

# **How to Structure Your Coaching Program**

**Sean Mize**

## How to Structure Your Coaching Program

Sean Mize

The purpose of this manual is to show you how you could structure your coaching program. My suggestions are not exhaustive by any means. There are a lot of models that you could use. All I done here is to discuss the most common methods and to tell you what has worked for me.

That said, I think that you will see many other possibilities that will work in your niche.

Before I say anything else, I want to clear up a very important point. A coaching program is not a vehicle for passing everything you know to your customers. Rather, it's a means to give them what they need and to recommend actions that they can take to reach their goals.

The risk, however, with many coaches is the belief that somehow they have to tell their clients everything, including all manner of ways to implement it. The end result is that rather than being helped, coaching clients are stopped in their tracks – afraid to do anything because everything, it seems, needs to be accomplished simultaneously.

I want to show you how to make your coaching program simple for you to deliver, but successful for your clients. I want you to enable your customers to achieve their goals.

### **Delivery paths**

---

For myself, I've found that there are three delivery paths that your customers could use to access the information that you have to give them: Training core; interaction; and accountability. And in my experience, both my clients and I get the best results when all three are present.

### *Training core*

The training core consists of the means through which you deliver your training. For example, you may use audios, videos, or PDFs. You may use them individually or together. They may be standalone products, or work together to teach a particular concept depending on how much material is needed to understand it.

There are two things that you need to think about before choosing which medium you will use. The first is this: which do you prefer to do? Are you comfortable with the idea of speaking into a microphone and recording what you say? That's what I do. And it takes me about an hour to create an hour's worth of training.

Do you prefer to do video? Some coaches do, and it works well for them.

Or, do you like to write? Writing is a legitimate means for delivering training, but it is time-consuming, as so you may want to think about a more efficient delivery method.

The second thing you must consider is in what form do your customers prefer to receive your training? Would they rather listen to an audio, watch a video, or read copious pages of material?

Well, there are a couple of things that characterize society today that should help you to answer that question. The first one is that most people don't like to read. It's been suggested that 80% of the families in the United States don't buy books, and that more than 40% of university students never read another book after they graduate.

And that probably explains why PDFs have so a low perceived value. Not many people want to read them.

The second characteristic will be less surprising, and that is that our lives are driven by entertainment. Even the news and weather has become something of a sitcom.

So, given the fact that the majority of people (in the US, anyway) don't like to read and that almost all of them seek entertainment wherever they can find it, what do you suppose will be the more popular means through which people would prefer to learn?

The obvious answers are audio or video.

So when you choose a training delivery method, you need to pick something that will be easy for you to do, but desirable by your clients.

I should also mention that you should choose to use only one of them. This flies in the face of what many other very successful coaches do. For them, anyway, they attempt to reach as many people as possible by offering their training through a variety of means.

But there are a couple of problems with that approach.

The first one is that in order for you to do that, you have to reproduce the same material in each of the different ways; and that violates the first principle that I suggested earlier, which is to do what is *easy* for you. To me, easy means that I only have to do it once, and that I can do it in the minimum amount of time.

If I felt that I had to provide the same information in a number of different ways, I would consider that to be a duplication of my effort; and that's *not* easy.

The second problem is that *because* people prefer one method over another, they will look for a coach that gives them what they want in the form that they want it.

Now you may think that you'll attract more people by doing all three. But actually the opposite happens. In an attempt to get more customers, you instead will alienate everyone. That's because those who want PDFS don't want to listen to audio or watch video. Those who don't like to read or haven't the time to watch video will prefer audio. And those who'd

rather be trained by watching TV (which is almost the same as watching a video), don't want to have to read or just listen.

So that means that your training delivery method has to take into consideration both factors: what's easy for you, and the manner in which your customers prefer to learn.

Now I should say that while you want to have one primary method, that there probably will be times when you need to use a secondary one. But it's not because you're trying to reach a different type of client. It's because some training can't be delivered effectively any other way.

For example, let's say you decided to use audio 95% of the time. If the training you had to offer could be understood from just listening, then that would satisfy the criteria: that it would be easy for you to create and somewhat entertaining for your customers.

But, you may realize that in some cases it's much easier to show people something than it is to just explain it. And so in that particular instance, you might decide that a PDF or a video would be the best way to do this.

Think about the challenges that come with describing a diagram, or facial expressions, or a lot of numbers. All of these examples illustrate the need for us to see, rather than just to listen.

