

Ep #179: The Biggest Business Mistake Coaches Make



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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Hey, this is Lindsay Dotzlaf and you are listening to *Mastering Coaching Skills*, episode 179.

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. Today I want to talk to you about something that I've been thinking about over the last couple days and I can't stop, first of all, kind of just laughing at myself. So I'm going to share it with you because some of you have reported that I haven't shared something like this in a while and you like to laugh at me.

So here we go, I'm going to do that. So first I'm sharing so that you can also have a laugh because I can't stop laughing about this. And because although I'm going to tell you kind of a funny story about myself, this is something that the thing I've been thinking about over the last couple of days is how this reflects so much into what I see a lot of coaches doing right now and things that I help my clients with.

So I'll give you more context in a minute. First, I'm going to start with a story, like something about myself, and then I'm going to tie that into coaching and entrepreneurship and just having a coaching practice and all of those pieces, all right?

So something you don't know about me, I'm sure you don't because I don't think I've talked about it before. And really, I don't know that I've talked about this often with anyone besides maybe like the people, the other humans who live in my house. So something about me is that I love plants.

Like if you're watching this, if you're seeing this on video, you might see that I have a big live plant in my office. Or if you are in my spaces and if you've ever been to my house or if you're in any of my programs and you've just seen me talk on video, you know I have a big plant behind me in my office.

Ep #179: The Biggest Business Mistake Coaches Make

Now, this plant is not doing so well, which is part of the story. But I love plants. Like in my dream life, I have plants all over my house. My house feels just very – Like right now my house is just pretty neutral, although we're about to make some changes when it comes to that. But it's pretty neutral. But if it were up to me, it would just be green everywhere. There would be plants all over the place, just everywhere.

Kind of like those, if you follow, if you don't I'm going to give you some ideas, but if you follow any of the plant accounts on Instagram of people who just are obsessed with plants and who talk all about houseplants and how to care for them and they have all these special plants and all the things, I am obsessed. Like that is my dream.

Half of my algorithm knows that this is what I like, so they keep sending me more and more plant videos. One of my favorite accounts to follow is Plant, I think it's @PlantKween, and it's Kween with a K, like K-W-E-E-N, and they are just so fabulous. Like they just have plants everywhere. They talk about how to take care of them. It's just one of my favorites.

So if you go to that account and see what they're doing over there, you'll know that is what I want my house to look like, plants everywhere.

Now, that's one piece. Here's the other piece of this, I am so bad at taking care of plants. So bad. I kill all of the plants. I am notorious for killing plants, even though I buy them. Now, I've learned over the years different ways to buy plants and where to buy them and how to buy them. And I'll get into that, but just know that over the years, pretty much any plant that I've bought myself or that someone else has bought me, it just dies.

Like period, it dies, which doesn't pair well with my love for plants and my want to have them all over my house, right? To just be surrounded by plants.

Now, obviously, in this dream life, someone is going to come and just tend the plants for me. Now, this is not something that's actually going to happen. I can't really imagine myself ever hiring someone to do that, but if I

Ep #179: The Biggest Business Mistake Coaches Make

hired someone to do something else and they just happen to know a lot about plants and they wanted to take care of my plants or help me take care of my plants, I would be totally into it.

But here's the funny part, right? The funny part is how much I love the plants paired with my complete lack of ability to take care of them. And not because I try really, really hard, but because I just don't try. Like I just think that they're going to take care of themselves and I either get annoyed if I have to figure out what's wrong with them if it's going south, if it's not going well and I have to figure out what is wrong with them or like how to mend them back to health.

Or if, I don't know, like if they are very particular about how often they need to be watered or about what kind of water they need or if they need to be repotted or need special soil or anything like that. Now, I mean, when I say I love plants, I'm telling you like I have plant books. I have, like I said, my social media is like half plant content. I love to look at plants.

I love every piece of it except, like even if you came and stayed at my house in my guest bedroom on the nightstand, it's called, I think it's called like Wild Interiors or something, but it's a whole, it's just a whole book about plants. It's beautiful, right? I think mostly what I'm learning as I'm saying all of this out loud is I just love to look at plants, right? I love to have them around. I love to look at them. I'm not the best at taking care of them.

Although I don't mind the day-to-day taking care of them. I don't mind. I feel really accomplished on the weekends when I water all my plants. And I don't know, there's some kind of attachment to like, oh, I'm a real adult when I do that. And I'm thinking it's probably because when I was in college and living on my own for the first time when I had an apartment, I had roommates, so not on my own, but like not at my parents' house. That was just one of the first things that I did, I bought some plants.

