



Inner IDEA®

Tricks of Trade: How have lifestyle coaching services impacted your personal training business?"

by IDEA

The relationship that develops between client and personal trainer is vastly enriched when the trainer assumes the role of mentor and coach. Understanding the important role that coaching plays in the client success model, we felt it was imperative to add coaching to our list of services. As we help our trainers develop and hone their personal coaching skills, I have assumed the role of life and training strategies success coach within our facility.

We first introduced coaching in 2005 as an added value for new and existing personal training clients, without charging them an additional fee. I meet every other week with clients who feel they need additional direction or motivation. The success of the coaching program has been so great that we have decided--at least for the time being--to continue to provide it at no cost. Coaching has proven to be one of the most influential client retention tools we've ever initiated. What we discovered after the 2-month introduction period was that our average monthly client falloff and dropout rate had decreased by almost 20%. In addition, we found a measurable increase in the number of training sessions the coached clients were doing after coaching versus before coaching. On average, those clients were completing one additional session per week. For clients who want extra coaching (weekly or more), we offer a fee-based program.

The success of the coaching program led me to change my focus from training to coaching exclusively. My time is now divided between working with our clients and helping a number of personal trainers in Colorado to develop their coaching and communication skills through our Personal Trainer Leadership and Coaching Alliance.

For trainers interested in adding coaching to their toolbox (something I highly recommend), the first step is simply accepting a true leadership role in the relationship with their clients, then living and acting in a way that is absolutely congruent with that role. The second step is the development of education and experience.

*Tom Terwilliger
Owner, Terwilliger Fitness
President, Personal Trainer Leadership Coaching Alliance
Denver, Colorado*

I moved into coaching in 1999 when I realized that I wanted to offer more to my clients. I had a successful, well-established personal training business in Beaconsfield, England.

I introduced the idea of coaching sessions to my long-standing clients, which was easy, as I already had their trust. Since I had known them for a long time, I knew how I could help them outside of a personal training session. I offered them a half-day workshop in which I combined physical and mental training. This workshop was very popular--and a great way to introduce the coaching concept to clients and to establish me as their "coach."

After introducing quarterly workshops, I was able to combine both services for my clients. I also raised my fees. I now charge £100 for a 1-hour coaching session and only do 30-minute personal training sessions (for a fee of £50).

I learned to run teleclasses and introduced this concept to clients by asking them to come to a free teleclass call on posture. I now run an annual program that combines workshops and coaching/training by Internet and telephone.

I often find I am mixing training and coaching during a physical session. When my long-standing (16 years) clients book a session, they say what they would like to focus on. For example, a client who was going on an annual ski holiday booked a 30-minute personal training session. I had her exercising on a balance board for most of the session, and I used mental techniques with her at the same time. When she returned from the holiday, she was delighted, as she had skied better than ever and all her friends had noticed. She'd had a much better holiday because of the work we'd done--priceless!

I ran my first retreat in Italy last September. This experience was a fabulous learning opportunity for me, and I intend to run a minimum of two retreats per year: one in Italy and one in Palm Springs, California. Last year, I decided I had a lot to offer other personal trainers who were interested in coaching, so I designed a coaching program for them.

I have also moved into working in corporate business as an executive well-being coach in London. I offer a presentation on well-being that combines physical and mental techniques, and I work with individuals. I also put out a monthly newsletter with a physical or mental exercise each month.

*Linda Moseley
The Coaching Gym
Hurley, Berkshire, England, and Torino, Italy*

I added wellness coaching to my personal training business a little over a year ago. The rewards for my clients and myself have been tremendous and continue to grow. Wellness coaching and personal training are a perfect fit for helping clients reach their health and wellness goals.

In my private training business I have been fortunate enough to retain clients for many years. By adding wellness coaching, I can guide these clients in designing a wellness vision for themselves. Some clients are stuck in self-defeating stories. Training in wellness coaching has provided me with tools and skills to help these clients change their narratives. We begin by discussing what wellness means, looks like and feels like for each person. I guide my clients and show them that they have the power to overcome their own obstacles. By setting 3-month goals and working on weekly goals that are obtainable, measurable and very specific, my clients can overcome unwanted urges and self-defeating behaviors that stop them from achieving their best.

