



Four Stages of a Soul Driven Coaching Business

Introduction

Very much like we humans move through childhood, adolescence, adulthood and being an elder, there are four natural stages of a coaching business.

Knowing them will help you grow your business at a sustainable pace and overcome the challenge of not knowing what to do. It will also give you confidence in yourself as CEO of your coaching business.

The four stages are **Coach in Training, Startup, Sustainable Success** and **Legacy**.

I created this matrix from a combination of our own failures and successes and from working with hundreds of coaches.

Like any other type of growth stages, there are also transitions that need to be navigated. Those liminal times of growing pains that, when you identify them, will make them much easier to manage and will build trust in your business having long-term success.

Warning: Missing or not completing a stage can leave you with a weak foundation that makes your business unsustainable. Just as damaging is the frustration that comes when you feel like you are doing all the right things, but they aren't working!

The good news is you can go back and fill in the fundamentals of a missed stage at any time.

The purpose of this booklet is to lay out these stages with a narrative so you can see the big picture of this transformational profession.

Knowing the big picture, you will be able to pinpoint where your coaching business is right now, and what's needed to nourish and grow it into where you want it to be in the future.

To Your Soul Driven Success!



Stage #1: Coach in Training

You are called to the coaching profession because you want to have a positive impact in the world.

You are enrolled in a Coach Training Program to learn a coaching model, improve your skills and determine how you might use coaching in your work.

Your focus is on learning how to coach.

You need to work with clients in order to be able to practice coaching and see if this is your calling. You learn how to talk about coaching as a profession. You experiment with your client enrollment style and use coaching skills as sales skills.

During your training, income is secondary to learning.

You create a basic website to describe your coaching. You choose a name for your business and create a business logo with simple brand colors.

You begin doing marketing events such as a book club, a free or low-cost workshop for people you know or a talk at a local networking group.

You purchase equipment for client sessions and to record calls, if needed.

You put in place beginning business systems to track hours, schedule clients and receive payments. You develop basic contracts, design agreements and enrollment forms.

You designate a clearly defined workspace where you participate in coach training and do client sessions.

You hire a Mentor Coach to help you navigate your training and to experience excellent coaching.

You may explore possible niches, noticing what type of clients are drawn to hire you and the topics you like to focus on with your coaching.

You begin to think about the problems that people hire you to help them solve and identify ones that you love to help them solve.



Near the end of your training, you explore how you want to use coaching in your work going forward. You check out the options of specializing in one area of expertise.

You learn how to organize your time to fit the training, coaching clients and client enrollment into your life.

You get a vision for doing meaningful work in the world using your coaching.

You uncover your personal strengths, values and life purpose... and how to apply them in your work as a coach.

You realize that coaching is vulnerable work and will take you outside your comfort zone!

You begin to name and manage the fears that naturally come up when beginning a new endeavor that you care about deeply. Fears such as:

- Who am I to coach people?
- How do I make this work financially?
- Am I any good?
- Will I fail?
- What will people think?
- Can I really call myself a coach?

Fears and thoughts such as these are normal. You get support to learn how to self-manage around them.

One of the biggest areas of vulnerability is learning to take feedback and experience failure while holding onto your self-worth and your value as a coach and as an amazing human.

There may also be questions and excitement about how to make coaching your life's work, which will require lots of soul searching.



The Transition from Coach in Training to Startup

You realize you are at the beginning of a journey into the profession of coaching and there are unexpected twists and turns ahead.

You begin to let go of "I'm a coach in training" and step into "I'm a professional coach", exploring what this transition means to you. You make a commitment.

You stay on track with your accreditation status to ensure that you have credibility in the marketplace. You begin to explore the marketplace to see where you belong.

You may decide on a name and URL for your business, recognizing that this will probably change.

You look at what type of business structure is right for you.

You step across the line into **Startup** and let go of **Coach in Training!**



Stage #2: Startup

This is the hardest and most essential stage of all. In it, you will experience the ongoing discomfort of conscious incompetence and the sweet beginnings of conscious competence.

The most important thing to know about this stage is that you need to stay in it until you create a stable foundation on which you can build sustainable success.

This stage can take up to 3 years to complete. According to research by ICF, this is when most coaches fail because they do not do the foundational work of building a business or career.

The first thing you need to do in this stage is to choose a niche. This is important whether you plan to be a solopreneur, executive coach or join an organization.

Narrowing your area of focus is what will make it possible to communicate with the marketplace easily. Instead of throwing spaghetti on the wall, you aim at a clear target of your ideal customer.

