

Unusual Ways to Motivate Coaching Clients



by Glenn Livingston, Ph.D.

Why Is This Elephant on the Cover?
You'll Just Have to Read the Book to Find Out!



Glenn Livingston, Ph.D.

FREE BOOK **Unusual Ways to** **Motivate Your** **Coaching Clients**



Sharon Livingston, Ph.D.

**The
New York
Times**

Entrepreneur

ADWEEK

CRAIN'S
NEW YORK BUSINESS

Originally trained as a psychologist, Dr. Glenn Livingston has helped literally thousands of clients. Along with his wife Sharon, he's sold consulting, teambuilding, and workshops to big names like AT&T, Nextel, Panasonic, Whirlpool, Novartis, Lipton, Colgate-Palmolive, Kraft, and Panasonic. Their work, research, and theories have been seen in major media publications like The New York Times, Entrepreneur Magazine, Crain's NY Business, AdWeek, America West, and more!

["According to Our Students We Run One of the Most Powerful Certification Programs for Coaches Who Want to Grow a Thriving Practice...And Now You Can TEST-DRIVE It for a \\$25 One Time Payment!"](#)



Contents

Introduction	4
What is motivation?	5
Types of motivation	6
Motivation theories and how you can use them	7
Motivation busters (and solutions!)	9
Procrastination	9
Feeling overwhelmed	13
Making excuses.....	13
Problems with criticism.....	14
Lack of self-confidence.....	15
Fear of failure	16
Lethargy	16
Conclusion.....	17

Introduction

No matter what niche you've chosen to work in as a coach, motivating your clients is one of the primary, if not most important, tasks you'll undertake each day. Every single coach needs to keep their clients motivated.

Setting goals and creating the action items to achieve them are pretty straightforward tasks. But most clients have previously tried and failed with their own reasonably-well-thought-through plans. Indeed, that's why they hired you as a coach in the first place.

The Reason Clients Fail is Usually Lack of Motivation And Follow Through NOT Simply a Lack of Clear Goals and Directions



Which means your job as a coach is to prepare and motivate your clients to carry the torch to the finish line.

If you think about it, if we didn't need someone or something to help us get and stay motivated nobody would ever need a coach. We would set goals, break our dreams down into manageable steps, and conquer them one by one until we achieved the dream.

The problem is, your clients lack the energy and determination to do this. And so they often defeat themselves before they even get started...

As a matter of fact, most coaches have been in this place, too. Because in the absence of training and strategic forethought to overcome it, human nature seeks the easy way out. And because it's very rare that the easy way is the road to accomplishment, most of us need others to motivate us to reach our potential!

This short book outlines some background about motivation, common obstacles you'll encounter, and several different approaches you can use to motivate your client. Learning what motivates each individual client will make your job as a coach easier and should help your client reach their goals faster.

What is motivation?

Motivation is what guides us to act. It's what makes you do whatever it is you need to do to reach a goal, whether that goal is to save for retirement or just to get off the sofa and answer the doorbell.

Now, I know this might sound obvious, but it's important to remember the first thing that has to happen for people to be motivated is a MAKE A DECISION. Simply put, you've got to decide to do *something*...otherwise human nature will just take you wherever the wind blows, more or less.



There's that pesky elephant again... What the heck is he doing in *this* book?

You have to decide you want to save for retirement, for example, or else the years will pass you by and you'll wake up wondering where all the money went when you've only got a few years left to do it. *(Note: Coaching can be a great way to compensate if you're one of the many people who find yourself in this situation)*

Some people don't accomplish anything significant simply because they never DECIDE to do it. It really can be that simple. And in those cases the bulk of your job involves helping the client articulate and work through their ambivalence.

The second component of motivation, however, is continuing to work towards your goal even—and *perhaps especially*—when major obstacles get in your way.

This latter and more important part of motivation is where the real coaching work usually lies. For example, helping your financially motivated client stick with the budget cuts and income increasing efforts needed to finance their retirement.

Types of motivation

Psychologists have identified two fairly different types of motivation to which different types of people are prone to respond. Knowing which type gets your client moving better, faster, and more sustainably is a very valuable piece of information!

The first kind is called intrinsic motivation. Basically, this means “motivation from within”... the kind that occurs inside your own head. Intrinsic motivation includes the feeling of accomplishment you get when you complete a project or the self-determination you experience when you’re inspired to move forward. An example of intrinsic motivation would be doing a research project at work mostly because you’re inherently interested in the material. (*I remember volunteering to coordinate a whole study on time perception in college for this reason*)

The other kind of motivation is *extrinsic*. That’s the kind of motivation which occurs outside yourself: Things like recognition, bonuses and rewards. Coaches often provide some kind of extrinsic motivation for their clients, usually to congratulate them on a job well done.

