

Mastering Your Psychology for Success at Work

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Editor's note: Coaching is a fast growing and increasingly influential profession. In transitioning to coaching, a background in psychotherapy can both help and get in one's way. In this essay, Nina Cherry shares her experience in integrating Hakomi into business coaching.

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ABSTRACT: Nina Cherry tells the story of her transition from the trauma work of psychotherapy to the strengths-based work of coaching. She offers some distinctions between psychotherapy and coaching, as well as how they might be mutually beneficial. In particular, she highlights how knowledge of Hakomi can enable coaches to work with barriers so clients progress naturally to their goals when the internal obstacles are dealt with. She outlines some of the forms her coaching practice takes, and how Hakomi can be integrated within it. Coaching options in the future are outlined.

KEY WORDS: coaching, Hakomi Therapy, core issues, professional development, business development

Transitioning from Psychotherapy to Coaching

Thirteen years ago I went to an International Coach Federation conference to learn about the new field of coaching. I was smitten! Coaching is uplifting work for the practitioner and a life-changing experience for the client. I was ready for a life change myself.

I have been a certified Hakomi Therapist for over 20 years and was a teacher for the Hakomi Institute in the 1990s. Before going into the field of coaching, I had a full counseling practice offering private sessions, workshops, and therapy groups in Eugene, Oregon. I taught Hakomi skills to psychotherapists, clergy, and healthcare professionals in the U.S. and Brazil.

I often worked with client cases involving sexual abuse and trauma. Psychologists and psychiatrists would send their difficult clients to me to help the clients discover from their own body memories what happened to them growing up. I was privy to daily stories of abuse for many years. When I discovered coaching, I was ready to shift from working with this heavy material to what I saw as the more delightful work of helping people reach their cherished dreams and goals.

Coaching is a recognized method of human development focused on achieving results. It is different from consulting, managing, or mentoring. Coaching helps clients to identify their top skills and strengths, and empowers them to use

their talents to manifest their highest ideals in life and work. Coaching draws from the person their own answers—and keeps them accountable to their strategic plan.

Laura Whitworth, one of the founders of the Coaches Training Institute (CTI), said that it was often the accountability alone that drew people to coaching. Clients could be competent and successful in many phases of their lives, but there was usually at least one area where they could not make the changes they wanted to make alone; they needed the structure of a partnership.

Comparisons

There are noticeable differences between coaching and counseling. Counseling often focuses on helping clients heal issues from the past or personal distress in the present to become more functional in their lives and relationships.

Coaching works with functional people who are motivated to become more successful and productive in their business and personal lives.

Due to my natural proclivity for business (I started three retail stores on the waterfronts of Maui in my twenties), business coaching was a natural focus when I entered the field of coaching. I graduated from a two-year program at Corporate Coach University, which focused on coaching business owners, executives, managers, and teams. Over time, I developed a niche working with professionals to help them get more clients, increase their income, and resolve core issues that got in the way of business and financial success.

Hakomi at the Barriers

The core issues department was where my Hakomi training came in! I found that everyone had at least one personal issue that got in the way of being more successful in his or her career: procrastination, lack of inspiration, secret fears, addiction, or inability to focus . . . to name a few.

I bring Hakomi into my coaching sessions when appropriate, whenever a client is interested in going deeper to solve a problem or transform a limiting belief. Some clients never experience the deeper work; they come to coaching for strategic planning and business development. When I see a client who clearly needs deeper work, I recommend long-term counseling. I make the distinction to the client between counseling and coaching.

I start the coaching work by helping my client clarify their needs, vision, and goals. We develop a plan and I give them homework to achieve their objectives more quickly. Before long, the inner issues behind the presenting problem of lack of clients, time, energy, income, or success usually emerge.

Procrastination is a common issue affecting work performance, and often stems from fear. As an example, I'll describe a session with a client, Susan (not her real name), who had a tendency toward procrastination. Susan's web design business was going downhill because she was not getting new clients in her pipeline. Although she was well paid and had several previous large contracts, she was going through a marketing slump. Susan had a tendency to put off marketing her services to new prospects.

Through experiencing Hakomi in the coaching sessions, Susan discovered a critical inner voice that inhibited her from taking action. This voice was similar to the messages her father gave her as a child. As we looked deeper, it became clear that she had internalized the parental messages, "You don't have what it takes," her father would tell her. "Who do you think you are?"

As Susan became aware of the unconscious tapes running in her mind about her self-worth, she began to understand why she had been procrastinating. She didn't want to put herself out for fear of rejection! Together we worked with her inner child, the 10-year-old who believed what her critical father had said to her. I told her how sorry I was that she had not gotten support and encouragement for her natural talents and gifts. I reflected back to her the qualities I saw: her intelligence, talent, and creativity. With the positive regard, Susan released the old pain, and new insights came. She understood at a deep level that there was nothing wrong with her; she was not incompetent. It was her father's own poor self-esteem and emotional dysfunction that had affected her so deeply.

At the end of the session, Susan and I worked together to develop her new action plan. She began contacting three new prospects a week, and in the following three months she closed several big contracts.

Coaches who are not trained in Hakomi or inner work will continue to try to get a procrastinating client to be more accountable. They will tell the client to go back out there and just DO it. It's the "feel the fear and do it anyway" mentality. That approach often triggers people's defenses. It is more skillful to create safety, build rapport and trust, and help the client discover for themselves what's going on inside when they are stuck or unmotivated.

