

Ep #119: How to Create the Best Client Experience



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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Hey, this is Lindsay Dotzlaf, and you are listening to *Mastering Coaching Skills*, episode 119.

To really compete in the coaching industry, you have to be great at coaching. That's why every week, I will be answering your questions, sharing my stories, and offering tips and advice so you can be the best at what you do. Let's get to work.

Hey, coach. I am so glad you're here today. I want to talk to you today about an experience that I had recently and then kind of talk to you about how I've been thinking so much about it and how it shows up in our coaching and how we kind of set our containers and think about the way we create our spaces for our clients. Okay, and like the client experience, maybe that's a better way to say it.

And first, I'm going to tell you a story. So I recently went to Cabo in Mexico. I was there for eight days. I was coaching. I was working in my coach's mastermind, being a coach for her, and then I also received my own coaching. It was magical. It was amazing. It was just everything I needed.

And right before I left, I had this experience when I bought something through a clothing company. So, of course, this is going to be about clothes, not about coaching when I tell you the story. But then I'm going to tell you how it relates to coaching. I think it'll be pretty obvious right away. And then kind of how I think about this and how I teach it.

So, when I was about to leave for Cabo, I looked at the weather. It was like a week before, I think. I looked at the weather and realized it was going to be a lot chillier than I had planned for. And I kind of panicked a little bit and thought, oh, I'm not sure if I am prepared for this. I don't know if the outfits that I had planned to pack if they'll be a good fit for what I need. So I kind of panicked and ordered a few clothes, ordered a few things, all from the same website.

Basically, I saw an ad, and it was a company I thought I had ordered from before. So I thought I knew what I was doing. So I just went on the website,

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found these things that I thought were amazing, ordered them, paid for quick shipping so that they could be here quickly so I could try them on and see if they're right, whatever.

So I did that. And these were not inexpensive clothes. I mean, I think inexpensive or expensive is a thought, but I think most people would probably agree that it wasn't cheap clothes, right? Like, I wasn't ordering from a company that's like, here are the clothes, no refunds, we don't care if you like it, right? It wasn't like that kind of company, or at least I didn't think so.

So I ordered some clothes, and they came. It took a couple of days for them to get to my house. They came, and before the clothes even arrived, before I had them in my hands, I think the day before or maybe that morning, and then they got there that day, I received an email that said basically your clothes are arriving today, and just so you know, here's what we expect from you.

We have a seven-day return policy. Basically, I felt a little bit like I was being reprimanded. And I didn't even have the clothes yet. It wasn't like, I'm so glad you're my customer. None of that. No niceties. We have a seven-day return policy. If the returns aren't in the mail by X date, then you will be charged in full. No refunds. No exceptions. Okay, fine.

So the clothes come. I am so excited. I pull them out, and I'm like, oh, these are pretty cute. I try them on. And immediately, I'm like, wait a minute, did I order the wrong size? What is happening? So I look at the size. No, it's my normal size. And I can't even get the clothes on my body, okay?

So I go back to the website just to look because I think, oh no, maybe they weren't US sizes. Sometimes that's confusing. Like if it's European sizing, that can be different. Or sometimes it'll say like a little disclaimer, hey, for whatever reason this, let's say, shirt runs small. Order two sizes up.

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And listen, I literally could give two cares about what size it is, right? Like about what the number is on the tag. I just want it to fit. And I want to be able to at least try it on. Truly my first thought was like, did I accidentally order a kid's size? That is how extreme the difference was. So there's that.

And so I try on the first – I can't even get the first thing on, so I take it off. It's a shirt. I take it back off, and then I have a dress. And so I try to put the dress on. I can get it on, but it's bad. Can't breathe, no way, right? Take it off. Then I look at the ground, and I see these strips of paper. And I was like, oh, that's weird. What is that?

So I look at it. I pick one up, and it says something along the lines of no matter what you do, do not remove this paper from the garment, or there's no returns, no money back, whatever. Basically, it was almost like a security tag, kind of, but it was truly just a piece of paper that was taped very lightly around, like through the garment. Because now there's a third thing, so then I pick that up and look at it, and I see, oh, it's this teensy little strip of paper. It's so small, and it just says in the tiniest red letters, "Do not remove with penalty of not getting a return."

I was instantly super irritated because, remember, I found it on the floor, so it's already removed, right? So I look at it, and it's like this very kind of flimsy tape. But the way that it is, you can tell like there's no way, I can't just tape it back, right? You can tell that it's been ripped. And also remember, if the clothes hadn't been way too small, that probably wouldn't have even happened, right?

