

Ep #159: Clearly Defining Your Offers as a Coach



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Lindsay Dotzlaf

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Hey, this is Lindsay Dotzlaf and you are listening to *Mastering Coaching Skills* episode 159.

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 happy you're here today. I want to chat with you today about something that I have been working on just personally in my own business that I think might be really useful for you to think through. So I'm going to use some examples and through the lens of some things I've been working through in my own business and then kind of show you how you can do this for yourself.

So one thing, if you're listening in real time in November of 2023, I am currently, I just finished Coach Week, which you may have heard of. I am enrolling clients into The Coach Lab, which is my foundational coaching skills program. And then I have an advanced certification, which through November and into December is open for enrollment and we start the beginning of next year.

And so one reason that I've been thinking a lot about this is because one question I get asked a lot is what's the difference between the two programs. So to me, it's really obvious but of course just because something is obvious to you, you know this if you've been in it before. Maybe you've experienced this where it's like something might be really obvious to you but people keep asking you over and over and over.

And when I say people, I mean potential coaching clients might ask you over and over and over. And you have to get more and more and more clear over time, if you have more than one offer, between your offers. Or if you just have one offer, more and more clear about who it's for and what you're doing inside that space.

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And so I've spent a lot of time thinking about the difference between foundational coaching skills, which are the skills you need to learn when you're a newer coach or maybe go back and learn or refresh if you aren't a newer coach. And the skills you need, like what's different between that and then what I teach in my advanced certification.

And so I've been thinking a lot just around the theory of how we learn a new skill and then over time become an expert at something and can consider ourselves like a master level coach, right? So if we're taking coaching in this example where it's like you hear about coaching, you decide you want to be a coach, you learn how to coach somewhere somehow, then you start working with clients and over time you feel like you're an expert, right?

You come to this place where you're like, I am really good at what I do and everyone should hire me, in my niche, right? Like all the clients that are right to work with me, they should definitely work with me because I'm excellent at what I do, all my clients get results, all of that.

And that can be a whole journey. And some people love for that journey to be super short. Most of you listening probably are like, yeah, that would be amazing if I could just learn to coach and then right after that, learn to be an expert. And unfortunately, I just don't think that's how it works.

So I want to describe a little bit about how I think about the journey, like what it takes to learn foundational coaching skills. Like what does that look like? And then kind of what I teach in my certification, my master level certification, which I do want to say up front this is not just like the truth of the universe, this is just how I think about it. And what I teach in my master certification is very different than what a lot of people do.

So some people listening or some other coaches that you follow or whatever, they might teach this differently. But I just want to let you in on kind of how I think about it. And you can take away from this whatever feels

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useful for you when you're thinking about your own spaces and your own programs, all right?

So when you're a coach, when you just decide you're going to be a coach, however that happens, right? For me it was like I worked with my own life coach for over a year just working through every aspect of my life, just a general life coach. And I mean, it changed everything.

And I'm going to dive actually into that in some upcoming episodes and tell a little more of my story. There are lots of it, lots of pieces of it that I have left out or that I think might be important for you to understand or that might be useful for you to understand when you think about how I created what I've created and how I got where I am and why I teach what I teach and all of that.

But for me, I worked with a life coach for a year or a year and a half and then I decided to be a coach. It made a lot of sense, I had a background in psychology. I just had all these things that it was like coaching was like the thing I didn't know I was looking for is what it felt like at the time.

So maybe that was your journey. Or maybe you heard about coaching and you were like, I could do that. And so you learned to coach somewhere. Or maybe you have a really specific expertise and then you learn about combining coaching with that skill and learn to coach so that you can add it into what you already do. There are so many entry points into the field.

So it doesn't matter, however you got here there is a part where in the beginning you just have to learn coaching skills. So this is what I teach in the Coach Lab. I teach foundational coaching skills, which to me, is all of the skills that every coach needs to know, no matter what kind of coach you are.

No matter what your niche is, no matter what techniques you use, everybody needs the skill, somehow, of creating awareness, of setting goals or looking at the future, of asking really incredible questions. I think that's one of the best skills you can have as a coach. One I don't talk about

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a lot also is how to listen. I think that is also one of the best skills you can have as a coach.

Maybe even like we might argue curiosity and listening, those could go, I don't know, depending on the day, I might argue that one is more important than the other. Maybe you have a strategy, your own unique strategies as a coach, your own processes and decision making. I think we are always helping our clients make decisions and identifying where they have unmade decisions, which I think is very important that every coach should know how to do, and then to have some kind of process to walk them through to help them make decisions.

