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INTERNATIONAL COACHING NEWS

MARKETING FOR COACHES

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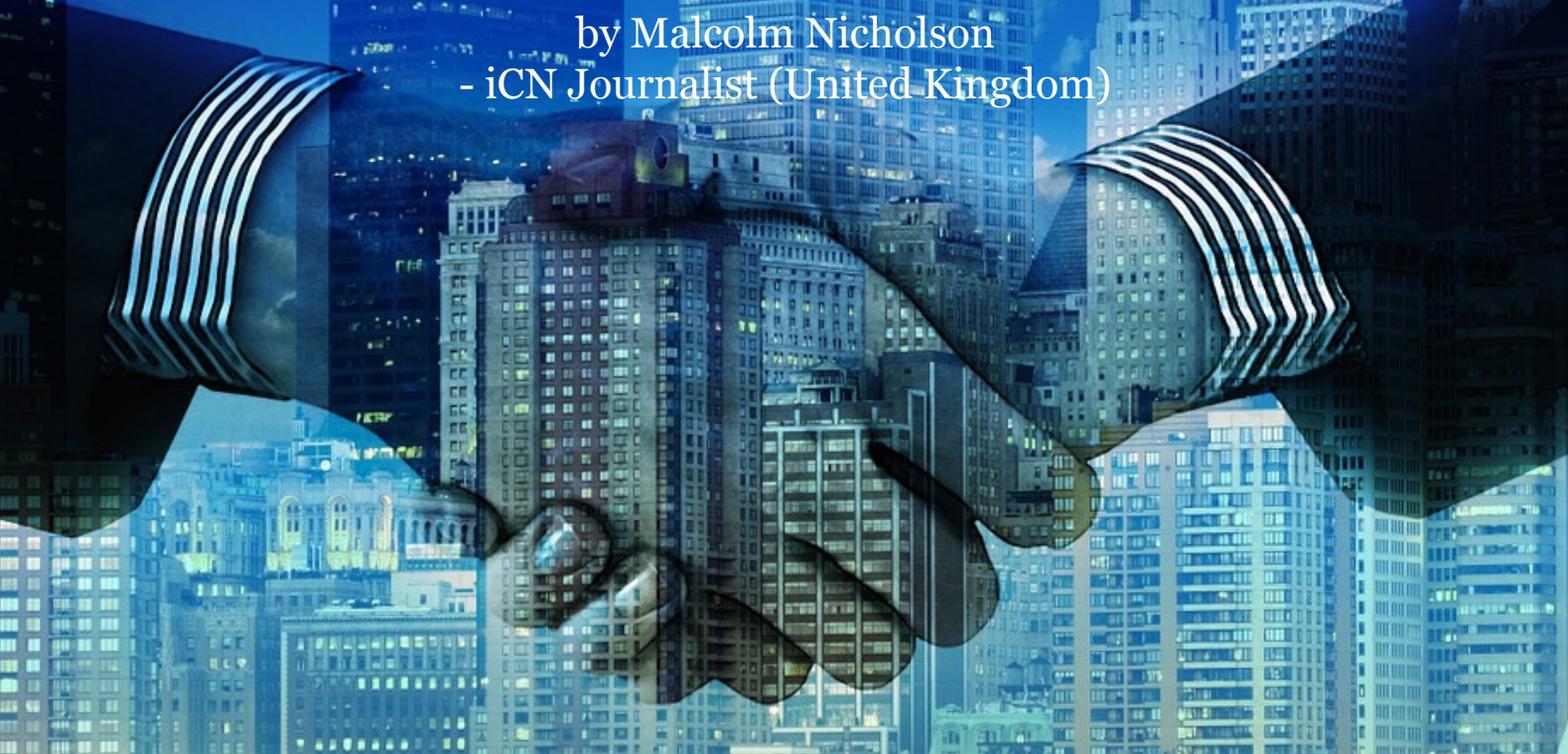
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Adopting a Coaching Approach to B2B Marketing

by Malcolm Nicholson
- iCN Journalist (United Kingdom)