Now, of course, I killed them all. I was so bad at it, but there's something about just watering your plants and taking care of your plants. It's like the

Ep #179: The Biggest Business Mistake Coaches Make

step before having a pet or kids, which turns out I'm somehow much better at taking care of my kids than I am my plants.

What does this have to do with you or with coaching? I think it is such a good analogy. The way I just described that, the way I think about it, the way I love the idea of having plants and being surrounded by plants, and I really don't love the idea of taking care of them or figuring out what to do when, for example, recently I have a money tree, which is one of the best plants. Like I've done the best with this money tree. It is growing. It's actually outgrowing its pot. And this is where my lack of ability is like, well, now it's just outgrowing its pot.

I do feel pretty motivated specifically with this money tree to figure out what to do about it. But last year it had aphids, right? Like the leaves were turning brown. I Googled it. It had aphids. I figured it out. It had a little sap on the leaves. So I was annoyed, but I did go to the garden shop down the street. I bought some neem oil or whatever it's called. I sprayed it.

And it smells really terrible, so I left it. I put it outside in kind of a shaded area because money trees don't need full sunlight, only bright indirect sunlight. And then I forgot it. And it was very hot outside. And I forgot it outside for, I don't know, at least 24 hours, maybe 48 hours. What that means is that the plant died. The leaves turned black. I mean, it was so sad.

What happened was it fell over, I have to defend myself. It fell over. So it was in the front yard, I put it kind of in the garden so the oil could dry. And then I was just going to bring it right back inside. Well, I forgot. And then the wind, it probably was a little windy. The plant fell over so I didn't see it, right? It wasn't like, pay attention to me. And then it just laid on the ground and the leaves died right up.

I was devastated. I brought the plant inside. I did nurse it back to health, which to my, I don't know what the word would be like, not to my credit. I think I just got lucky because it was a fairly easy thing to do to nurse it back

Ep #179: The Biggest Business Mistake Coaches Make

to health. I didn't have to do a lot of research. I didn't have to put tons of effort into it. I just had to kind of be patient, let new leaves – I could tell that the plant wasn't dead, right? It just burned the leaves, which I felt so bad about. And I just had to give it some time.

All the leaves fell off, every single one. All the shoots with the leaves on them, they all fell off. But then after a few weeks, they grow pretty quickly, they regenerate leaves pretty quickly, new ones started to grow.

So, okay, now the plant is doing great. Although I did just notice yesterday it has some little spots on it that I'm like, what, how is this happening again? It's fine. I think it just might need a little bit of care. It's going to be okay.

But now, as I said at the beginning, the plant in my office is dying, which it looks fine. If you can see it on video as I'm recording this it looks pretty okay. But when you look up close, some of the leaves are black. It's just, it's a whole thing. And I just don't feel that interested in figuring out what is wrong with it. You can judge me for that if you want.

I'm probably going to, especially because it's a really pretty plant and I love it. And I want, this is one of those things like I want to want to do it, right? I want to want to figure it out. So maybe I'm going to talk myself into it.

But I want you to think about what does this mean for your coaching and for your coaching practice? One thing that I noticed that just happens so often in the industry is that coaches, some of you listening, get sold on the idea because you saw an ad or maybe you had your own coach or whatever, like wherever you heard this, you heard some version of like, well, you could totally do this. Like you could build a business. You can be an entrepreneur. You could be a coach.

And I want to be very clear, this is totally true. I am not saying that anyone is doing anything wrong, and just stick with me for a minute because this is not me calling out anyone or saying you shouldn't be a coach, just like I

Ep #179: The Biggest Business Mistake Coaches Make

don't think that I should not be a plant owner. But what I have learned about plants is what I want to teach you about coaching.

What I've learned about plants is like the best chance I can give a plant in my house to thrive is, first of all, to not buy all the plants on the plant accounts because they have all kinds of plants, exotic plants, right? They have humidifiers, it's a whole thing. One, just be super honest about which plants are for me. What does that mean for your coaching? That means to be super honest about knowing yourself.

If you decide to be an entrepreneur, if you decide you want to run a coaching business, what does that look like? Not what does someone else tell you it should look like? What do you want it to look like? What do you have the capacity for? What do you have the energy for? What do you have the time for?

Are you going to work it around a full-time job? Are you going to work it around being home with your kids? What structure, what coaching style, what things will fit you? It's such an important place to start.

