



## RESOURCE PAPER

## Free or Barter Coaching – Should You Do It?

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For any coach at any time, but particularly when you're just starting your business, you might be tempted to get a client by offering free or barter coaching. Should you? There are more reasons not to than you might think.

No fee coaching does have its place (see the last paragraph). But if your goal is to earn a successful living by offering soul-satisfying coaching, it's usually counter-productive to give it away, except in a sample session. Here is why:

### #1 Damaging the co-creative relationship

Coaches often have the heart of altruistic caregivers. If you love to help others and are generous to a fault, being a coach will give you many opportunities to learn balance around giving. This strength, when overused, comes with a high price to your integrity and to your clients.

I've been there. I understand that heart-tugging reaction to come to their rescue, when a prospect says they can't afford your services but they so clearly need help. It's a RED FLAG.

Coaching at its best is a co-creative process. Coach and client are each creative, resourceful and whole individuals, equal in power and ability. Your role is to draw out of the client their own wisdom and solutions. It's not your job to fix them or be their savior.

To be effective as a coach, it's critical that you **stay "right-sized"**. Take care not to:

- Take responsibility for your clients.
- Do things for them that they should do (which includes *investing* in coaching).
- Over deliver to prove your skill and worthiness.

Thomas Leonard, credited with being the "father" of modern coaching, said: "Do not want more for your clients than they do for themselves." Sage advice. Each time you correct this, you'll help maintain a healthy power balance between you and your clients, and you'll both thrive.

### # 2 Fear and desperation are poor decision makers

When making decisions, it's always best to choose from your highest good, rather than from fear or scarcity. So if a potential clients says, "I can't afford your coaching" or asks you to barter, and you're tempted to shift your fee structure for

them, ask yourself:

“Am I ....?”

- Coming from a place of LACK. (I’m not enough... I don’t have enough...)
- Running away from something. (The feeling of being a fraud, client-lessness.)
- Off balance. (Contracted or inflated.)
- Reacting rather than responding.
- Diminishing my sense of self value.
- Giving away my personal power to get love, approval or recognition.

You do know what’s best for you. Take the time to look closely at what’s motivating your impulsive actions before you take them.

# 3 Clients reap less from coaching when they don’t invest enough

When clients pay out of their own pockets for coaching, they invest more. It’s true. Think about it. Most of us, when we buy something that’s a bit of a stretch for us, will value that thing more highly and treat it with more respect. We’ll “show up” more fully, take it more seriously, and get all the gifts that we can from it. Whereas, if we don’t invest much monetarily, then we’re not as emotionally or mentally invested in the process, either.

When your clients pay your full fee (and you’ve set your fees by valuing yourself highly) you’ll find they progress more, do deeper work with you and value the results more highly.

#4 Free coaching sometimes won’t feel real

If you want to coach for free or barter because you just want to feel yourself coaching, the experience may be misleading. When you position yourself as a professional, value your services highly and pay yourself well, coaching feels better and more real.

# 5 Few clients will shift from free to fee

If you’re hoping that a client will pay you later if you give them free coaching now, the odds are against it. It’s better for you to stand fully in your power, stick to your full fee, and improve your ability to enroll clients. Sometimes it’s just a matter of meeting more prospects and setting up enrolling processes, such as a freebie that leads prospects to a consult where you can connect and “close”. You can do it!

If you do...

If you decide that it's in your integrity to barter, be certain that you really want what they're bartering. Otherwise, you might feel resentful or come off inauthentic, which might undermine their sense of value.

Once you have a coaching business that meets your financial needs, it can be perfectly appropriate to occasionally give a client a "scholarship". When you hear "I can't afford it" but you really feel you're an ideal fit and are consciously deciding to reduce your fee, try this approach. Ask the client what fee amount would be a stretch but doable, and invite them to pay that amount.

Volunteering is Cool!

Volunteering your coaching to non-profits is a wonderful way to give back to community. When this is your conscious goal these red flags don't necessarily apply. In this post, I'm not addressing *volunteerism*, but rather the *impulse to give away coaching* because your prospect says they can't afford your fees.