

THE COACHING HUB

Podcast Episode 30 - The dark side of the online coaching industry

Ruth Kudzi: If we are putting the clients at the center of what we do, then we need to make sure that we have the appropriate training. The appropriate training that we can hold space for them, the appropriate training that we can go to those difficult mindset places and we can help them overcome it. Rather than telling people to get up at 5:00 AM, we actually work with the individuals to work out what works for them.

Hello, and welcome to the Coaching Hub Podcast with me, your host, Ruth Kudzi. If you're a coach or you're coaching-curious, this is the place for you. We're going to be talking all things coaching, personal development, and business development in a really fun way. You're going to hear live coaching sessions, and you're going to come away with tools and techniques that you can practically use and take away. If you enjoy this podcast, I would love you to subscribe. And if you really enjoy it, give me a review.

Today, I'm going to talk about something which I think about quite a bit, I'll be honest. And it is about the dark side of the coaching industry. And when I'm talking about this, I'm pretty much talking about the online coaching industry. So if you were to come onto Facebook or Instagram, you would think that the primary motivation of many people to become coaches is so they can have a super yacht, travel to five-star destinations, and rake in the cash. There seems to be this connection of especially online coaches to money and that coaching can create wealth. And obviously, we all know that wealth can create happiness.

I am going to debunk a few myths, that I hope you recognize my sarcastic tone, and really talk about what I think is fundamentally wrong, and also what I see as the light. Because there have been many times over the last five years in business when I thought, "Is this really for me? Do I have what it takes to actually run a coaching business?" Because a lot of this doesn't sit right with me. And there've been lots and lots of times, what I did hold on to before that is that I was coaching many, many years before I became an online business owner. And so my principles of why I coached were pretty much the same. And it wasn't about having the mega bucks, although I'm going to be really honest, and of course money is a driver.

And when I say that money is a driver, we know that if our basic needs are not being met, if what we need for our families is not there, then we are much less likely to be able to thrive in our businesses and make those right choices. And we know that if we are, wherever we're working, we do have a baseline. And I think that this is important to talk about, that having a baseline income is important. And that will differ depending on who we are, where we are, what our situation is. So I'm not discounting that.

But what I do want to really bust a few myths then is this idea that online coaching is this next get-rich-quick scheme. And really, actually, it isn't coaching. I've seen over the last year, in fact, numerous examples of people who've come into the space, who've offered coaching, who have no qualifications or experience. And I guess, probably have never even picked up a book on coaching. Or maybe they've done a little bit of online training which has given them a basic foundation. And I've spoken to and seen the fallout, because really simple things, like on a professional level, they're not giving people contracts. So without a contract, how are you going to hold the space with someone? And of course, that can be terms and conditions. But you need to be really, really clear with your clients on what you are delivering.

Now, I know for all of our clients, we have contracts. That was pretty much, that started at the beginning of my business. Even when I worked with people pro bono, we had contracts. If you're insured and if you're not actively qualified, it's difficult to get insured for coaching because they want you to either be working towards a qualification or have the appropriate qualification, or your insurance is void. So if you're calling yourself a coach and you're not insured, and you're not providing contracts, then legally you can be in a little bit of murky water. So obviously, that whole legal side is to protect you and to protect your clients so they're really clear on what you're offering, and what that intervention provides, and how that's going to help them. So when I see these people and I hear these stories about people not knowing what the coach is delivering, it rings alarm bells.

And I think this is the darker side. Because honestly, if we are really showing up in integrity, and I'm not just using that as a buzzword, I'm using that as integrity to ourselves and integrity to our clients, then we are providing them with a clear understanding of who we are and what we've done in terms of our training and what we're going to deliver to them. And this is why I say you may call yourself a coach, but you may deliver something different. And that's okay if you're contracting with your client to deliver mentoring, or training, or teaching, and you're using that coach as an overall banner word. Yeah, you're good. But if you're saying, "I'm a coach, I'm going to deliver this intervention," and you don't contract appropriately, and you don't have the appropriate training, then you could well move into very murky land. And that's what I'm seeing more and more and more online.

And I think that, really, the issue is that when we work with people, we are developing a really safe space. And as a coach, with the ICF, one of the competencies they look at is developing trust and intimacy. But it is difficult to develop trust and intimacy if we don't have the foundations there. So all of this stuff that we see online, most of it is not coaching. Most of it is training or mentoring. And lots of great coaches do a blend. And they're very, very clear that it is a blend. But really, if all we care about is money, where are our clients? Are we building sustainable businesses where our clients are at the center?

And the reason that's important is that if I'm thinking about the coaches that I've worked with, that I rate, I go back to them. I refer people to them. They have a sustainable business, even if it's not on social media. When I look at my current one-to-one clients, 80% of them renew. 80% of them renew because they have a great experience, because I have the skills to hold that space and really provide that experience. And this is the thing, that if we are putting the clients at the center of what we do, then we need to make sure that we have the appropriate training. The appropriate training that we can hold space for them, the appropriate training that we can go to those difficult mindset places and we can help them overcome it. Rather than telling people to get up at 5:00 AM, we actually work with the individuals to work out what works for them.