The most interesting thing about extrinsic and intrinsic motivation is that most people mistakenly use *extrinsic* motivation to try to generate *intrinsic* motivation. For example, your boss might name you employee of the year, an extrinsic motivator, to increase your and your coworkers’ intrinsic motivation.

This approach doesn’t usually work. Here’s why: Psychological studies have found offering too many rewards actually *decreases* intrinsic motivation. One theory is that excessive rewards make fun things seem more like work, and remove the satisfaction of the work itself. (*For example, this is why it’s difficult to pay your kids for good grades*)

That said, extrinsic rewards are helpful in moderation, especially when people have little interest in pursuing something or they don’t have all the skills they need for the job. Extrinsic rewards should almost always be small, like a dinner out or taking a half-hour out of the day to do something they love.

You’ll need to pay careful attention to your client’s response as you test out the different types of motivation. The key is, once you see what works try to stick with that and keep reinforcing it.

For example, I’ve had many clients who feel motivated by a freshly organized understanding of the problem at hand. To them, life is a puzzle of sorts and I’m their puzzle-solving partner...

With these clients I try to intellectually reflect back to them what they seem to be struggling with, offer some theories as to how that fits in with “how they tick”, then just sit back while they speculate on this and try to organize their thoughts for themselves. I know once it “clicks” in their neat little system of thought, they’ll go out and DO what’s necessary!

That’s an example of an intrinsically motivated client...

Other clients, however, just aren’t like that. They seem more motivated by my personal emotional involvement and vibrant stories from either my personal life or those of others I’ve worked with (*minus identifying details of course*). When I’m working with them I’m working more from my heart than my head. I’m digging deep inside myself for the associations, stories, and most importantly the FEELINGS to help them.

Just pay attention to your clients over time. You'll be amazed at how frequently they fall into just one of these two types.

Motivational theories and how you can use them

Over the years psychologists and behaviorists have come up with several theories about what causes motivation in human beings. None of them fit every person 100 percent, but we can glean some very helpful information from each one.

The first one I'd like to talk about is the **theory of arousal**.

This theory postulates that some people are motivated to act when arousal levels get too high or too low. Some people get overwhelmed or too excited and need to relax with a book. Others may be bored and decide to go hang-gliding to get back into their arousal peak zone. The theory is that most of us have a consistent level of arousal that we need to maintain. If we stay in that "zone" we will accomplish more.

How to use it. Watch for patterns in your client's behavior that suggests to you (s)he is either overly aroused or under aroused by her work or other significant element in her life. Experiment with either stimulating or lowering her level of arousal by adding or withdrawing activities to help keep her on track. Judge your success by what actually gets accomplished, not necessarily her first response.

(One cautionary note about this: If you're working with clients who tend to be anxious, it's often better to start by removing the level of stimulation and arousal first. Less input and activity often leads to less anxiety. And remember, if your client is too anxious you need to refer them to a licensed professional...don't cross the line into what could be perceived as medical treatment and/or psychotherapy)

The **humanistic theory**, on the other hand, suggests humans are motivated in a strictly prioritized order of needs. First we've got to fulfill our basic needs like food, shelter, love, and physical safety. After those are filled we move on to something called self-actualization—the very human drive to reach our full potential. People who are fulfilling their potential have a variety of characteristics which separate them from the rest of the herd, according to researchers. They include:

- **Realistic expectations.** People who are self-actualized have realistic goals and are ready to accept the circumstances they find themselves in...
- **Spontaneous behavior.** The self-actualized think and act spontaneously. They trust their decisions and follow rules, but they do things their own way...
- **Independence.** They have no problem being alone and need time by themselves to focus on their own potential *(but are equally comfortable working with others)*...
- **Profound experiences.** Self-actualized people report having feelings of joy and wonder that leave them feeling rejuvenated or transformed...
- **Approach the world with wonder.** People who have reached their full potential aren't afraid of the world or distrustful of it. They are inspired by everything around them and take pleasure

in what the world has to offer...

- **Problem-solving.** Self-actualized people are interested in helping others. They are interested in solving problems and do so in an ethical way which benefits others around them, as well as their community at large...

Understanding the characteristics of the humanistic motivational theory will help you spot gaps in motivation when they occur (*and they always do*). Humanistic coaches tend to try to rectify these gaps by sharing their own alternative perspective—inviting clients to consider feeling differently about a particular situation.

For example, I was once supervising a coach who said she felt like her office was a prison and her clients were her jailors. She had overbooked herself and was working with 10 to 12 clients per day, all week long including Saturdays. It's another story entirely why she did this—*I don't recommend it!*—but I simply shared with her the amazement and wonder I felt when I went through an intense day of clients...