I'm sure that they just ripped right off when I was trying to squeeze into these things or maybe trying to even get them off. Because literally the first shirt, I couldn't even get it over my head and arms. So it's not like I was pulling hard, like hurting the shirt. It was just like, nope, that's not it. I took it off. Somewhere in there, this thing falls off. So now I have two things. I've spent hundreds of dollars on them. And in my mind, I'm like, okay, well, I'm not going to be able to return it.

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Then, of course, I thought, oh, no, I'm definitely returning these. They're going to let me do it. I'm going to email them, you know, whatever. So then I package the things back up. Everything is in perfect condition. I have not harmed the clothes. I'm very careful whenever I try on clothing, just in case, right? I am always like, how can I be respectful of this? I never want to send clothes back that I've damaged in any way or, you know, I'm even really careful, like, oh, don't get deodorant on this, all of the things.

So I package them up very neatly. Everything is intact, except, of course, the stupid paper tag things. And I pack them back, and I get them ready for a return. I just go ahead and go on the site and say I want to return them. However you do that, right? Apply for a return, whatever you call it. I don't know why I can't think of the name of it right now.

And then I emailed them and said, "Hi, I will be returning these. Here's why." And I immediately got a response, very quickly, that told me I couldn't. So I emailed them back. I said, no, you're confused. This isn't going to work for me. So then they tried to offer me to exchange, right? And I got, I'm not kidding, like three emails. Here's how you exchange them. We will do you a favor and exchange these things.

Now, I even went back and looked at the email that said you have seven days to return. Nowhere did it say, just beware, there's a piece of paper. If the paper comes off, you can't return them. There's nothing. I would have seen that before I tried them on because I know that because I remember seeing the email and thinking, wow, this is like, it almost felt like a threatening email. And I just thought it was so strange.

Anyway, so I'm backtracking, right? Just like looking at all the things to make sure. My go-to, and this isn't always the best, my go-to is like this is probably my fault. Turns out, it was not. It wasn't anywhere. It wasn't on the website. It wasn't on any of the emails I received. It wasn't. It wasn't anywhere.

So I emailed them back. I said, no, this is not going to work for me. The clothes are in perfect condition. I would love to send them back to you. If

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you think they're not, and you can tell me how they aren't, we can talk about this. And I'm emailing you within, you know, I think it was like within 24 hours of it getting here because, remember, I'm in a hurry to find clothes that are going to work for the trip I'm about to go on.

So I give them my whole thing, right? This isn't going to work for me, blah, blah, blah. It's been less than 24 hours. Literally, there's no way I could have worn them somewhere, and now I'm trying to return them.

Now, I also know, I've heard some stories, and I know that there are some reasons that clothing companies do this, especially ones that advertise on Instagram. I have heard lots of stories of some people that would consider themselves influencers. They will order a bunch of clothes, order a bunch of things and basically do like a box opening, like a reveal, try them on, and or do a photoshoot, or wear them or whatever and then try to send them back.

So I understand that, and I just think that there maybe are different ways to handle it. So I want you to think about this for your coaching business. What is the experience that your clients are having with you? And I think that this is very important to talk about because I see this so often, especially with newer coaches, right?

I especially see it a lot in the Coach Lab. Sometimes people ask me questions about this, and they'll say, well, I don't know what to do when a client has to reschedule. Right? And I always say, what do you mean? Tell me more. What's the problem? And they're like, oh, well, the client said they were going to be there Tuesday at noon. And they messaged me half an hour before and said there was an emergency.

Okay, I still don't understand what the problem is, right? We'll have kind of this whole conversation. And I'll say, like, is this something the client does all the time? Or was it a one-time thing? And if it was a one-time thing, I might say, okay, what if there was really an emergency?

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And sometimes, that surprises my clients, which I think is really weird. And I do know, I have learned from hearing what they tell me that there are coaches out in the world kind of teaching this like absolutely no matter what, you can't reschedule, you can't, whatever. And one of my just values as a human, but also in my company, is just seeing the humanity in others, right? Just allowing for it and, of course, emergencies come up. Of course, this thing comes up.

Even if, let's say in the worst-case scenario, the client is freaked out about the coaching or gets nervous, or for whatever reason, they cancel. Unless it's something that's happening all the time or even multiple times, then maybe we look at it, right? How is this happening? Why is it happening? Maybe there's coaching to be done around it. But otherwise, who cares? Let your clients reschedule.