And for me, those are things you have to learn, right? If you don't already know how to do them, if you haven't learned them somewhere, you have to learn them as a coach in some form. And it can look like so many different things. It could take on so many different forms, learning how to do each of those.

So there's that part, right? And, to me, learning is like you're consuming the thing. So I'll just give you the example of the Coach Lab because that's what I know. But you can apply this to, as I'm using my example, definitely apply it to your thing, right, to how you work with your clients.

So when people come into the Coach Lab there's a whole portal of videos. And the videos are, here's how to create awareness. Here's how to – And that's not just one video, it's multiple videos. Here's my decision-making process. Oh, here's how to evaluate. That's another important skill I think that all coaches can use. Here's how to – Just all the hows, right? Just like here are the skills. I'm going to show you how to do it. I'm going to give you the information.

And then you're just going to go into the world and practice it. Maybe you're going to practice with free clients. Maybe you're going to practice with paid clients. Maybe you're going to like whatever. Whoever you're going to practice with. Maybe you're going to practice with your mom. Maybe you're

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going to practice with people in the Coach Lab, right? You're going to say like, hey, I would love to partner with someone and do some coaching. Amazing, I highly recommend this. Whatever it takes for you to feel confident doing the thing.

So I think of this, it's kind of like an undergrad in college, right? Or in high school or whatever. Like, wherever we go, at least in the US, where traditional education is very much like consume the thing and then regurgitate the thing, right? Consume it and then in the case of coaching, then go do it. And over time you're going to get better and better and better, right? The more you do it, the more confident you're going to be.

The more you practice, the more clients you work with, the more just coaching you do, the better you're going to feel about your coaching. The better you're going to be at the skills, because you're taking it from theory, which is like learning the thing, right? Learning how to create awareness, why it's important to create awareness, what is awareness, like learning all of that. That's the theory of it.

And then you're going to take it to the real world and do it. And that is how all coaches start. I don't care who you are, I can't think of a time when this wouldn't be true. Even if, let's say, you were doing something very coach adjacent prior to being a coach and so maybe your time doing this first step was condensed, right?

Like maybe you're a therapist and you have lots of adjacent skills to coaching. And then you come in, then you decide you're going to be a coach. Let's say you come into the Coach Lab, you consume the material and it just clicks quicker because you've been doing things that are really similar.

And now there are just some shifts you have to make and maybe some reframing, some relearning, but maybe the learning curve isn't as big. So there's that piece that every coach has to go through, every single one. I don't care who you are, you cannot skip this part.

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Where I see a lot of coaches kind of getting stuck in this is they want it to be just fast. Like, well, I just learned the thing, I don't want to practice. The practice is uncomfortable, I want to go from learning the thing to being an expert. And if you think about that out in the world, that's just not how it works, right?

Like, let's say you go to college or university to be a math teacher. You're going to learn the things first, right? You're going to read the textbooks, take the tests, consume the material, get the grades, and then you're going to go practice. And I was an education major for a while, so what that looks like is then you start going, before your teacher you start going into classrooms and working with real life students and practicing all the things that you've been learning.

And it can be uncomfortable because stuff happens that you're like, that wasn't in the textbook. And really, a lot of stuff happens that's not in the textbook because it's working with the real life people right? And as coaches, I see a lot of you not wanting to experience that or just thinking you should be better at it, or it shouldn't feel awkward, or you should just know how to do this.

But really, there is a piece of it that is like the only way you can learn to do it, is by going into real life situations and coaching the people. Real life coaching, although I love peer coaching, I love practicing with each other, it isn't the same. It's just not the same.

I've been in so many certifications, so many training programs, so many all the things where we practice the coaching, and it just is not the same as just being on your own in a coaching session with another human who isn't a coach, who has no idea. Or who even is a coach but is just showing up as a real client is very different than practicing with someone who knows that you're practicing, right?

Someone who also has all the same skills, who knows what the next thing is you're going to ask, or is wondering why you're doing this thing, or is

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even going to help you out a little bit and say like, well, this is my thought and here's how I processed this thing that came up. Like they just know things that you know that real life clients, even if they're coaches, hopefully even if they're coaches because even if they're coaches –

I encourage my clients to do this all the time. I say like in the situation let me be the coach. You just drop all of that at the door for today's call and just give me your real life, unfiltered whatever it is, messiness, fine. Or it's not always messy, but I do encourage that.

And so I just want to offer you can't skip this part, you have to do it. And I think the more willing you are to do it, the faster you will get to the second part. And what I see is a lot of coaches wanting to be in the second part, which is more like a coaching mastery, an expert at coaching, an expert at working with your clients. It just takes practice, first of all, right? It takes practice at what you do. It takes a willingness to show up and get it wrong.

