



InGenius

Review

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A review of
great thinking
from

INGENUITY MARKETING GROUP

a marketing and training firm that works primarily with professional service organizations and small businesses.

We offer strategic marketing planning and coaching, marketing program development, and curriculum and training mainly in the areas of consultative selling, professional service marketing, and customer service.

Wendy Nemitz



Dawn Wagenaar



BRING ON THE COACH!

By Wendy Nemitz, Principal

The most valuable asset in any service firm is the people. Anything that can be done to increase the effectiveness of people has a huge impact on profitability, long-term client relationships, staff retention, and competitiveness in the market. As more of the Baby Boomers look at retirement, transferring both their knowledge and clients to the next generation is a challenge many firms are facing. Smart firms are making serious investments in their people and are often turning to coaching programs.

~ Coaching Programs

Coaching and mentoring are big business in service firms. Virtually every firm has implemented, or is looking at, some kind of coaching or mentoring program. Only a few of these programs are actually effective. Most of the coaches and mentors are senior members of the firm assigned to do coaching. While they are terrific accountants and lawyers, very few of them have been coached or mentored themselves and they lack the skills to do it well for others.

~ Coaching v. Mentoring

Many people confuse the terms coach and mentor. Mentors are usually people with more experience in a field. They come to the relationship with no specific agenda and are open to helping you in a wide variety of ways. They may open doors and offer advice.

Mentors inside a firm can make a real difference. Seasoned professionals who have been great Rainmakers can bring along newer people and show them how fun and easy relationships can be. Some Rainmakers might need some gentle persuasion to do this because many of them tend to work on their own. They need to see the benefit to themselves.

Coaches usually concentrate on performance improvement, although they are open to the various ways of doing that. They help you focus on what you are doing now and what you want to do in the future. They often hold you accountable to a plan. *(continued on page 2)*

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The problem with assigning junior people to senior mentors or coaches is that there may not be an affinity between them. The mentor or coach may have no training and no experience either giving or receiving coaching or mentoring. The junior people may not know what to expect or what the program or coaching should provide.

~ **Creating a Coaching Program**

Coaches can make a great deal of difference by helping hold feet to the fire. When there is a hopper full of billable work, calling the possible referral source you met last week might fall to the bottom of the list. If the coach asks for commitment on a practice development plan and holds you accountable regularly, that phone call is much more likely to be made.

One of the difficulties in creating internal coaching programs is that few people are good at holding feet to the fire. The coaches also have their own billable work to do. Hiring an outside coach to just check in with people on their personal marketing plans can be very cost-effective. A coach can help them stay on course and build confidence.

One firm I have worked with has set up a coaching program that is meeting with success. Everyone in the firm has a coach. Everyone meets with their coach each quarter and draws up a 90-day plan that they both agree to. The coach is responsible for helping the coachee stay accountable to their goals.

It is very difficult for partners to coach each other so they hired me to do that and they all report their 90-day plans at a shareholder meeting.

One of the things this firm does right is invest in coaching training. Every other year they bring in an outsider with professional expertise to help all team members strengthen coaching skills. Even if they are not coaching

other members of the team, coaching skills easily translate into consulting skills with clients.

Another thing a firm can do right is to have reasonable expectations of coaching. It takes a long time to create a coaching culture and coaches who are good at it. You have to keep at it for several years. Don't expect your new coaches to be immediately brilliant. And know that some of your participants will expect the sky and the moon from their coach and so it helps to set up some expectations at the outset of what the coach can and cannot do.

The third thing this firm does right is to hire an outside consultant to coach the partners. In the "first among equals" business model of most professional service firms, it is difficult for partners to provide direct feedback as the coach. It also is difficult for coachees to share vulnerabilities.

Marketing professionals in service firms often end up coaching their professionals in some way or another. For example, they create personal marketing plans in which they hold individuals accountable for and help their professionals do tasks they would not ordinarily prefer to do. They may also coach proposal teams on how to make a presentation or niche groups on how to work a tradeshow. This kind of feedback is extremely helpful.

Marketing professionals are often a good place to start your firm with coaching. Most of us are good communicators and take to coaching like ducks to water.

Don't be surprised if your brand new coaching or mentoring program takes a long time to make a big difference. Coaches have to be trained or hired. People in the program need to have reasonable expectations. Ongoing systems have to be put in place.

But the feedback of information, the transfer of knowledge and the loyalty of those who participate in well-done coaching programs can be worth it.

If your firm is interested in starting or revitalizing a coaching or mentoring process in-house, we would be glad to help.

~ Please call me at 651 690 3358 or wendy@ingenuitymarketing.com ~

We are pleased to announce



that Wendy Nemitz recently completed her Masters Degree in Leadership at Augsburg College in Minneapolis.

It took her three delightful years as she wended her way through a wide variety of studies on leadership, including a trip to Cuba. She would like to thank her two children, Costa and Elle, and her parents for all their support.

When asked to describe the program, Wendy says,

"I highly recommend this for anyone, no matter what their field.

They allowed me to explore topics I am passionate about and also steered me into many new directions. Augsburg rocks!"



YOUR HONOR AWARDS



We were thrilled to win first place in the website category at the Your Honor Awards at the Legal Marketing Association's Minnesota Annual Conference. The "Best Website" was for William H. Hansen & Associates, an estate planning law firm in Golden Valley. We would like to thank Bill and his staff for being so open to creativity and warmth in their website and for creating a friendly and professional firm for us to work with. We would also like to thank Kristin Smith, who did a terrific job art directing and designing the site, and Shari Alovera, who took the interesting and fun photos.