The combination of being a licensed wellness coach and fitness trainer has also enabled me to market my services in the corporate environment. Businesses need and want comprehensive programs that encompass coaching, fitness, diet and skillful management of energy. These full-service programs produce great measurable results for participants, both personally and professionally.

If trainers want to provide coaching services, they need proper training and must be willing to commit time not only to this training but also to marketing. Just as I want my clients to achieve their goals with a renewed sense of energy and purpose, I must master my skills to help them achieve these results. There are no shortcuts.

*Jane Diamond Yogel
Owner, Diamond Wellness Solutions
ACE-Certified Trainer, Licensed Wellness Coach and Newfield Coach
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*

I have introduced wellness coaching services to my menu of services for existing and new personal training clients. I've also added an entirely new revenue stream: personal coaching/business coaching for personal trainers and/or those interested in starting a wellness/lifestyle coaching business. This coaching area is the one I am focusing on

growing.

Most of my coaching clients are existing personal trainers, executives or business owners. Coaching has made a tremendous difference in clarifying their goals, needs and values and helping these clients recreate the life they want from the foundation up. They are no longer aimlessly wandering around unsure of where to go from where they are now. They have uncovered what matters most to them and have a clear strategy for getting there. Having operated a profitable personal training (and now coaching) business for 18 years, I can offer clients the guidance and input they need, where and when need it. The weekly accountability-by-phone and homework assignments work wonders for engendering motivation and passion. I love coaching, and so do my many successful clients!

If you want to start a coaching business, be serious about your credentials and invest in quality training. Know, too, that a coaching business grows more slowly than a personal training business because it is a more intangible service and many people do not understand its dynamics.

*Kay L. Cross, MEd, CSCS
Professional Coach, Motivational Speaker, Personal Fitness Trainer
Cross Coaching & Wellness
North Richland Hills, Texas*

Coaching has always been an integral part of my personal training and biomechanics business. Listening to clients' needs, understanding their anxieties and communicating effectively are paramount to helping clients change behaviors of any kind. I have always seen the benefit in coaching services; I added a full-time coach to The BioMechanics staff as soon as our business could support the addition, and I work with this coach to uncover roadblocks that are hindering clients' progress.

When weighing whether to augment your personal training business with lifestyle coaching, consider these important points. First, if you are going to do the coaching yourself, you should invest in coaching courses, just as you would in personal training subjects like anatomy. If you decide to hire or contract with a coach, make sure that he or she is a certified coach--or at the very minimum has taken coaching courses.

Second, be sure to modify any liability waivers you currently use, so they address your coaching services. Most important: Include a clause stating that the participant acknowledges that he or she is not engaging in lifestyle coaching for counseling or therapeutic services, and that information provided through coaching shall not constitute medical or psychological advice of any kind. Consult with a lawyer to confirm that any changes you make to your waiver with respect to coaching services are in accordance with the law.

Lifestyle coaching is a very powerful tool that helps many people achieve their fitness, personal and professional goals. It should not be viewed or used as a gimmick to simply attract more clients. Occasionally, coaching produces a deep emotional response from participants or uncovers sensitive information. It is important that you refer clients to qualified professionals in the event that the services required fall outside your scope of practice.

*Justin Price, MA
Owner, The BioMechanics
San Diego, California*

I am a personal fitness trainer who added wellness coaching to my business about 2 years ago. It has made an enormous and fabulous impact on my business. I have some clients who only coach, some who only train and some who do both. The combination is working wonders for my clients. Most people who use trainers can't afford to use their services for every workout. Clients usually meet with a trainer for just a few workouts per week, and they do the balance of their weekly workouts on their own. Most clients are also trying to manage the eating side of the equation on their own.

Providing support and accountability for what clients are doing (or not doing!) the other 166 hours a week when they are *not* in our presence makes all the difference. Sure, in a training session I can ask clients whether they've done their cardio since I last saw them, but coaching is a whole other level. It really gets at their unique needs and provides accountability for things that no one else usually cares about, which is why it's so easy to let those habits slip. Clients tell me every day that it makes a huge difference to know that I am there to walk along with them. It's extremely rewarding.

*Cathy Moxley, MA, CSCS
Wellcoach Fitness Coach, Fitness InSight
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