That's just my opinion, obviously. Of course, this also depends on what type of coaching business you're running and what your structure looks like, right? If you have lots and lots and lots of clients, that might not be possible.

For example, I have one weekly call in the Coach Lab. If people can't come to it, they just can't come. They get the replay. I don't offer here's like a backup call because some people couldn't come. So it just depends on the structure, right? That's very different.

But the point of this isn't to say don't offer a reschedule or don't offer these things. The point is to just really think about what is the experience your clients are having. And what do you think they are interpreting from the way you interact with them?

When you are going into a client relationship with thoughts that are like absolutely no rescheduling, absolutely no refunds, anything that starts with a very firm whatever it is, I would just check-in. When you're thinking that, how are you feeling? Where's that coming from? What's the feeling behind it?

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Because I can say, of course, I'm not rescheduling my Thursday calls in the Coach Lab. I can't. It wouldn't make sense. There are hundreds of clients in there. I can't reschedule depending on every client. I feel so calm and certain and confident that my clients are going to get exactly what they need from that space.

But especially if you're a newer coach and you notice that maybe you feel defensive, or like, oh, they're not taking my time seriously, right? That's obviously a thought, not a feeling. But anytime you go to that place of, "I need to protect myself" I just think it's really interesting to look into that.

It's kind of how I felt with the clothing experience, right? They were like, we are protecting ourselves in every step of this process. You absolutely can't return. If you rip the paper, you can't return it. You have seven days. If we don't hear from you in five days, you can't return, right? It was just all very protecting them. And I think that there is a way to do that that doesn't feel bad to the customer, right?

I didn't care that there was a seven-day return policy. I do think that's short, but it's okay. I know other companies have that. And that, you can see on their website, right? Here's the return policy. I could have looked it up. But none of the other things and the tone of the experience I had in the emails that I received from them, none of them said, "Hey, we have a seven-day return policy because XYZ, here it is."

It didn't feel like a calm, certain, confident experience. It felt like, let us protect ourselves from you, the customer. And because of that, I really have no interest in buying from that company again. I'm not going to say the name because it didn't feel like it was – They did make it right. If they hadn't, I would maybe say the name.

But they did make it right, so I don't feel like I need to say it and really call them out like no one should shop there. But I did. I gave them my opinion. Who knows if they'll take it or not?

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But when you think about this, when you take this and translate it into your coaching, maybe take a minute and think, what are the thoughts that I'm believing about my clients when I'm creating my spaces?

I have rules in some of my spaces, like, for example, in the Coach Lab because it is a program and there are lots of coaches there. I have a rule that you don't have to come. We do the calls on Zoom, and I do it in a way, at least right now. I do it in a way where you can see everyone because I love that. It just creates a certain energy. But I don't make people be on camera, right?

I know that a lot of times, people are coming to just listen to the coaching or watch the coaching. Or maybe they can't participate, but they just want to be there to learn or get the coaching they need by watching someone else get coached. I have no problem. I say it is completely fine if you have your screen off, right? There's no reason that I have to be able to see you. It just doesn't make sense in that environment that I would need everyone to be on the screen. There's just no reason.

I encourage them to just come to get coaching by watching or come learn just by watching the coaching if that's what they need to do that day. I also know for some of my clients that they're in a very different time zone, so it might be really late or really early, and I'm just excited they're there. I don't care if they're on camera.

Now, if they want coaching, they do have to be on camera just so I can see them and interact. But I also do keep the chat open just for myself, not where everyone can chat with each other. But so people can send me if we're talking about something specific, sometimes people in the chat will just send me questions. And I love that. But that wouldn't also be a great fit for some of my other things, right?

So for those of you, if you've been paying attention to my emails and my social media, I just announced a coach certification which is, for now, taking the place of Coaching Masters and taking the place of the mastermind. So

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it's an advanced certification in coaching mastery. And in that space, it will be a little different, right?

There aren't nearly as many people, and I'm not going to say everybody just come and show up however you are. You can still show up however you are, that is fine. But it is going to be much more interactive, much more back and forth than everyone just showing up and being off-camera.

So I'm not saying that there's a right or wrong or you have to have certain rules to make your clients feel a certain way. I am just asking you to kind of do an audit. Do an audit of what are my thoughts that are creating all of these rules that I have.