With your first niche chosen, the next steps to take to build a solid foundation are:

- Research Your Niche Problems and Offer Solutions
- Craft a Message
- Create a Marketing Plan
- Use a Sales Script for Consultations
- Create a Sales Website
- Do a lot of Networking
- Set up Chats with people to talk about your business
- Collect Case Studies and Testimonials
- Nurture Your Referral Base
- Set up a Free Consultations System
- Have Clarity on Your Pricing
- Learn the Basics of Internet Marketing
- Hire a Basic VA or Specialty Consultants like a Bookkeeper

Do you see why this stage is so important? All of these things take time, many cost money and you will have resistance to some. If you take the time to pace yourself and look at these activities as necessary to your success, it will be a whole lot easier.

During this stage, you want to balance your time and energy between increasing your income and building your business foundation.



Most coaches combine starting their coaching business with working at their current job or profession, or getting a "day job." You may work for an organization that uses your coaching skills or perhaps it's a totally different kind of work.

It's important to keep a flow of income and also to stay engaged out in the world!

This is why it is essential to work with a Business Coach or enroll in a Business Building Program, even if you think you can't afford to. The truth is you can't afford not to!

You will also do many of these:

- Choose the legal structure of your business
- Continue to keep on track with your accreditation in order to be credible in the marketplace
- Upgrade your computer and internet connection
- Choose an online scheduling service
- Choose your invoicing and payment system.
- Increase your prices from hourly to value-based by offering Coaching Packages
- Once you have the basics in place you will want to choose other software that will help you begin building a list and using a CRM.

In order to increase your value and begin growing your business, you will consider developing a specialty.

One of the best ways to grow your business is to add some kind of group coaching to your offer of services.

Having a group will give you a lower price coaching offering which opens up the door for more potential customers. **This is only advantageous to consider once you have your niche and marketing dialed in.**

Here's why:

- It takes specialized marketing to enroll a group
- You will need to have structure, purpose and clear deliverables that are specific to group work
- There are more logistics & technology to consider
- You will need training in order to master group coaching



With your first niche and some sense of the type of coaching career you want, you may choose to have specialized training. Some possible avenues to explore:

- Relationship Coaching
- Business Coaching
- Spiritual Coaching
- Teams Coaching
- Leadership Coaching
- Neuroscience Coaching
- External Executive Coach
- Internal Corporate Coach
- Training Managers in Coaching Skills

Another area of growth in this stage is with your marketing mindset. Marketing is simply a way of delivering transformational information that helps people understand what you do without having to explain "coaching".

It could be writing a blog, livestreaming on social media or crafting a signature speech to deliver at a networking meeting. This way you express your opinions and have a positive impact on people by delivering an engaging and effective message.

Now that you have chosen coaching as your career, it's time to think of yourself as a CEO! You need to be clear on your strengths and the variety of roles you will need to play in this phase.

You also need to see where you have weaknesses and find your ideal partnerships to cover those bases.

You need an office space dedicated to your business. It is essential that you have your own well-structured weekly schedule so you use your time effectively, to get your work done and to rest!

Schedule time for:

- Business development
- Your creative endeavors
- Friends, family, downtime and vacations
- Excellent self-care & personal growth



It can be super helpful if you delegate all \$15 tasks in your business and home to an assistant.

One way to stay on track with your time and energy is to be a part of a mastermind group.

During the Startup years, you will want to explore and find the answers to these questions:

- What's my vision for my business and life?
- What is the impact I want to have in the world?
- Do I want my own business or to work for others?
- What is my commitment to the coaching business?

Being in Startup mode can be exciting but also overwhelming if you don't stay grounded in your own soul's wisdom. It takes courage and a willingness to be publicly vulnerable. To put yourself out there. It requires that you grow into your best self.

So make sure you take the time and get the support you need to enhance your self-care and spiritual practices.

Address the fears that often arise from a commitment to coaching as your career:

- Can I make this work?
- What if I don't?
- What will I have to learn, spend, face, let go of... now that I've committed to coaching as my career?
- Will I get the right help?
- Am I capable?
- Am I ready?
- And on and on and on, believe me.

So please, whatever you do, don't fall into the trap of isolating yourself, overworking, thinking you have to do it alone and thinking that you can avoid failure.

Learn to make mistakes, embrace your failures as your greatest teachers.

Remember that you are not alone and, also, to hold it all lightly as possible. Remember this is your dream.

It's essential to laugh and play!



The Transition from Startup to Sustainable Success

Remember ...

Don't rush this. It will come naturally.

During this transition, you can focus more on developing your specialties and the activities that help you increase your income.

Then there will come a moment when you realize you have a business foundation underneath you.

You will notice you have a steady stream of consultations and your income has stabilized.

Celebrate that moment. It's a big deal!

After you do your happy dance ...

It is time to raise your prices and get ready to take another leap in the marketplace!

