

Group Coaching Structure and Mechanics

This document outlines factors and questions to consider when building a Group Coaching program.

Your Role

- Determining your role and whether you are acting as a coach, consultant, mentor, trainer, facilitator or all of the above will be important to determine as it will modify how you describe, advertise for, and structure your Group Coaching program.
- If co-facilitating a Group Coaching program, what is your role versus the role of your co-facilitator? Will your roles vary throughout the program or stay the same for the duration?

Audience

- Who is your ideal audience? Are you creating a group of individuals or working with a team? Your ideal audience will change the structure and mechanics of your program.
- The size of your Group Coaching sessions will determine how long your sessions need to be as well as the structure of your sessions. Consider a maximum of 8 for sessions that are an hour and schedule 90 minutes for groups of 10-12.
- To count Group Coaching sessions towards your ICF Credential, groups need to be limited to 12. Document your hours based on your time as a coach (if you group coach for 1 hour you document 1 hour, not 1 hour * # of people in the group.) Please note, ICF Mentor Coaching is limited to 10 participants and does not count towards your credential coaching hours because it is mentoring. Please refer to www.coachfederation.org as these are subject to change.
- If your Group Coaching sessions are larger than 12 they will not count as coaching hours for your credential per the ICF's current requirements. In addition, your role will likely require more training, mentoring, and consulting if the group is larger. While this is not necessarily a problem, consider your role and how you will describe your program.

Description and Proposal

- People don't know what Group Coaching is, and even if they do, it's not necessarily what you will be offering. Provide a concise definition of how you define Group Coaching so your participants know what to expect.
- What you are proposing depends whether you are advertising to a group of individuals or to an existing team. If marketing to individuals you may benefit from more specific topics and a defined program as individuals will need to self-select.
- If working with a company to provide Group Coaching internally, consider offering sample topics and partnering with leadership or administering a survey to determine which topics would be most impactful.
- What does your potential audience need to know about you as a coach in order to make the investment?

Pricing

- One of the appeals of Group Coaching is that it is usually priced more competitively for consumers because you are being compensated for multiple participants. Consider what you want to be compensated for your time, your rates for individual coaching, and the minimum # of participants when pricing for a group or team.
- Your Group Coaching program design will impact your price. If you are including an assessment and/or 1:1 sessions, the # of participants in the group, your minimum # of participants, and your number of group sessions will all impact the price of the program.

Duration and Frequency

- Consider trying a Group Coaching program that meets for 4-6 sessions. This will allow you to create a program covering a breadth of topics in a shorter time period and lower price point.
- Duration of your Group Coaching sessions may depend on your # of participants. Consider scheduling 90 minute sessions but remember that the time moves quickly because you are managing the dynamics of the group.
- Frequency of your Group Coaching sessions should be influenced by the needs of the group. While every other week allows for time to implement between sessions, if you are working with a group that is newer in their field or working on something time sensitive, you may want to meet more often. If meeting less frequently than twice a month, consider supplementing the group sessions with communications, resources, and internal champion support to keep the goals of the group top of mind.

1:1 Sessions

- Including a 1:1 session before the Group Coaching program starts allows you to determine success measures, build trust, answer questions, and determine a baseline for success measures. Similarly, a 1:1 session at the end of the program allows for you to collect feedback, address concerns, and gather data to present to stakeholders or the group as relevant.
- Your # of 1:1 sessions impacts the price of your Group Coaching. Consider bookending the program with a beginning and ending 1:1 though giving participants the option to opt in to or purchase additional sessions.

Assessments

- The use of assessments in Group Coaching gives you additional context about participants and group dynamics prior to the group sessions. When assessment results resonate with participants it can build trust in the process and you as a coach faster than if you are creating a program without an assessment. If administering an assessment you can provide context to participants in their initial 1:1 as well as educate the group or team on their dynamics if/as relevant.

- If you are Group Coaching in an organization that already utilizes an assessment, consider whether you want to integrate that assessment into your sessions to establish and reinforce common language and concepts.
- Inclusion of an assessment will need to be factored into your price and topics.

Determining the Topics

- The topics you choose for your sessions will determine who participates in your Group Coaching program. I recommend having a theme and potential topics set before you advertise your program to give your participants context so they can self-select. You can also create a menu of brief topic descriptions for participants to choose from.
- If working with an existing team or within an organization, leverage leadership input and consider a survey of participants to determine the topics that are most relevant.
- When you have topics determined you are able to establish baselines based on your topics that support your creation of and reporting on success measures.
- Consider leaving the last Group Coaching session as “Choose Your Own Adventure” so that the group selects the topic it finds the most relevant. You can propose a list of topics for participants to choose from but let them know they can also establish a topic that isn’t on the list. This flexibility built in encourages your participants to partner with you in establishing the content that will be the most helpful to them in the duration of the program.

Determining Success Measures

- How will you determine the success measures for your Group Coaching engagement?
- How will you define the current state so you can establish a baseline to track progress?
- What will participants walk away with?
- What quantitative measures and qualitative feedback will you be reporting to the group or sponsors?

Baselines

- Whether working with individuals or an organization, establishing baselines allows you to measure before and after the program. Baseline success measures can be based on the topics you have established for your program, survey data, or success measures already established for participants based on their roles.
- When establishing baselines assess for both quantitative measures and qualitative feedback. For subjective topics you can measure on a scale of 1-10 or % of the time. Collecting comments and feedback on the scores provides additional information for anonymous trend reporting.
- Discussing baselines in a 1:1 prior to starting the Group Coaching program enables you to build trust with participants as well as gauge personalities, engagement, and concerns about the upcoming program.

Expectation Setting

- Establishing and reinforcing expectations are critical in establishing a successful Group Coaching program. Consider what expectations you will set for the group versus if/how you will engage the group to set expectations and norms.
- Expectations to establish:
 - Confidentiality
 - What parameters will you set around confidentiality to establish a safe space for the group?
 - What are the consequences if confidentiality is broken?
 - Attendance
 - What happens if people are late, have to leave early, or miss a session?
 - Is attending the duration of the program expected or required?
 - Are there consequences if a session is missed?
 - If someone is out of the office for an in-person session can they call/video in?
 - Is video participation required?
 - Engagement in the program
 - What needs to be said so participants can fully engage in the session?
 - What are sponsors expecting?
 - What support do you have or do you need from the group and/or sponsors to ensure the success of the program?
 - Expectations in the sessions
 - How will you structure the sessions?
 - What are your expectations of when/how often participants engage?
 - Expectations between the sessions
 - What are your expectations of participants between sessions?
 - Success Measures
 - How will participants measure success in the program?
 - What preliminary or ongoing measures will be used to gauge progress?

About Hawthorne Union:

For coaches, by coaches, [Hawthorne Union](http://www.hawthorneunion.com) provides mentor coaching, coach supervision, and continuing education approved by the International Coach Federation to support ongoing coach and professional development.

Diana Ideus is a Master Certified Coach with the International Coach Federation and has her Masters in Organizational Behavior and Executive Coaching. Diana currently leverages her coaching, management, and leadership development experience supporting leaders in education, tech, and healthcare. Diana has developed leadership content and group coaching programs in academic and corporate environments.