But the occasional use of one method does not mean that it should be used equally with another. You should have a primary method that is supplemented very occasionally by a second. It will make your training

delivery easy for you to create, and it will appeal to those customers who prefer to learn what you have to say in that way.

### *Interaction*

The second delivery path is *interaction*. It's the interactive element that changes ordinary training into a coaching program. Without it, customers simply buy a product, use it, and hope that it works. And when that happens, the results tend to be varied. A few will get it for the most part, and some won't be able to figure it out at all because their questions will interfere with their ability to see how it applies to them. Probably the vast majority will be able to make it work if, and only if, they can discuss their efforts with someone who is more knowledgeable about how it works or can give them the benefit of his or her own experience.

A coaching program does exactly that. It gives new insights to the few people who get it on the first attempt, but perhaps most importantly, it enables the great majority to make progress because they can get their questions answered as they go through your material.

And when that happens, the value of your coaching goes up. Why? Because your customers realize that you care personally about their success. You not only know what you're talking about, but it gives you a lot of satisfaction to help them reach their goals.

It's that personal touch that makes all the difference. And it's impossible to make it personal if you're not available in person, as a coach, to help

them. It's not something that anyone will ever get with a home study course, any more than he or she could get it from just reading a book.

What are some of the ways that you could interact with your customers? The most popular are email, telephone calls, video conferencing, private blogs or private forums.

Just as with your training core, it's best to pick one and have another one as a backup. That is, you use one method as much as possible, and then only on rare occasions do you use the other.

This satisfies the criteria that I laid down earlier: it has to be simple for you to administer, and it has to be acceptable to your customers.

For example, you could use email as your primary method, and an interactive forum as your secondary one.

If you use more than one method to interact on a regular basis, then you will be duplicating your efforts (i.e. making it more complicated), and confusing your clients, because they will pick the method they prefer to the exclusion of the other, and not all of them will choose the same one.

A forum is easier than email because when you're asked a question, you can answer it there where everyone can see it. If anyone has this question in the future, the answer will be in the forum, and they'll never have to ask it again.

And new people can be directed there to find the answers they need. In fact, most people will have the same questions; so by creating a Q&A page, you can probably obviate the need for you to participate very much at all except to interject some encouragement or clarify a point.

On those rare occasions when one customer struggles to understand your answer, then you can switch to email. But just for that one person.

Or, you could combine email and one-on-one telephone calls. You might use email as your primary method, but resort to a personal telephone call if you just couldn't figure out how to solve a particular problem.

### *Accountability*

The third delivery path is *accountability*, and I should say straightaway that this isn't essential in a coaching program. But, it does give customers better results, and in many cases you'll find that you're the only one in your niche who does it, and so that may give you something of a competitive edge.

But, if it's common to your niche, then you'll need to do it just to stay in the game.

So, how can accountability help someone?

The truth is that life can get in the way. You've experienced that, and so have I. And so no matter how badly people want to achieve something,

the circumstances in which we often find ourselves prevent us from doing it.

Typically, when clients sign up for a year of coaching, they make a supreme effort to do everything. There's a real enthusiasm about the program. They think about it all the time. They can't wait to get started each day, and they're disappointed when they have to stop to go to bed.

But after a couple of weeks, they have a tendency to cut back on the time they've spent on it in order to catch up on the stuff that was neglected due to the enthusiasm they had for the coaching program.

They might decide that they need to spend more time with their friends and family, for example, both of which are legitimate. But that means that it's easy for them to back away from doing the work necessary to get the results that the coaching program can give them.

And so, without accountability, it's easy for someone to drift for months doing just a little bit here and there.

And then one morning they wake up and think, "I've been in the program for six months, and I haven't really accomplished very much." And that's because the enthusiasm declined and so did their commitment.

Accountability reminds people every week that they're in a structured program, that they've paid money to be in it, that they want the training, and that they have (in my program) a recording this week to listen to,

and so they decide that they must do something this week that perhaps they otherwise wouldn't have done.

So, for example, as a part of your program, you could require your customers to send you a short report every Friday that spells out what they did during the previous week.

You see, we all have a tendency on Friday to think of Monday as the day to get started on something, or to renew our efforts to form a new habit. We do the same thing in the evening when we contemplate the next day. And that's okay, sometimes.

But, it can also become a habit of its own. Procrastination, after all, is the thief of time. And so each day, and each week, something can come up that prevents them, or us, from making the most of that new, anticipated period of time.