I recently hosted a live event in Miami. I know a lot of you heard me talk about it, and it was incredible. And one of the things that I felt so inspired by in the room is just really noticing everyone, and part of this is because I teach this and part of it is because I think it just happened this way. Everyone in the room was so clear about what they want to create in their coaching practice, right? Like what they want it to look like, what they have the energy for.

Some of the women have had an entire full-time career. Now they're retired and they're creating a coaching business. And they're like, honestly, here's what I want. Here's the energy I have. This is what I want to create, right?

It's very easy in this industry to be distracted by "this can be so easy" and "everybody should be making zillions of dollars" and all of that, right? Which is not bad. If you want to make money, go make the money. This is not

Ep #179: The Biggest Business Mistake Coaches Make

against that. But what I am offering is to know what you want, know your capacity and be realistic about it.

Sometimes I hate using the word realistic because realistic is like a thought, right? It's like, I might think something is "realistic" that you would be like, what? That's crazy. We can just all have different opinions about it. But what I mean by that is when you're deciding what you want, just notice if it sounds like something that's totally outside of the ordinary, right?

If it's like, well, I really want to work two hours a week and have a billion dollar coaching business. I don't even know. Hopefully no one out there is saying that, but that was exaggerated, but just notice how most people would hear that and be like, yeah, I don't think that's going to happen. At least not in the beginning, right? Like that is not a way you can start a business.

And right now, because the economy has kind of been down and because of just things happening in the world, I do think as an entrepreneur, as any kind of entrepreneur, lots of businesses are being affected. And so coaches that came into this industry like, oh, this is supposed to be easy. This is an easy business to build. This is an easy place to make money, and this year right now, it's maybe not necessarily that all of the time. They're feeling a little bit like, whoa, this isn't what I thought it was going to be, right?

Kind of like when I get a plant and then I put it in the wrong place and then it gets too much sunlight and it dies quickly. And I'm like, whoa, that isn't the plant-owning experience that I expected, right? Or it's like at one point I bought a bunch of succulents because I was like, this is the ticket. Surely I can keep succulents alive. They need no care. My mother-in-law gave me a bunch of air plants and I was like, these are the coolest things ever.

I don't know why, I know that these types of plants are supposed to be easy to take care of. Maybe I love them too much, I don't know. For me, these are like the easiest things to kill. And that kind of reminds me of

Ep #179: The Biggest Business Mistake Coaches Make

sometimes the messaging in the coaching industry, right? Like this can be so easy, anyone can do it, all of that, which I just totally disagree with.

I think there are pieces of it that can be easy, but I think building a coaching business, like there are parts of just being an entrepreneur, whether you're a coach or not, that are just hard. To me, that's just a fact, that's not a thought.

Just like going to a nine to five job, or let's be realistic like a seven to seven job or however many hours most people are working now, so many things about that are also hard, right? You just get to choose your hard. Like for me, the hard parts of entrepreneurship outweigh the hard parts of having a 12 hour a day job where I have to be, like someone else is in charge of my time, right?

Another thing when it comes to plants that you can translate into your coaching and into entrepreneurship, one thing I've learned is that buying quality plants, like being willing to invest in the plant from the beginning from sites that take excellent care of their plants, that send plants in excellent shape, so one of my favorites is Bloomscape, is key, right?

So every once in a while my husband, because he knows I love plants, he'll buy me a plant at like Costco. That's his favorite place to shop. Like if he had to choose between me and Costco, I honestly don't know which one he would choose. It's his favorite place to shop. And sometimes he brings me a plant home from Costco.

The problem with that is, okay, now I have to research because there might be two lines of instructions. But we've already decided I'm not great at plant research, so that first check mark against it, right? Second, what I've learned is that big box stores like that, so whether it's Costco or I don't know.

I'm not going to call out other stores, but just when you're buying plants at maybe like a non-plant store, the plant health, even though it might look

Ep #179: The Biggest Business Mistake Coaches Make

fine when you buy it, just the plant health really is different. There is something different about those plants, in my experience, than buying them from someplace where that's all they do, is sell plants. So Bloomscape is one of my favorites. There are some other ones.

I just found one recently, it's called Easy Plants maybe, or something like that. It looks very similar to Bloomscape as far as what they offer and how they help you match the plant with what you're looking for. And they have this watering thing on the side, which looks very intriguing, right? It's like, maybe this is just a shortcut that isn't actually going to make plant owning any easier, but maybe it will. I might test it and find out and let you know.

But it's kind of the same thing, right? In your coaching practice, if you go into it looking for just like, okay, this is just supposed to be easy. Like, how can this just be the easiest thing ever? You're going to be frustrated every time something goes wrong, right?

