coach respects the clients' self-determination rather than imposing their own objectives, which might be more commercially motivated. If that happens, this is what I'd call a sales conversation, not a coaching conversation.

To keep it clean, coaches should:

1. Adhere to ethical standards established by professional coaching organisations like the International Coach Federation (ICF). Even if they're not a member, these guidelines look after the industry as a whole and emphasise the well-being of clients over commercial interests.
2. Set clear expectations and boundaries between the commercial and social aspects of their work. They should be transparent about pricing, the nature of the coaching relationship, and what clients can expect all outlined in a coaching agreement at the start of the coach-client relationship.
3. Engage in ongoing training and self-reflection to ensure they provide the best service possible to clients while remaining ethically sound. This feeds into why it's beneficial to have an unregulated industry. So much research and new data comes out that can immediately be implemented by coaches to help their clients move forward making life coach training and development relevant, current and fit-for-purpose, offering maximum impact and as fast as possible. This is highly beneficial to the world.
4. Coaches should adopt a client-centered approach that respects clients' autonomy, preferences, and values. The focus should always, 100% be on the client's agenda and well-being, not the coach's.
5. Coaches should be transparent about their qualifications, experience, and success rates, providing clients with accurate information to make informed decisions.

In conclusion to maintain the integrity of the coaching relationship and avoid blurred lines, coaches should prioritise the well-being of their clients and adhere to ethical standards and best practices. They should aim for consistency in their delivery, maintain and up-level their skillset and see a coach themselves to ensure they're looking after themselves, and can therefore hold space and look after their client.

Coaching will change your life and while there are things to be aware of, you'll never know until you speak to a coach what you can begin to expect. So go talk to a coach and find out for yourself.

See you next week.

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Also, if there are any topics you'd like me to cover specifically about life coaching or the life coaching industry, visit rhiannonbush.com to contact me. Thanks for joining and I'll see you in the next episode of Do I Need A Life Coach?!

Please note, this transcription may not be exact.