But, in my experience, when accountability is added to the program, people will send me emails apologizing for not getting as much work done as they had hoped. And then, remarkably, they figure out how to rearrange their schedule so that they do something and can then report that they have accomplished something after all in time for that Friday email.

That one week by itself doesn't make that much difference in the big picture, but it can have a snowball effect: If they do something this week, then it's more likely that they'll do something the following week.

And so at first it helps to create momentum, but then when they need it the most, it helps to sustain it. And consequently they get more results.

## **Structuring your coaching program**

Now that I've talked about the three delivery methods that I use, I want to show you how you could structure your program around them.

### *Training core*

There are two factors within the training core that need to be considered: the methods themselves, and the perceived value; and I'll discuss these together.

In an online coaching program, there are three methods, and just to remind you, they are PDF, video, and audio. Even though your program should have an interactive component, you wouldn't normally expect that to take the form of face-to-face time.

I've already mentioned that not many people like to use PDF because they don't like to read. But printed material raises other issues.

Many customers will just skim the material. For them, this is desirable because it takes them less time to find out what to do than any other method. But, when they do that, they come away with the idea that it's

not as important as it would be if it took them longer to learn the same thing. And that means that the value that it has for them decreases.

In my experience, when it takes longer for people to go through the material, then tend to put more time into implementing the training as well. In other words, they pick up many of the nuances that they would miss otherwise. And that means that when they have to put in more effort, they get the benefits of what I have to teach them. It takes longer for you to produce it.

My program is focused on results. And if my customers aren't getting them, then if they're doing the work, I have to find a way to help them rectify their situation.

That said, the method you use still has to be efficient for you.

For example, if you can coach 100 clients in the time it takes someone else to coach 10, and you charge the same price, then your revenue stream will be 10 times that of the other coach. If you can make your business more efficient, even in the smallest areas, then then you can either make more money, or work less and earn the same income.

You have to ask yourself what your priorities are.

Here's another example. I can save 80% of my time by creating training via audio as I can by creating the same material as a PDF. And as I mentioned already, the perceived value is less. So not only am I

spending five times as long to do the work, I'm probably going to be paid substantially less for it.

For example, let's say that you decide to create a 10-lesson program. You could send out 10 PDFs, each 30 pages long. There are about 300 words on a page, making your printed version about 9000 words. If you type at 50 words per minute, it will take you something like three hours to type *each* lesson. Alternatively, you could record each one from some brief notes. Then it would take you about an hour to record an hour of training. And if the information is identical, the recordings will have the highest value to customers.

Some people may place more value on a printed copy, but on average, they will pay more for audio than for a PDF.

Now it could be that you're in a niche where audio just isn't practical; that in order to benefit the most from what you have to offer, video will be more effective. This would be the case if customers needed to actually see what you were describing.

For example, swimming, cooking, martial arts, or golf can be taught more easily and are better understood by watching than by listening. So is the description of a lot of numbers, such as reporting statistics. In niches such as these, video would be the most appropriate.

But most of them can be taught just as well with audio alone.

Audio satisfies the principle of simplicity, too. It requires less computer power to create and less bandwidth to upload. And it also removes much of the complexity that comes with making a video recording, such as learning how to use the software that's required to do it.

Anything you can teach in either PDF or video, you should be able to teach with audio, unless it your customers need to see what you're doing to understand your comments.

### *Interaction*

I mentioned several interaction methods earlier in this manual: Email, forums, blog, telephone (one-on-one or group); but these could also include instant messages, chat or Skype.

As always, you need to pick the method that's easiest for you and works relatively well for your clients. You don't want it to be cumbersome for them.

Note carefully, however, what I just said. I didn't say that you should choose what's easiest for clients, but works for you. If it works well enough for the clients at a price that they're willing to pay, then they'll also be willing to do it your way. If they value your information, and you're available in some way, then that's how they'll communicate with you.

So, what's easiest for you? This will vary from person to person.

If you're operating an online business at the same time as an offline business, or while running a household raising kids that are home all the time, or doing something else, and you're willing to be available 24/7 more or less, because you're sandwiching in everything else, the most effective way to communicate with clients might be through IM or Skype, or even texts.

But, if you want to work 9-5 and be available only via the computer, then email might be easier to do. Your answers may not be as fast, but they would still be able to get them in a timely fashion.