The business coaching marketplace is evolving. The impact and benefit of coaching – no matter what flavour – is beyond dispute and so demand continues. There is a continuing flood of inexperienced or transitioning newcomers into the business, whilst within organisations the HR function wants to take on more senior coaching/mentoring. Some businesses are providing internal coaching and others are outsourcing coaching to external providers – either established consultancies who now offer coaching, or training businesses who are also providing coaching panels. This is leading to commoditisation of coaching. Consequently the need to for ‘solo-preneurs’ to market themselves effectively is becoming a matter of survival.

The route to the customer is outside the scope of this article, which focuses on how to develop your proposition for the time in front of a potential coachee.

To get an expert opinion, I spoke to Garry Mansfield, MD of [Outside In Sales & Marketing](#). Outside In are a specialist UK B2B sales consultancy established in 2008. I like Garry’s approach because it dovetails with a coaching approach and has evolved out of frustration with too many companies selling “silver bullet” or the next big thing. Outside In realise sales challenges are more complex than a single fix and so work shoulder to shoulder with their clients.

We began by speaking about the ‘landscape’ of business to business deals. My impression is that a lot of people go into coaching either for the



In the photo: Garry Mansfields, MD

lifestyle or because they enjoy helping people. It is not necessarily because they are good at selling and marketing themselves.” said Garry. “Around a quarter of all b2b deals fail to happen at all. Almost half of forecasted deals fail to close when expected. However, over 70% of business goes to the company or supplier who engages with a prospect in the early stage of the buying process to help them to see the value of change.”

Bringing this into the coaching marketplace, Garry said “What you do as a coach - day in day out - is challenge people to see what they don’t see already and then to care enough about it to take responsibility to act. It is about changing people’s behaviour. A similar approach in business development will pay dividends. So start by understanding how they see ‘value’ and then help them to see how they can deliver sustained improvement using coaching.”

“To me this is less about the various channels of communication for marketing and more about the mindset and approach, what we call Outside-In not Inside-Out thinking about marketing for growth.”



“Let’s give that some depth. Whatever you’re doing, you can use email, events, networking, cold calling, the internet and social media to communicate your message. But it is the **messages** that make the most difference. Traditional marketing is Inside out, where you build a message that is all about you and then you tell people how great you are. For many potential clients this becomes just another message in the

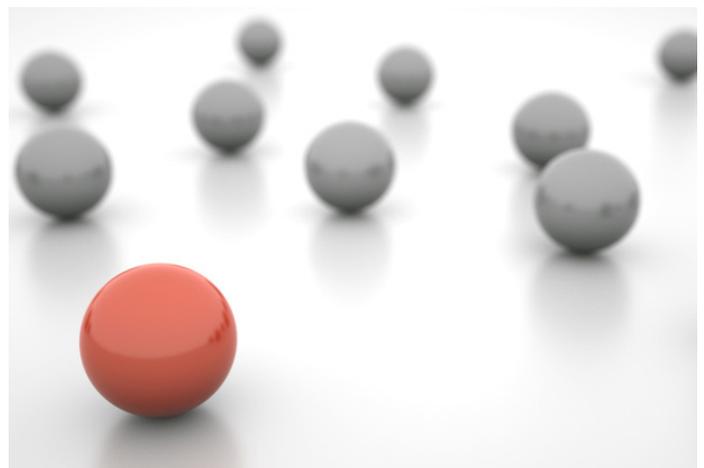
white noise of their day that fails to encourage them to take action.”

“Some coaches will refine this and take the ‘we are great’ message to specific and targeted segments. Better, but still focused on the wrong thing... you. Clients don’t care about *you* initially, they care about *them*. So you need a new way to engage.”



“Unconventional’ means a new and different way to think and act - outside in marketing. To give that some context, we need to understand first that the typical b2b buying process is split into **three core stages**:

1. Why Buy (why should I change from steady state)
2. Solution (how could I resolve the problem and which approach would be best for me?)
3. Why you (why are you better than the rest in delivering this approach?)