Just like when he brings a, when my husband brings a plant from Costco and immediately it starts, something's wrong with it. It's been under-watered or it doesn't love the transition or whatever it is, I'm immediately irritated, right? Because I'm like, ugh, why didn't we just get a nicer plant? Like, why did you buy this? Now I have to figure it out. And I can't just let it die, right? I have to put at least a little effort into it.

So think about that. How does that also make sense for your coaching business, right? Like what is the effort? One of the questions I love to ask people, whether it's colleagues, friends, you know, if I'm coaching somewhere where we are specifically coaching on the pace of their business. I always say, how long are you willing to let it take for it to work? Work in quotes, like whatever that means to you, right?

If you're like, listen, I'm starting a business. I'm giving it four months. That's it, or I'm out. Like it must work or I'm out. Chances are really good that it's not going to work. That might sound really harsh, but just in my experience, from what I've seen, it's kind of true, especially right now where the bar for

Ep #179: The Biggest Business Mistake Coaches Make

coaching is very high. The industry is very much calling for great coaches, right? Which I am all for.

This is like buying a really nice plant instead of just the discount plant from Costco, which is also great. Some of you might be able to do that, by the way, just like some of you might be able to do that also with your coaching business. This is not a black or white, like 100%. I just really want to point out the similarities between this analogy so that if you find yourself having a hard time right now, maybe in some of these examples, you can kind of pinpoint why.

The next thing that I've learned about plants is that I really, this kind of goes back to one of the first things that I was saying, I have to buy a plant that makes sense for the room it's going to be in, for the lighting it needs, for how often does it have to be watered.

One of the things I love about some of the plant websites that I use, like Bloomscape, is that you can filter by – Like I filter by doesn't really need much. Like doesn't need much of my time and attention and either needs direct light, so like one side of my house I have lots of windows. And so it would be like direct light pretty much all day, or just lots of not much light or indirect light, like the plant in my office, right? Where it's like, there's a window in the room, but there's no light ever shining directly on it.

The same is true for your coaching business, right? Kind of like I was saying in the beginning, what do you want your business to look like? How can you create a business that fits the needs that you have? Again, not the needs that someone else is telling you that you should have. Not the business that someone else is telling you or the messaging that you're hearing that's like, you should have this kind of business. You should have this big of a business. You should be making this much money.

You always get to decide. You get to decide what you want. Maybe you do want a huge business with hundreds of clients, right? Like I've known from

Ep #179: The Biggest Business Mistake Coaches Make

the beginning that I wanted to help as many people as I could. And I've always been driven by that, but not everybody is.

Some of you might say, I want to be a coach, like I have clients right now who are retired, like I said. And they're like, I want like 5 to 10 one-on-one clients. I want to be excellent at what I do. I want to be a very high-touch coaching service. And that's it. Like at least for now, that is what I see for my business. And that feels incredible.

I love that plan. There's absolutely nothing wrong with that plan. How amazing is it that coaching is a business and it is an industry where you can decide something like that and just work that amount of hours, right?

But if that's your decision, just be really clear about that, that you're not listening to business coaches or coaches that are selling things that are like, sign all of the clients, make all of the money. You know, that's like a very different plan that doesn't align with what you want.

Again, to be clear, nothing is wrong with those other programs. Those are just not for you, right? Or if you're like, I want to grow quickly, I want to scale quickly. I want lots of clients. I have a very important mission and I must help all the people, that's different, right? Then what's the business that matches that model?

The next thing that I've learned about my business and that you might learn about your business from my time owning plants is that it takes time, care and attention and the willingness to sometimes get it wrong. So for example, when I burnt my money tree I was very sad. And I could have just said, I think it's dead. Like the leaves are black. They're all going to fall off, which they did. It's dead. Get rid of it. Which would be like the equivalent of just quitting your business, right?

Instead I was like, you know what? I think I can get this going. I think. I'm going to bring it back to life. But it didn't happen overnight. It took months for it to be back to looking like a normal plant. Now it looks amazing and it's thriving, but it didn't just happen overnight. And I had to trust the process,

Ep #179: The Biggest Business Mistake Coaches Make

right? I had to nurse it back to health, nurse it back to life and just assume that it was working and just keep going.

So many of you, I know, need to hear that in your coaching business, in your practice. How long are you willing to believe that it's working? By the way, looking for tiny little signs along the way, right? Not just like assuming it's working. That would be like, if I just brought the money tree in and I set it on the countertop and I was like, okay, well it's probably going to come back to life. We'll just see, I'll check it in a month. That's not what I mean.