Maybe instant messaging (IM) or chatting is what you like to do the most. The question is how does that impact your clients? Is it easy for them? If they know that they can ask a question whenever, and get the information almost immediately when you're online, that will probably be a desirable method for them.

But, email, and IM or chatting, requires an internet connection, which may not always be possible for either of you.

Maybe you'd rather be available to clients during office hours, or just two hours per day, e.g. 10-12 M-F. If so, then email might be better. But, anything will work if you put the hours into it.

Or you might provide a telephone number for customers to call if they need your help. This can be an attractive method because they can talk

directly to you and hear your voice. That in itself connects you personally and can be especially encouraging.

The main drawback is that you probably will be available only during scheduled times, unless you've priced it in such a way that they can call you whenever they want to for much of the day on your office or personal phone.

You have to decide what really works well for you. Would you prefer to coach during certain hours, or answer customers' question as they come in.

Another way to do it might be through a blog or forum. I'm not a huge fan of using these methods, but some people do it. The advantage is that if you tag the response accurately, and you make sure that the title of the question matches what you're describing, then you only have to answer a question once.

If you have a lot of clients, then a blog or forum can act as a sort of storehouse of frequently asked questions. Then people can do much of the research on their own.

But, the more you suggest that look for answers there, the more they move away from the interactive element, and so you make need to think about changing the pricing element to reflect that. The more interaction, the more people will be willing to pay for the coaching. But, when the

interaction decreases, the value of the program also goes down, and in many cases so do the results.

So, how can you decide what works best for you. Remember, you don't want to have more than two methods. Instead, you want to have one that is primary, and one that is secondary.

To answer that question, you need to think about how many clients will you have? If you're just starting and have only two clients, then you could do one-on-one and spend an hour a week with each one, and that would cost you only two hours per week.

But, if you have 1000 clients, then one-on-one would be impossible. [Even 40 would be very challenging. That would be 40 hours per week of one-on-one.]

Group coaching would be tough with that many clients, too. You'd probably have to hire someone to help answer standard questions, even though 90-95% of them would be routine.

As I mentioned for the forums, you could create a database of answers, or you could hire an assistant who would screen most of them and then forward the less common ones to you to answer personally.

You can scale your coaching program up as much as you want to. But as you do, you'll need to get some help.

If you have a one-person coaching business, then you need to think about how to interact with a varying number of clients. For example, what happens if you have 100 clients? That's still too many to speak with one-on-one.

You could manage them in a group. In my experience, of the coaching clients who've been in the program for less than six months, about one-third of them will show up every week. The rest will listen to a recorded version of the live coaching. That means that at most, you could expect between 30 and 35 to show up.

For those clients who have been in the program for a year to 18 months, you may find that only 10% of them show up every week, and everyone else listens to the recording.

Email coaching is convenient for both you and your customers. They can ask their questions whenever they choose, and you can reply whenever you want to. The big question is: do you like using it?

The same thing is true for IM, as long as the service you use can hold past messages until you're online again. Skype, for example, will do this, and it works really well for most clients

And so now we need to think about how much time is required for each method

- Group coaching takes about one to two hours per week.
- One-on-one is probably an hour a week or every other week *per customer*.
- Email can run your life, if you let it.

Some coaches limit the number of emails that their clients can send to just one per day. I don't like to do that.

Customers appreciate having unlimited email access to you, and of the hundreds of people I've coached, only one person has ever abused the privilege. In that instance, the client was only asking questions. He wasn't doing the work, and so I limited him to one question at a time until he did, and the problem went away.

So, for example, if you had 100 clients, and they each asked you one or two questions a week, that would only be about 40 per day, which you could manage part-time, particularly if you priced your program appropriately. Not only that, but unlimited email access is a huge selling point because it helps you to differentiate your program from your competitors.

For example, if clients are paying you \$300 per month, then that's \$30K per month for an hour of interactive time every day.

You could restrict the hours during which your customers could send messages to you, or you could just tell them that you would only answer them during your working hours. And so if you chose

to work only a four day week, for example, then it could be three days before they heard from you.

Of course, all of this depends on the number of clients you have.

### *Accountability*

What could accountability look like? How could you hold your customers accountable?

One way would be to have a spreadsheet with a column for certain results that they would be expected to do, and then every day they would use a new line to mark off what they did.

They could use a running Word document, similar to a log or a journal. At the end of the week, or the month, depending on the reporting period, they would send it to you.

They could leave you a voicemail, rather than writing it down.