“It is worth ‘Drinking your own champagne’. When coaching you may well follow the GROW approach. Why Buy is focused on the **G & R** - identifying and accepting that there are areas of performance improvement. The solution is like **O** - what are the various ways to solve the problem and make an informed choice about the best way to approach it. **W** - execution and actions toward getting the problem resolved and in marketing terms this is about showing why you are the best coach/coaching company to help them.”

“Now you can plan your attack - Identify the problem space by asking yourself coaching questions (related to **your** coaching offer) Be ready to articulate why this is a problem worth solving – remember many business people are wrestling with complex situations, so need to know why one issue has priority over others in the their company. What is your approach to the age-old issue of proving the value of expected outcomes from a new way of doing something? Consider the specific outcomes where YOU can drive value for your target customer. Now, clearly this will vary on the type of coaching you provide. Executive coaches will likely be focused on the value of improved leadership, sales coaches on key dimensions of sales performance etc.”



Why should they do something?

“ Armed with this considered message identify the people inside the customer who care about this problem. Is it an individual to whom you have access or a group of people? Engage with them about their problem space (NOT your offering). Help them to see the reason why this is worth solving in their organisation (Why Buy). This is not about your coaching offer, but the value of improvement in areas to which your coaching would be a solution. ”

Why should they choose coaching rather than other ways to fix the issue?

“ Help them understand the relative merits of the potential ways to solve the problem. Coaching is one of these of course and this is your opportunity to influence them as to why coaching is better than training, process improvement and restructuring for example. Have evidence to prove the effectiveness of your solution and how these outcomes are better than the alternatives. This is not about you, but coaching as a solution. ”

How will you be distinctive?

“ Then it comes to why you. They should by now be convinced coaching is for them so why should they now turn to you rather than the many other companies offering coaching services. This is when you articulate the benefits of your offering. ”

So, an unconventional yet proved methodology that dovetails with what we as coaches do. Focus on the client’s issues and help them do things differently.

Outside In’s Marketing Top Tips

1 Stand Out - it is important that you differentiate yourself. Make a list of the top reasons why a customer would get better performance from working with you as a coach.

- Work through this list and cross out any that are not related to the issues that this target customer cares about.

- Remove any for which you are unable to provide evidence - prove it through your approach, references and experience
- Look at the messages your competitors are sending out (website, collateral, brochures, exhibitions) and cross off any that they also say about their offer. (these are areas of what I call 'value parity')

... what is left are your true differentiators. The prospect cares and you are different.



2 Target customer groups where you have greatest relevance - whilst abstract experience is very helpful there is more credibility in areas where you have direct experience of delivering results. This could be situational (type of problems faced, e.g. turnaround, growth), industry or functional expertise (e.g. HR, C-Level/Owner or sales transformation)



3 Talk through your views on why they need to do something differently - use primary research findings have a clear point of view. Make it relevant.

4 Make any collateral relevant to each stage. There's no point in having a specific proposal at the first engagement.

You need collateral that educates the prospect about the potential value they can unlock if only they approached things differently. This may be a market report, case study, diagnostic tool or similar that helps them to see that they need to improve performance in the area for which you have a solution.

5 Control the process. Be decisive when choosing which leads to invest effort into. Do you want to work on leads that don't happen? -No! Do you want to work on leads where you are not well positioned to win? - No!. How do you make these choices...

Remember to download your **free qualification guide** at <http://outside.in/1OIxRnS>

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ABOUT MALCOLM NICHOLSON

Malcolm Nicholson is the owner and Coaching Director for [Aspecture](http://Aspecture.com), and has worked successfully with a wide range of senior business people for over 15 years, enabling them to improve business results through transformational changes. To find out how he can help your organisation contact him at malcolmnicholson@aspecture.com or on +44 1932 267597.