Sometimes it takes a willingness to show up and get it wrong over and over and over, which is super uncomfortable. And a lot of coaches just want to skip this part because it's like they're doing so many uncomfortable things, right? Especially if you're building your own business as a coach, now this is also happening on the business side, right?

You learn the foundations of building a business, and then you just have to go out into the world and actually build the business. So there's just discomfort happening all around. And sometimes what I see is coaches wanting to take some kind of shortcut or thinking even that there is a shortcut to this, right? And instead of going out and just practicing over and over and over and working with the clients, what they'll do is they'll sign up for another coach certification.

You've heard me talk about this before, they'll sign up for another coach certification. They'll do more learning. There's so much safety in the learning, right? So much safety. Even though it isn't maybe the most fun, depending on what the learning is, sometimes it is. If you're like me, I love

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to learn and there's just so much safety in it, right? It's like if I'm just here learning, then what I don't have to do is be out in the world practicing the thing, being an expert.

If you feel called out, don't worry because this is so, so, so, so common. I see this with so many of my clients. So then what is the next step from that, right? It's like you practice, you have a lot of practice, you're feeling pretty confident as a coach. The next step for that, for me, like what I created for my clients is the Advanced Certification of Coaching Mastery.

And I get a lot of questions about this and I think I've realized I haven't been the best at explaining what it is and talking about what it is. And here's why, because a lot of advanced certifications or master coach certifications, what they do is they teach you kind of the next level of learning. So it's like you did the thing, right? You consumed the material, you learned how to be a coach, and then you enrolled in a master coach certification.

And that next level is consuming maybe more material and just being better at the thing that you already know how to do, which is great. This isn't a bad thing. Like for sure, learn all the things. I highly encourage the learning. But what I do, which is a little different, I think of it more as like if I think about traditional universities or education or whatever in the US, if you have ever been, like if you went to college or if you –

No judgment if you didn't. But if you went to college or if you have any kind of advanced degree, it's like the more advanced your degree is, the more kind of self-mastery it requires. And it's like the less learning but the more hands on, right.

So if you think about being a teacher, for example. When you learn to be a teacher you consume all the materials, you go practice in the classroom, you practice over and over and over. Then you get to be a teacher, you just go into the world and teach. Then when you might go get your master's

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degree in teaching, it's not usually just teaching, it's in something. And usually that is more individualized to you. Now, it kind of depends.

Listen, I didn't do this, but I've watched my sister do it and it's a little bit like, what's the thing that you want to improve when it comes to you as a teacher? But also kind of what's your body of work that you are putting into the world?

So for some teachers that might be learning how to be a principal and really stepping into, like, if you've been around principals, you know a lot of them do their job differently. Not good, better or worse. I mean, arguably, maybe some of the teachers right now that are listening might be like, oh yes, there is better or worse.

But there also can be two incredible principals that do their job very differently, right? That lead very differently and that create different cultures in their schools.

And this is what I teach in my advanced certification. I don't teach you how to just consume more coaching, more coaching knowledge. You already know how to do that. What I teach you is how to take that and instead of just learning more and consuming more and then just showing off to me, right? Like turning in a bunch of stuff, like showing me just congratulations, you consumed the thing, now you get an A. You get gold stars.

What I teach you to do is really look at who you work with, what you do and use your brain, which can feel very uncomfortable for those of you that just are like, no, no, no, I'm just here to learn the thing and regurgitate it. Use your brain to really, first of all, create self-mastery.

I really think the better you know yourself as a human but also as a coach, the better you are going to be at coaching your people. The more solid you are in this is who I am, this is what I love to do, here's how I love to do my work. Here's what I'm really good at. Here is what I believe, here's what I don't believe.

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And the more settled you feel in that, the more available you are to go out and put your unique spin on the work you do on the world. Which is very, very different than just more consuming, more consuming and then just showing someone like, ta-da, I learned the thing.

So I'll give you a few examples from my certification. So one thing that I have my clients do is they all do a project. And this isn't new, some other master coach certifications or advanced certifications do this. I think it's a really amazing, incredible idea because I think it's so – Like one thing I see with the projects is the project's, I think, is where a lot of self-mastery comes into play.

Because people will come in with like, I want to start a podcast or I want to write a handbook for my business, or I want to, like one of the ideas I've heard pitch to me for this next round is I want to kind of rebrand and have this huge, amazing photo shoot. But I want it to feel like the most on-brand, the most like me and settled into who I am that it's ever felt.