And the more that I go into this space, the more that I see alarming practices where people are dressing themselves up as coaches and, it seems, with the sole aim of making money. But I want to really be honest here. The majority of people in this space and the people that I am friends with and associate with, that if you can look online and you can see the photos and you can see their faces, those people take what they do very, very seriously. And I do have great friends that operate in the kind of marketing space and they don't have the qualifications, but they have the experience. And for something like marketing, that's absolutely fine. But when we're looking at working with individuals, if we're prioritizing the money over the individual, you can see where it starts to fall apart. And you can see why some people have a dim view of the coaching industry.

So my myths that I'm debunking today, in a way, yeah, anybody could decide to become a coach, but it's a skill set, it's a paradigm, it's an intervention. So if we are truly serving our clients, then we'll have training. Now, that doesn't need to be accredited training. That's something that we can talk about next time. But we will have appropriate training so that we can hold the space and deliver a great experience to our clients. Because actually, professionally, the integrity, that makes a difference. Now, that doesn't mean that we can't step into wanting money. There's nothing wrong with wanting money. But when it becomes our sole motivation, you do wonder what are you thinking about the service that you're giving clients. For me, it's impact over income every day of the week. How am I creating powerful experiences that do change things for my client? Because if I am not doing that, what's really going on? Is that drive to have the six and seven and eight figure business overtaking what I do for clients?

And if I'm honest, often, when I listen to people who've got seven figure businesses, they talk about their clients. They talk about the delivery. And I know that people that I've worked with who are at that level, they do prioritize their clients, because what they realize is that if they want a sustainable business, their clients come first. And I think that this is the dark side of the industry. This is something that we're seeing, obviously, because a industry with no barriers to entry, other than a laptop, anyone can come on. There's a misunderstanding with many people, and I've been there so there's no judgment, on the different types of qualifications and what they mean. And lots of people at the moment during 2020, into 2021, have lost their jobs. So it seems alluring, doesn't it? It seems like you're coming into an industry where people are talking about making all of this money.

It can sound like a magic pill. Going from working in McDonald's to making seven figures overnight and sitting on the beach, drinking a piña colada. I understand why that narrative is so powerful for people. I get it. But this isn't coaching. And let's be honest. How many people do we really see making that journey? The people that I tend to work with are people that actually want to make a difference. And by doing that, they want to make money. So they want to work with schools and actually change the way that teachers feel about themselves, which is going to impact hundreds of thousands of young people. Or they work with individuals and help them unlock powerful things around their mindset. Or they're like Dr. Katherine, I told you I'd mention you, Dr. Katherine, who is looking at changing this paradigm, where we're moving away from the guru, where we're actually moving towards somewhere where we're embracing change. We're helping our clients to build businesses on their terms, in their energy, moving away from the masculine, moving towards the feminine.

There are lots of changemakers in the coaching industry, and there are lots and lots of lighthouses and people who are doing great, great work. And I think that the narrative that coaching is this next get-rich scheme and this kind of MLM Ponzi scheme, that narrative needs to change, because this isn't coaching. And if we are not putting our clients at the center of what we're doing, fundamentally if we don't enjoy delivering to our clients, then what are we doing? I know that I've had many periods of introspection when I thought, "How can I be part of this?" Because I've seen lots of tactics online, which I feel, and remember, this is my perception, but I feel are unethical.

So what do I do? Well, I decide that I'm going to operate in my sphere of influence and in my sphere of expertise and integrity, which means I'm going to support people. I'm going to make sure that they have a fantastic experience and I'm going to do everything I can to continue to build and to learn.

So yes, sometimes the coaching industry does seem like all anyone cares about is making the millions. But if you scratch underneath, you're going to see an industry which is fueled by people who actually do want to help their clients, and to make a lasting change in their

lives, and help them create legacies, and have that ripple effect where they are able to change. An industry where people, which, you can hear from my voice, that I love. An industry where people are helping others to overcome their real and perceived obstacles so they are able to move forward in their lives. And when we look at that, when we look at creating an industry like that, when we look at actually ultimately serving our clients and helping them overcome things, and we make sure that we have the tools and experience, it's a brilliant, brilliant industry to be part of.

So I don't want to make anyone feel that this isn't a great industry, but I did want to raise that elephant in the room, the idea that we all have to be striving to making X amount of money, and this is our measure of success, and we should always just be talking about our last launch. When in reality, those clients that have paid for our last launch, they're more important than the money that we've made. If we deliver them a great service, if we help them transform, surely that's more important than any amount of money in the bank. I'd love to know your thoughts on this. Please tag me on Insta Stories. Drop me a message. I would love to chat. I'm Ruth Kudzi. This is the Coaching Hub Podcast. Have a great day.

Thank you for listening to the Coaching Hub Podcast with me, Ruth Kudzi. If you enjoy this, I would love you to join my Facebook group, The Coaching Community, for more of the same.

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