P. S. Often coaches are in the transition between Stage Two and Three for a while, with a business foundation that is pretty solid, yet still needs attention. Don't be discouraged if you find that, even after you enter Stage Three, you return to do Stage Two steps when they again call for your attention.

Just come on back and finish it up. It is all good.



Stage #3: Sustainable Success

You will know you are fully in this stage when your income is steady as a result of consistently effective marketing activities.

You may enter and exit this stage or maybe you want to stay here for years. The truth is you can stay at this stage for as long as you like and some coaches stay here forever.

Your coaching offers are scalable, with a combination of individual and group offerings.

You have a recognizable brand with a central message, look, feel and voice.

You have good systems to keep your marketing producing a steady stream of consultations.

Your sales strategy makes the sales to those that are ideal clients for your offers.

You have had success with at least one compelling offer that resonates in the marketplace that you can now replicate and add to as you grow to the next level in income and impact.

You focus on maintaining systems, growing in your knowledge of internet marketing, increasing your income while keeping true to your brand.

Here are the things you will do to grow your tribe:

- Build a sales website that grows your list
- Form great partnerships and alliances
- Create a host of targeted freebies that identify compelling problems for which your services deliver solutions
- Use effective marketing and sales activities: webinars, live streaming, online challenges, quizzes, contests and surveys
- Host live events



If you want to grow even more you might:

- Have one main niche and one or two sub-niches
- Create a Facebook group
- Create a customer journey that offers a series of compelling "next steps" for your ideal clients to take as they move thru your suite of programs
- Offer high-end individual work
- Hire other coaches and leaders to deliver your programs

It is time to improve and up-level your systems & structures! You will also want to upgrade your video and computer equipment.

In order to maintain this level of success you will need a higher level of support which could include:

- A marketing coach or mentorship program
- Having contracted team members
- Working with specialty VA's and consultants
- A personal assistant to do all \$50 hour work

All of which will help you consistently increase your income to six figures and beyond!

At this stage, you already have worked on adding specialties to your business. Now you get to go to a new level by developing one or more of:

- A Signature Program that is central to your business
- A program that can be delivered online
- A program you can eventually evergreen (meaning sell as an online, stand-alone, self-study program)

Here's another point at which you might add the specialized training mentioned in the last stage: relationships, business, leadership, spirituality, etc.



Other specialized activities that deliver your unique message:

- Write a blog
- Publish articles
- Write an ebook or publish a full-length book
- Host a podcast that connects to your message and the marketplace
- Host a radio show or Facebook show to showcase your message or to invite other experts to inspire your tribe
- Craft a couple of signature speeches that highlight your message
- Find speaking gigs that are paid or highly beneficial to growing your tribe.

It is time to slow down and develop a steady pace. This is super important because in the Startup stage, you may have become used to bursts of high-energy activities.

You definitely want to think about leadership training, being a part of a mentorship program or mastermind group that is at your level (or a bit above).

Here are a couple of other aspects of this stage you will want to consider because now it is time to really step into your leadership.

- It is time for you to begin cultivating a tribe and becoming comfortable with being visible. Embrace your unique qualities
- You need to make the shift from manager to leader so get very clear on your role in running this business. Then stay in it by getting help or partnership for everything else.
- Get an office outside the home or have a dedicated office in your home that is used only for your business.
- Regularly invest earnings back into your business
- Take your time management up a notch or two. You need big chunks of time for business development and to nurture your creativity
- Hire an Assistant for all \$50 work personal and business

Take time for excellent self-care: manage overwhelm, cultivate healthy habits, take care of your health, schedule open time and make sure you have a personal life!

Put attention and effort on nourishing your whole self: body, mind, heart & soul.



Address the ongoing fears that come with success, such as:

- Will it last?
- Is it real?
- When is the other shoe going to drop?
- Will people discover that I'm really an imposter?

Or, on the flip side, there may be a voice that whispers:

- Is this really what I want?
- Is this all there is?
- Why do I feel uninspired, ungrateful, empty & tired?

Feedback from others can be harsh in this stage because there are higher expectations you have of yourself and others have of you.

You will need to go to higher ground to learn to be authentically confident and comfortable in your skin.

To stay sane and happy in this stage (and prepare for the next one), be sure to go on nourishing retreats, spend time with family and friends, and get a personal coach or spiritual guide.

The Transition from Sustainable Success to Legacy

This transition can be a long one. You will find a new level of inspiration to take you forward. You will make a higher level of commitment to your true dream and soul's wisdom.

This transition has you stepping into realizing your life's purpose and channeling that through your coaching business. You create something that will live long after your life is over.

Is there something you haven't yet done? Do you long for more?
Are you willing to do what it takes to, once more, take a leap?

In the Transition from Sustainable Success to Legacy, you will focus on becoming an authority in your niche, growing your own tribe and letting go of things that just don't work anymore.