So all the projects are very different, but they all require a certain level of self-awareness that isn't required when you're just consuming more information and then just turning around and spitting it back out. And so I think where it gets tricky is the self-awareness, it just feels different.

For those of you that love to learn that love to consume, which I do as well, I think of it as like a different muscle. There's a different muscle or a different part of your brain that we have to tap into that is, okay, amazing, I learned. I did all of the learning. Now, let me take all of that learning and condense it into who I am as a coach and the work I want to put out into the world and who I want to work with. Like this is what makes you stand out, right?

When I say I help you stand out as a coach in the certification, it's not because you're going to have flashy new branding or marketing, which that stuff, I think, does come along with it a lot of time. But it's because you are going to literally create something novel from your own brain. I don't think

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programs and, again, I'm not saying this is a bad thing, I'm just saying they're two different things.

Programs where you just go learn more and then kind of report back like, here's what I learned, that doesn't help you stand out, right? That's like you're learning the same thing that everyone else is. And, of course, in my program I'm thinking about how do I teach this? Like, I'm still teaching, everyone is still learning the same thing. And then we turn around, how do you put your own spin on it? How do you make it yours? What is your intellectual property that you're creating?

So another thing that we do is we work through a handbook, right? Like you're going to create your coaching handbook that is, start to finish, how you work with your clients. It includes your processes that you create in the program. It includes just everything that's crystal clear.

And what I learned, so I've only done one round of this so far. And I knew I was going to learn a lot in it, but one thing I learned, one of probably the biggest things that I learned from a coach perspective is that that doesn't look the same for everyone. So in this next round, I'm going to do it a little differently, where we're going to start with the handbook and it's going to be kind of like a workbook that guides us through the program.

But I didn't do that last time. I taught all the things and then I was like, okay, here's how you submit everything. And what I learned when people started submitting things, and for those of you that have been in the certification, this will probably make you laugh because you saw it play out in real time.

What I learned when I saw people start to submit things was there were just different types of learning, different types of things happening. In my mind, I was like we went through all of this. You created all of it already. Now all you're doing is putting it on paper to turn in. And then I'm going to turn around and create this beautiful handbook for you. We're going to have it printed, we're going to send it to you.

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And what I saw is that a few people were like, yes, all in. They immediately finished it, no problem. Then there were a few people that took a little bit longer. And maybe one or two things came up where it was like, oh, this part feels really sticky. I need to sit with it for a little bit.

And I allowed them, it wasn't like a strict deadline. I was like, take your time. This work is for you, not for me. I'm not looking for you to turn in something that's like I give you an A plus. I'm looking for your amount of self-awareness. Your amount of awareness that you are taking away from all this work that you've been doing.

So there were those few people that just there were a few things that stood out, they just needed to work through it, it turned out to be really great. Then there were a few people that just really stressed over the whole thing. And then there were a few people, that's like four different categories, but then they got it done.

And then there were a few people that just froze and didn't turn it in. And so I started thinking. I was like this is so interesting. And I gave them the option of like, you don't have to have this printed, right? Here are the things that are just required. It doesn't have to be pretty, just kind of show me that you did the work.

And so what I realized is that the people that froze, kind of the people in those last two categories, which is why I think I'm going to do it really differently next time. The idea of filling in a handbook and having that at the end is super exciting for some people. And, for me, my thought about it was like, I don't really care. If you don't want the handbook that's totally fine. And a lot of you also, a lot of them that were in the program, they showed me like I saw all of their work as we went.

So I started thinking about it and I was like, what is actually required here? Like, why am I requiring them to turn this in for the people that don't really want to, right? Of course, the people that were excited, they're all in. They turned it in like day one, right? Like I thought you'd never ask, here it is.

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Now I'm the one that's behind on things like formatting and getting them the handbooks.

But then what I really started thinking through is like for the people that haven't done it or for the people that this feels really hard, what I realized is that I, Lindsay as a human, am so opposed to busy work. And for maybe someone who is actually a lot like me, which is interesting because I'm the one who created this assignment. But for someone who's a lot like me I was like, you know what we could do, I could just get on a call with them and talk through all the things.

What if all they have to do, instead of turning all this in, they have now created this big story in their mind about how hard it's going to be and how much work it is, and it's like the thought of doing it has gotten so much bigger than what it will actually be or the time will actually take.

And so for a few of them I've just been setting up calls. I'm just kind of like, okay, how about you walk me through this? And I'm asking them questions. And then I'm like, okay, like you did the work. And then I give them, I let them decide, is there anything you want to turn in? Do you want a handbook? If you do, here are the things that we will need.