The last thing I want to do before I hop off here is share some of my thoughts about my clients that I use when I am creating spaces. And one thing that I will be very open about is that sometimes when I'm creating new spaces, there is a little wonkiness in the beginning, right? And my thought about that is that the coaching is going to be amazing, the content is going to be amazing, and I trust my clients to give me grace when I'm figuring out some of the logistics.

Now, I don't want that to be a thing. I don't ever expect it to be a thing. But I know going in sometimes, oh, there might be some things we're going to have to work out around the logistics of XYZ, whatever it is. But that's okay because they're here for the coaching, they're here for the learning, they're here for like all the things that they're here for. Those are going to be excellent.

So then, some of my thoughts about my clients are, I'm so honored you've chosen to do this work with me. Right? Like there are so many coaches out there, I know that. I know there are so many spaces you can go to learn. And I'm so honored that you're here. The second one is I trust you, right? Like I want my clients to feel like I trust them to tell me the truth and to show up for what they need, whatever it is. I trust them.

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I also believe in my clients. I know you're resourceful, and if sometimes you need help, that's okay, right? I completely believe that you are a resourceful human. And sometimes I'm going to tell you that, or I'm going to let you figure out things for yourself. But when I see that you're really struggling or you need help, that's okay. I will never use resourcefulness against you.

The next thing is I expect you to show up a little messy when you need to, and that's never a problem. So what I mean by that, and I don't necessarily think that there's a right or wrong to this, but I know some coaching spaces where I've been and where I still am, there can be sometimes a little bit of like I want you to coach yourself, I want you to be very aware of what's going on here before you come to get coaching.

And in some spaces, I do think that makes a lot of sense. I just have a little more of a messy show up. I would rather you show up messy than not approach at all, right? Like I don't want you to ever be scared. I actually posted about this recently in the Coach Lab. I don't ever want a client to be scared to get coaching because they think they're not yet clear enough or they need to self-coach first.

Sometimes I've noticed, this is just like a little side note on that for any of you, especially if you have communities or programs or group coaching and you have this as a rule. Or even with your one-on-one clients if you tell them this. Sometimes I see what happens when they do that, especially because I work with coaches. So they're like, okay, let me really get in there and self-coach myself.

And then they show up, they've already done all this coaching, and sometimes that has created awareness. But it's created in a way that they have almost used the coaching against themselves. And they're like, oh, I can see, okay, it's just a thought, or I can get through this, or wherever they've landed, that sometimes isn't useful, and I have to spend time unwinding that. Like, let's back up a few steps because it's okay to need the coaching.

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Okay, the next one is you are an expert of you, and I'm just here to facilitate the growth. This is something I think about my clients. I believe my clients come to me already whole, already amazing humans, already knowledgeable about themselves, already an expert in them, right? And I'm just there to facilitate growth or to facilitate – I don't know if there would be a different word than growth. That's how I usually think about it.

But I'm just there to facilitate the coaching. It doesn't mean that I'm an expert on my clients. I'm an expert at what I do, and then I help them be an expert at what they do, who they are, what they do, all of it.

And then the next one, which kind of links to the thing I said in the very, very beginning before I started saying my thoughts. Anytime I make a mistake, I will be honest, I will let you know, and we will resolve it. So that one is a little about me, but I think it circles kind of back to, like, and I'm certain, usually, that you will give me grace, right? Because we're all human. And if I show you that respect, I just assume you're going to show it back to me.

So that is all. I hope this was really helpful. Just don't be the clothing company that makes your customers feel awful about buying from you and then like doing things wrong that you didn't do wrong. Unless, of course, that's how you coach, and that's your brand. Maybe it is. These are just my thoughts. I only share them with you as an example. You get to choose your own.

I know people, I know that there are coaches that, at this moment, just giving it as an example, I have no thought about if it's good or bad. But I know that there are coaches that are like, nope, this is how I do things. That's it, period. No exceptions. You'll figure it out, whatever. Like their rules might be a little different than mine. And I'm sure mine will change. Maybe, maybe not. We'll see.

But the most important thing isn't that you create the perfect container. It's just that you see all of your thoughts when you're creating it. That's way

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more important than finding the exact right way to do it. All right. I love you all, and I will talk to you next week. Goodbye.

Thanks for listening to this episode of *Mastering Coaching Skills*. If you want to learn more about my work, come visit me at lindsaydotzlafoaching.com. That's Lindsay with an A, D-O-T-Z-L-A-F.com. See you next week.