I mean, deciding what's the plan here? How am I going to take care of it? How am I going to take care of my business? And what are the signs I'm going to watch for, for growth? So when I think about the money tree, right? I'm like, oh, I'm going to watch little, tiny green blooms starting. I'm going to look for the base of the plant looking healthier. I'm going to, I don't remember what the other ones were, but it was like, I would start to see tiny little signs of, oh, it's coming back to life. This is working.

How can you do that same thing for your coaching practice? And then are you willing to, this is similar to what I just said, but are you willing, over time, to figure it out and to keep figuring it out, right? To not think once it is working, once you have it working, like, okay, now it's just like set it and forget it. I should never have to do anything again. That's just never true.

I've just worked with so many coaches who, some of them have been coaches for quite a while and maybe they did have an offer, they have a coaching container or they have something that they teach that is working for a very long time and it's going so well and they kind of just stop paying attention to it, right? They stop paying attention to it. They're like, okay, it's working. So now it's clearly just going to work forever.

And that's just never true, right? Just like, if we go back to the plant example, sometimes I think, oh, this is working. It's great. But if I just stop paying attention to it, it's going to stop working, right? It will still need water. It will still need all the things, still need light. I can't just like, okay, I grew it to the

Ep #179: The Biggest Business Mistake Coaches Make

point that I wanted to grow it to. And now we're just done and I'm just going to like ride into the sunset with this plant. That's just not how it works. And some of you treat your businesses like that, right?

So I hope, I know this is kind of a silly analogy, but I think that it's really, really important to think about this. To think about this analogy, and you can use a different one. If it's not plants for you, maybe it's something else. Maybe it's like home improvements or something, right? Like something that over time takes care and attention and the willingness to figure it out, the willingness to get things wrong and to try something else, the willingness to experiment, to research.

One thing that I was thinking about that kind of made me laugh when I was thinking about the plants, and this is what made me connect it to coaching is sometimes I'll work with coaches who come to me and they're like, okay, I know how to coach. And they want to be a lot better at coaching, right? Because that's what I help my clients with.

And I'm like, okay, well, how many clients are you working with? How many clients have you worked with? And if they say no, I'm like, okay, how many free clients are you willing to work with? Like, is that on the table? I just ask them all of the questions like that, right? Like, tell me what has been going on over this period of time.

And sometimes the answer that I get is a little similar to me owning plants. It's like, no, I love the idea of it. Like I am just so in love with being surrounded by them. I'm also in love with reading all the books and looking at all the pictures, right? Like how many of you are reading all the books about coaching or self-help, self-improvement, whatever you want to call it.

You're reading all the books, you're doing all the research. You're like doing all these things that are so lovely because you love the idea of coaching so much. And you love the idea of having a business and being an entrepreneur. But, like me, you aren't being honest with yourself about what you

Ep #179: The Biggest Business Mistake Coaches Make

really want and what you have the capacity for and what you are willing to do to make it work.

Hopefully this was super helpful and it didn't feel like too much of a, what, like a punch in the gut? I don't know. What else would you call it? I think that this is just so important. And I want to be very clear, no matter where you are in this journey, just like me with plants, like I can decide, no, I'm all in. I feel very comfortable saying if I decided that I really did want to have a room full of plants, that I would make it work, right? Like if I was really committed.

And I could try it now, but I would probably waste a lot of money, a lot of time and a lot of effort if I wasn't honest with myself about like, this isn't for me in this form. It's not that I'm going to stop owning plants. I'm just not going to own them like that.

So what is that for you? What does your coaching practice look like? How do you start from there and turn it into exactly what you want? Not what the plant queen says you should have, or replace that with whatever your favorite coach to follow on Instagram is because all their stuff is so pretty and flashy and whatever, right?

Not what they say you should want. Not what they model even, because that's for them. It may not be for you. How can you create the thing that is for you? Okay, I love you. I mean it. Thank you for listening. And I will see you back here next week. Goodbye.

If you would love to hear me talk about mistakes that I've made in my business over the last year, if you missed it the first time I talked about it on the podcast, I've created a series called Behind The Curtains. It is a video and audio series where I'm sharing all the mistakes that I made over the last year that kept me from hitting my goal and what I learned from them.

I share kind of the mindset that got in my way. And then from that mindset, the actions that I took, right? Like the mistakes I made in strategy and in action. And so I kind of cover all of the bases. If you're interested in that,

Ep #179: The Biggest Business Mistake Coaches Make

we will link that up in the show notes because I think it goes along with what I talked about here today. It might be really useful for you to hear.

All right, see 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.