And I share this with you, it actually feels kind of vulnerable to share because looking back I'm like, oh, I wish I would have thought of this from the beginning, right? There are probably some people that forced themselves to work through the handbook, who did a bunch of busy work, who probably didn't want to, and they could have done this call with me. So if that's you and you're listening, I apologize.

But what I have learned from it is, oh yeah, there are so many things that go into this, right? There's like, what motivates you, there's a neurodiversity component to it. There's like how good are you at scheduling and following directions part of it, which is like, this is certainly not what I'm measuring, so I don't want that to be a big thing.

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And so my biggest takeaway is when we have the capacity to do it as coaches, how can we, instead of just saying like, okay, here's what I think all of my clients should be doing. How can we turn that around and say, what is the actual result? Like, what's the purpose of them doing this?

So I'm speaking specifically to those of you that have a lot of homework or busy work in your coaching. What's the point of it? Because not every client is going to respond to it in the same way, right? I know I've worked with coaches in the past that I was like, I'm not doing the worksheets. I'm just not, I'm sorry. You know who you are. I'm pretty coachable, but I can be pretty opinionated about some things like that.

But I think it really is questioning like, what is the purpose? Why am I wanting the client to do this? What is the result for them, right? Because we're client-focused. What is the result for the client? And is this the only way that supports this result? Because it might not be.

And if I have the capacity as a coach, if you have the capacity as a coach, what are all the other ways? Like let me open up my thinking to what are all the other ways this could be done, right? So I do this a lot in my programs, where I know other programs have certain rules about how you have to show up or that you have to be on camera or whatever. And that's not necessarily a bad thing, that just isn't how I run my spaces.

I like to think a lot about, like I know sometimes it can be like, okay, well, you have to be on camera, here's why. Because you have to focus, you have to whatever. Well as someone, personally, who has a brain that works a little differently than maybe some of the others. I know that sometimes being off camera is how I focus the best, right?

Like being on camera and looking like I'm paying attention, sometimes it is true, like sometimes that really does help me. But sometimes it doesn't, especially if I have other things going on that day or if something else is in the way of me showing up how I would want to show up to be on camera.

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Maybe I'm not feeling 100%, but I really want to show up and hear the teaching and hear the material, but having to be on camera might stop me. Or maybe like I don't require, in the Coach Lab there's a lot of people and a lot of times a lot of them are off camera. I love it. I have no thoughts about that, that's totally fine. I just am happy that they're there, right?

In the Coach Lab some people never come to calls, they only listen to replays. And I'll get messages or a post in the community or whatever, like this call was so good, here are my takeaways. And it's really opening my mind in so many ways that there are so many different ways to do it. There are so many different ways to help your clients get the results. And there are so many different ways to think about our clients and think about the best support for them.

So one thought that I have all the time is I don't know what's best for my clients. I just don't. I can help them set goals. I can help them decide what's best for them. I can help them decide what they want. But I don't know the best way for them to get there. Sometimes I might give ideas. I might give strategies that have worked for me. I might give strategies that I know have worked for someone else, right?

I'm not saying this is always like, okay, now we just don't talk about it because it's different for everyone. No, absolutely. But then I encourage them to take that, to take whatever I've shared and to go make it their own, right? Figure out how it works for them.

So I just want to encourage you, any coach that's listening, to just – I kind of taught two different things here, right? There's like the path of coaching mastery, which is learning to coach, practicing coaching, then really learning how to make it your own. And then there's the flip side of that, which is for you to think about in your own coaching spaces, how can you best support your clients to get the results? And what are all of the different ways, like how might that look different for each client?

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I want you to just really consider that. I don't think it's a thing that is taught often enough. I think that a lot of times, especially when you're in that first phase of learning, when you're learning like this is how you do it, here's step 1 through 10. I don't think coaches that are just brand new to learning, they might not have the flexibility in the space they can hold in their spaces to offer all the different ways, right? Like maybe it's just like, here's how I coach, this is it. And then it just becomes about making that very, very clear to people that might work with you.

But, to me, part of coaching mastery is to learn to question all of it. How can you make it more accessible for all the different styles of learning, for all the different ways that people show up, for all the different ways that people can feel the most supported?

Before I let you go, I want to offer that if you loved this episode and if you're intrigued by the way I was talking about the Coach Lab or the coach certification, the Coach Lab is always open, at least as I'm recording this.

And the certification is currently enrolling. So if you're listening in real time, and you're like, that sounds really intriguing. I have actually just, it's open right now and I've actually added some times to just chat with me in my calendar. So if that feels like something that would be useful for you, just send me a message. Send me an email, let me know. Click the link in the show notes, we'll put all the links there. And I'll talk to you soon, 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.