Dawn Wagenaar envisioned and managed the project and Wendy Nemitz wrote the copy and came up with the themes. You can check out the best of law firm websites at www.whansen.com.

Most coaching programs are set up to focus on professional goals. The coach helps you focus on the marketing plan or on practice development steps. Being accountable for what is not billable is a powerful inducement to stay on track. But the new behaviors frequently stop when the coach is not actively involved. *For example, say Fred Jones is being coached to follow up with contacts he met at a convention. In spite of the fact that he listens to the coach and does the work, he basically believes he is not that good with people he does not know. He fears that he may be bugging them. When the coach leaves, the follow-up slows down or stops.*

THIS IS NORMAL. Most of the thousands of professionals I have worked with over the past 18 years went to college so they would not have to sell for a living. Most of them are not thrilled about meeting new people. Many of them are brilliant at their work and not as brilliant when it comes to turning friendships into productive business relationships. Most of them hate to think of themselves as marketers. This can change slowly over their careers as they have some success and gain confidence. Or their beliefs about themselves and what they are capable of can change and leave them much more comfortable with new thinking and new behaviors. Enter the transformational coach.

A transformational coach is not really a job title; it is a process. Coaches spend a lot of time getting their coachees to do new things. A transformational coaching process helps people change how they think and who they are, not just what they do.

One of the things coaching really works well for is helping professionals create and implement a personal marketing plan. One of the things transformational coaching works well for is helping uncover and change the belief systems that are keeping professionals from achieving their goals. Most marketing coaches have helped people create marketing plans that they did not follow. You may have created your own marketing plan you did not follow. That noncompliance is a result of putting the thing you are most uncomfortable with, the thing that is least “you”, last. So practice development goes to the bottom of the pile.

Transformational coaching is a different process than an agreement to accomplish something. Coaching that focuses on transformational work helps people change their beliefs about who they are and what they are capable of. Transformational coaching can be done by anyone but requires a specific skill set. It takes a while to learn how to create a space that allows people to look at who they are. In order to work on this process, as a coach you need:

~ Commitment

Believe in the person you are coaching. Andrew Lustig, one of the great coaches from Dorrier Underwood, says, “if you’re not excited about what your player is up to, you can’t be a coach. If you dislike the person or think they will never be effective at certain things, they won’t be.” Your commitment to their growth is a key part of the process.

~ Focus

Set yourself aside. This is probably the hardest part of transformational coaching. The process is not about you, it is completely about the person being coached. That means you have to quiet the voices in your head that want to jump in to help and just listen. You have to be able to be focused with the person even if you do not like what they are saying or do not agree.

~ Appreciation

Instead of starting with what your coachee is doing wrong or should be doing, focus on what is working. You need to work with some knowledge about the person. One of my greatest sources of knowledge is from the assessment and book *Now, Discover Your Strengths*, published by the Gallup Organization. Along with this book, there is an assessment on the internet that will tell you what your top five strengths are. Each copy of the book has a code printed inside the cover that allows you to take the assessment one time.

This book gives me a language of talking about strengths instead of weaknesses. When people see that you understand what they are good at, they often drop their guard and let you in. People need to feel valued and appreciated or they will not let their guards down. *(continued on page 5)*

(continued from page 4)

There are 34 possible strengths defined by this assessment. My top five are ideation, strategy, futuristic, input (the Cliff Clavin strength, just let me whomp you at Trivial Pursuit), and communication. My partner Dawn Wagenaar's top five are woo (she likes to meet and connect with strangers), input, focus, achiever, and communication. We have two in common, which helps us process information in similar ways. She is a focus achiever, who keeps me focused instead of jumping into the next futuristic idea all the time. It works.

Because she sees my idea-jumping, future-thinking abilities as my strengths, she values them. Because I see her ability to stay the course over the long-term (and talk to strangers in airports) as strengths, I value them. It gives us a language to work with that supports our relationship.

~ Vision

One thing a transformational coaching process does is make us look at others as they can be. You have to see the shy person before you as a leader. Not just as any kind of John Kennedy leader, but as the leader they will become. You have to find what is great about this person and tell them. You have to point out their progress. You have to see who they will become.

~ Confidence

You need to be confident in your own abilities and be able to instill confidence in the person you are coaching. Your coachees may become discouraged or they may take a while. On a greeting card hanging up in my window is the quote, "Everything will be okay in the end. If it's not okay, it's not the end."

Coaching Resources

There is a world of excellent coaches out there.

As a coach working in the transformational process, you have to help your coachee believe something new is possible. They have to discover strengths in themselves that they did not really know about. You have to help them see a brighter, stronger view of themselves and believe in it.

INGENUITY MARKETING GROUP

www.ingenuitymarketing.com

We focus on coaching professional service providers in marketing, sales, and leadership. We also work in firm cultures.

Andrew Lustig, DORRIER UNDERWOOD

www.dorrierunderwood.com

Andrew is one of the world's greatest executive coaches. His organization also offers a great program called *Mission Control* (www.missioncontrol.com) that will help you make a huge leap in time and project management. It certainly helped me.

Jean Paul Chave

www.indigocircles.com

Jean Paul, who is my own coach, applies spiritual principals to work, life, and self. He is terrific.

Roy Ginsburg

www.RoyGinsburg.com

Roy is an attorney who helps other attorneys stick to their practice development plans. As a practicing attorney, he really understands the challenges of practicing law.

LANDMARK EDUCATION

www.landmarkeducation.com

Landmark has both personal and corporate seminars. I have taken several of their courses and found them outstanding. No matter what area of your life or work is, as the Landmark people say, "not working", this education will create a breakthrough.