You could also get everyone to report their results on the weekly coaching call, though this method could become quite time consuming. For example, if 30-35 people are on the call, and they each speak for just one minutes, it would be more than a half an hour before you go to any of their questions. So unless you are charging an appropriate amount for the program, this probably is not the best way to do it.

Whatever you do, you want to use a method that really will hold them accountable while at the same time making it easy for you to evaluate their results. That means that the onus to stay in touch has to be on them. And the results they get will be largely due to the fact that they know that you'll be looking at them each time they send them.

But, you also want to do it in a way that will limit the time you need to spend. You shouldn't have to comment on each one, for example. And you also want to avoid having to read them every day. This is where an assistant can be especially valuable. He or she would know that you only wanted to see those that indicated that there was some kind of problem, or that congratulations were in order.

Daily accountability is the most effective. As the period between progress reports increases, the results that customers get will decrease.

You have to decide how often you're willing to look at the results. Whatever you do, you still have to have a handle on what is going on so that you can respond at the appropriate time.

If you feel that you need to, then you can point out to them that they're not keeping up with the accountability, and then ask what can be done to improve it.

Again, this all this has to do with how many clients you have.

For example, if you had five clients at any price point, you could have unlimited emails and daily accountability, and take 10 minutes a day to respond to each message. With 20 clients, you might have to have two levels of coaching: One that includes accountability at one price, and one that doesn't at another. Then you're being paid for the marginal time you're spending on the accountability part of your program.

Or, you could have several levels of coaching: No accountability, monthly accountability, or daily – the latter with the highest price.

You have to decide what works well for you and the client. But you always must remember that it is a commitment that you make.

A big part of this is how much you charge for the coaching program. If the price is too low, then you're going to feel like you're being cheated. So you really need to make sure that you're being paid enough so that you feel like going the extra mile.

It's possible that you'll feel that you want to have a high-level coaching program where clients pay more, but you think that people won't be willing to pay the extra. What do you do? Well, you have two coaching programs: One at a lower price with less interaction, and another at the higher price with more interaction.

You can cherry-pick the ones you want to use, either individually or in some combination. But you must decide what you prefer to do, and what will work for your clients.

## Summary

In this manual, I talked about three methods through which you could deliver your coaching, and how you could structure it in each of them.

I said that the training core was delivered as either a PDF, audio, or video, and that you had to choose the one that you preferred, and that worked for your clients as well.

I also said that you wanted to choose a primary method, and only use a secondary one when it was absolutely necessary, because you didn't want to have to duplicate your efforts in order to satisfy those who preferred one method to the exclusion of the others.

In addition, I discussed the need for you to use a method that was efficient for you, while at the same time creating a program that had a high perceived value to your customers. I used PDFs as an example to demonstrate that some methods don't work as well as others.

Then I talked about the need for interaction, and how that component makes ordinary online training into a coaching program. I mentioned the most common means of interaction: Email, telephone calls, video conferencing, private blogs or forums, instant messaging, chat, and Skype, and discussed why some were more effective than others.

The third method I talked about was accountability, and while this isn't essential to a coaching program, I said that it tends to give both you and

your customers better results. Sometimes life does get in the way. But, if customers know that you have a personal interest in their progress, they are more likely to take meaningful action every week than if they don't have to tell you what they've been doing.

I suggested a number of ways that you could do this such as with a spreadsheet or using Word to create a kind of journal that they could send to you.

I also mentioned that voicemail might be appropriate, but that asking about personal progress on a coaching call might not be very effective because the number of people that attended at any one time might use up much of the call just to report their activities for the week.

There are, of course, many others ways to deliver your training and to structure your coaching program, and no doubt you will have thought of them for your niche.

But, whatever you do must not only work for your clients, it also needs to be what you want to do.

I should just mention in closing that no matter what combination you decide to use, you're not locked into it for life. If you find that something isn't working for you, then explain it to your customers. Tell them what you think you should be doing instead.

## How to Structure Your Coaching Program copyright Sean Mize

Rest assured that if your clients really don't like the way you're doing something, they'll let you know. But recognize that whenever you do make a change, that you need to involve them.

You will be happier, and so will they.

By the way, perhaps after reading this, you want to learn more from me about creating your coaching program -

I have created a Complete Coaching Business Training Program That Teaches You Everything and how to do it A-Z - you can buy it here:

[Coaching Business Starter Course - WSO Sellers Special Offer](#)