Stage #4: Legacy

In this stage, you are poised to become well known in your niche or area of expertise. You are now an influencer that others turn to for guidance and inspiration.

You are a thought leader who is valued for what you stand for. The people who follow you are inspired. They feel you care about helping them in ways that are most important to their core values.

Your core beliefs align with theirs. They feel seen and known by you. They are grateful you have pursued your career and are delivering your message in ways that support them to learn and grow, to fulfill their own dreams.

You have developed unique intellectual property in your content, services and products.

You focus on creating evergreen products that help people at lower cost, as well as a few high-end offers for those who are deeply committed to going all the way.

It is time to uplevel your brand and relaunch your message because you are now an authority and message-focused.

You are the figurehead of your business!

Here are some things included in this stage:

- Create an authority website that highlights your message
- Create even more targeted freebies to grow your tribe
- Create low priced products to fill out your funnel
- Complete the customer journey to fulfill your ultimate promise
- Host large annual retreats to nourish and grow your tribe
- Set up all your marketing and sales systems to be run by experts

In addition, you'll:

- Replace or upgrade all your equipment and software regularly
- Have a top-notch coach who is willing to call you on your stuff and cheer you on through the ups and downs of a dream come true
- Benefit from your marketing and sales systems that run like a well-oiled machine



You only play in where your voice, creativity and expertise is needed!

In this stage of business, you get to choose what kind of new things you want to do. It could be to grow your business or purely for the pleasure of personal growth.

A couple of ideas to consider:

- Write your first or your next book. This may be a book focused on your legacy message or a more personal memoir.
- Create a Legacy program: the one you have always wanted to do
- Deliver it to the world with a bang!
- Learn how to perform, lead and speak to larger audiences
- Have a popular Ted Talk
- Learn how to be a masterful leader of your own tribe events
- Host a mastermind group for high level thought leaders
- Go back to school!

You have a team of employees or contractors working for you.

The day-to-day running of the business is handled by others so you can focus on your leadership. You have time to create, be visible in the world and have the impact you have always wanted!

Some things you will want to focus on:

- How to leverage your time for optimal work-play lifestyle
- Having a mentor who has walked the path before you
- Mentoring others who are right behind you
- Giving back
- High-level partnerships
- Ideal workspace for you to access your highest self

In this stage there are some paradoxes!

- It is no longer all about the money and you are aiming for a high six-figure income and beyond.
- This is when you get to do what you really want to do and you may take a dip in income to do that.



There may also be more that you need to let go of.

Your old roles may not fit you anymore. You have grown and it's time to catch up with yourself as you claim your true brilliance.

This requires you to let go of old habits and ways of thinking.

Speaking of letting go... here are some questions to ponder:

- What else is it time to stop and let go of?
- What will it take to be the leader you have become?

Here is where the "I'm an imposter" fears can really grab you. You may find yourself with doubts and limited thinking about yourself.

Perhaps there will be others who think you are "way too full of yourself, too visible, too ego driven" and all the negative opinions that can be directed at someone who is on top of their game.

There might be people who don't like what you are doing because you are outspoken and original, which are bound to bring criticism. At times it may seem personal. At times it may BE personal!

Things that will help you stay connected to your soul in this stage:

- It can be lonely at the top, so make sure you don't isolate yourself
- You will need to address your Upper Limit Problems head on
- To do this well you will need help from a specialized coach, mentor or spiritual guide
- Taking nourishing retreats is not a luxury, it is a requirement
- Set aside weekly, monthly and quarterly time away from everything to reassess, restore and connect with your soul
- Take lots of vacation time: at least three two-week vacations a year.
- Deepen your excellent self-care habits: movement and exercise, sleeping, eating, meditating, mindful of your health needs, family and friend time, spiritual retreats, downtime and goofy fun time
- Spend time in nature as much as possible
- Cultivate your love of music, art, reading, writing, playing, praying, creating and whatever floats your boat in this area of life
- Practice spiritual activities that you enjoy and that connect you to a higher realm... and do them often



The Transition from Legacy to “What's Next for You”

Be very mindful of the transition in this stage. You will hit a wall at some point. You might want to focus on the aspects of it that bring you the most joy.

You may want to let go of your business altogether and sell it to someone who has a passion for leading your tribe.

You may want to go back to school, begin training in something new or even start up another business.

It may be time to “retire” and discover what that means for you.

If you choose to enter this stage, you will have the attention of others and the money to live freely. It takes a high level of conscious and intentional responsibility to keep moving in the direction of your heart.

The most important thing to remember is to stay tuned into the impact you want to have in the world and the experiences that bring you the most joy.

Keep bringing those two things together and - no matter what stage your coaching business is in - you will be at peace with yourself and be living a fulfilling and prosperous life.