Coaches who don't understand inner patterns will sometimes tell a client they are *not coachable* since the client appears unable to move towards his or her goals in a systematic way. What I find is that clients progress naturally to their goals when the internal obstacles are resolved.

Coaching Through "the Gap"

Typically I begin working with a client by finding out where they are presently in their practice or business, and in their life in general. We explore and define their best vision of what they want to create in their business or career, including the lifestyle they want to live. They identify "the gap," the difference between where they are now and where they want to be in their future vision. Then they consider the challenges in the way of manifesting their inspiring vision—both inner and outer.

The inner challenges are my main interest; this is where I apply the Hakomi skills to the field of coaching. Working with the inner issues is transformational work, alchemical work. It's the work that changes lead into gold.

Steps to a Successful Practice

As a business coach, I help professionals with the whole gamut of starting or building their business. Together we clarify short term and long term objectives and create a step-by-step action plan that often includes marketing and business development.

I help clients define their niche so they stand out from others in their field. Many professionals are less successful than they could be because they don't have a specific niche or specialty. What do they do best? What problems are they an expert at solving? My formula for distilling a professional niche is:

1. Define your target population, the group of people you really want to work with.
2. Learn about their urgent needs and problems.
3. Develop your work to solve the problems and fulfill the needs.
4. Be able to explain the outcomes, benefits, and results people will get from working with you.

There are common issues professionals face in running a business: prioritizing, delegating, having a concrete plan for success, getting organized, knowing the best marketing strategies (including internet marketing), and having the right systems in place for record keeping and client contact management.

Another issue professionals need help with is clarifying their life purpose and aligning their work with their purpose so it becomes a passionate calling. The next step is to work together to develop the client's "branding" and presentation to the public: business cards, marketing collateral, and website—all with a consistent and unique look that reflects their values, so the public starts to recognize the professional.

Therapists have unique marketing issues due to the private nature of their work. In building a counseling practice of ideal clients, I recommend defining one's professional niche, advertising, offering presentations and workshops, speaking at conferences, and soliciting referrals. One area on which professionals can capitalize to increase their income is creating information products like books, eBooks, CD sets, DVDs, and other passive income products.

I coach people in private sessions and also in group settings. I bring individuals and groups to Maui for intensive coaching retreats using the Hakomi Method. I have developed a daily schedule of three hours of business and life coaching in nature that sometimes includes a Hakomi session on deeper issues; then we spend the rest of each day in vacation activities.

Transformational Retreats

On a retreat last year, an attorney who was also a judge chose to deal with a long standing issue of anxiety. Douglas (not his real name) would wake up nearly every morning with anxiety bordering on panic. Although he was very successful, the daily fears took the joy out of his life and work. Every single day he had to struggle to subdue the panic before he could go into the office. He didn't understand what it was about, but he was very concerned about it.

Douglas could have felt the fear and pushed through it every day for the rest of his life, but he decided to face the anxiety and heal it. With some exploration, we discovered the fear was about getting older and not doing what he wanted to do with his life. Aiming to please, Douglas had followed the script his mother had laid down for him. His terror was that he would never live the life of his dreams and his highest destiny because he was sacrificing it all for his mother, who needed to live her life vicariously through him. Douglas felt his mother was constantly judging him; he had internalized her critical voice that told him he was never good enough and could never please her.

Douglas had major breakthroughs during each session in the retreat. After returning home, he sent me an email saying, "I got to the other side—the side where the real me lives. The real me that is happy with who I am." Douglas said he had started looking forward to work and had also begun taking singing lessons and yoga, something he had wanted to do for a long time.

Ray Williams, co-founder of Success IQ University, said, "There is no doubt that a highly skilled coach can be a trusted adviser and mentor, and provide for the client an oasis of calm where the individual can share dreams, share fears and concerns, and cooperatively develop a plan to reach greater levels of success and happiness" (Williams, 2009).

Two months ago a real estate developer came from Canada to work with me on retreat. He admitted in the intake session, "I'm in the commercial real estate business but it's not my passion. I am not at peace and my work is a chore." With Hakomi work interspersed in his coaching sessions, he began to understand his co-dependence with his kids, and how much of his energy was going to attending to their needs and not his own self-care. He reflected on his daily habit of smoking pot to medicate his emotional pain.

This week he reported that he has had much more energy after abstaining from pot for two months and from letting his kids live their own lives. He felt inspired to recreate his business in a way that is more meaningful to him. He even

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started dating again, after being alone for 15 years for the sake of the kids.

Coaching Into the Future

Coaching is definitely developing as a respected profession. In the world of business just as in sports people have found that coaches help them perform at their best. A high percentage of Fortune 500 companies now use professional coaching services, according to surveys on the popularity and efficacy of coaching. Another reason coaching is popular is because it can be done by telephone with clients anywhere in the world.

A 2001 study on the impact of executive coaching by Manchester Inc. showed an average return on investment of 5.7 times the initial investment, or more than \$100,000. This was based on 100 executives in 56 companies who estimated the monetary value of the results achieved through coaching (McGovern et al, 2001).

The work of coaching is tremendously rewarding and meaningful. Like Hakomi, coaching is a spiritual practice that transforms me as well as my clients.

I am here on my own quest, and to help other conscious professionals and entrepreneurs step into their greatness and develop their business as a powerful vehicle to fulfill their life purpose.

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