"I'm astounded at the variety of different stories, problems, and experiences people have in this world," I told her. "In the context of one day I experience both comedy and tragedy, creation and destruction, sadness and joy, anger and grief, unbridled enthusiasm and painful despair. Everyone has a story...and they approach these experiences in ways I'd never dream of myself. I'm so much strong with all these stories inside of me!"

See where I'm going?

Another explanation of motivation has to do with **instinct theory**. This school of thought believes we do many of the things we do based on instinct. Like predatory animals staking out their territory or mothers caring for their young.

The thinking is there are certain behaviors we are born to carry out. This is absolutely true. We ARE born with the need to fight or flight when we feel threatened or unsafe, for example. We also have a need to create, to bond with others, to find food and shelter, etc.

Triggering someone's flight or fight response isn't a healthy way to motivate them—*despite what they do in movies about the army and professional football teams*—because it can lead to unhealthy physical conditions...

But the need to be part of a group or nurturing could be a good motivator for some clients.

(Next Page Please)

Motivation busters (and solutions!)

If we humans weren't constantly screwing up our instinctual drives with negative thinking (*and societal conflict*), our instincts might work perfectly. Unfortunately our clients' heads are filled with internal tapes in our clients' heads which sabotage their efforts and prevent them from meeting their goals.



The plain facts are that most clients can easily learn things like goal-setting and creating an action plan, but “psyching themselves out” will keep most from moving forward. **If you experience your client “just sitting down and digging in” when they should be MOVING, the odds are one of these negative thought patterns are stuck inside their head! (After all, it takes a LOT of work to move an elephant...and any excuse to stay put will do!)**

I go through an extensive list of the negative-thinking patterns (*and associated solutions*) you'll see among your clients in my FREE book, [How to Become Unstoppable](#). Most of these problems can be resolved through reframing techniques, which you can learn by reading that book. Here I'll confine myself to briefly addressing several specific types of thinking which interfere with motivation. (*And of course, their solution*)

Procrastination

Procrastinators flitter away time doing everything *but* what they need to do most. Although getting to the bottom of *why* they put things off and reframing that thinking to clear away the muck will most likely be part of your coaching job, here are a few short-term solutions:

- **Make sure the client has a strong enough “WHY” to accomplish the goal.** Often you’ll find goal which people procrastinate about the most are the ones which, at bottom, they feel they SHOULD do... not ones they really WANT to do. This is a critical distinction. It’s the difference between “I HAVE TO” vs. “I WANT TO”... which itself is the key distinction between a child-like orientation to the goal and an adult, self-actualizing orientation.
 - It’s not unusual in coaching for clients to have adopted a goal the coach thinks they should accomplish more so than one they want to accomplish themselves! Be keenly aware of this possibility and don’t be afraid to explore it if you suspect this is what’s happening
 - Don’t be afraid to go back to a goal and ask the client to remind you WHY they want to achieve it again. As clients go through the coaching process and begin growing internally, it’s common for their goals to change. Sometimes they want something different. Other times they still want the goal, but they didn’t quite realize what was involved in achieving it and they need to re-sell themselves on its importance. Regardless, a detailed exploration of WHY the client still wants to accomplish the goal helps to “unstuck” them and move them forward.
- **Fully “Dimensionalize” the tasks required to complete the goal.** Lay things out step by step. Then break those steps into even smaller steps. Frequently the reason people procrastinate is because they were a victim of “Falling in Love with an Elephant in the Distance”...



You see, elephants look pretty manageable in the distance. But when you look at them up close you start to realize just how big they are. The projects associated with reaching your goal are often exactly the same way. The goal sounds wonderful and very manageable—until

you start breaking down everything that needs to happen to accomplish it. Then it starts to look, well, quite frightful and overwhelming...



When the client lays out the tasks and subtasks in detail one of three things will happen:



(1) They may see how well they fit in with other big projects they're currently working on and this may re-invigorate them. "So what if it's an elephant... I've already got a few other elephants up and running who can help it along!" (Next page please)



(2) The individual tasks may seem less overwhelming by themselves and the clients sees a direct path to getting started. Something I like to ask clients is "What's the smallest step you could take to move you towards your goal at which it's impossible for you to fail?" This can be very motivating. The client may fall in love with the elephant up close because you've made it MUCH more manageable and approachable.

(3) They'll reconsider their goal now that they know what's REALLY involved.

Any of the above IS a satisfactory outcome because the client will either walk away with a fresh sense of motivation to move on their project—OR—a sense of relief that they got out of an overwhelming situation.

THE ONE TWO MOTIVATIONAL PUNCH: Combining the WHY review (*why does your client wants to accomplish their goal?*) with the Dimensionalization exercise in the same session is an exceptionally powerful. This one-two motivational punch both reminds the client of their intrinsic motivation, but lets them consider everything necessary to accomplish the goal in one fell swoop. It's kind of like drinking a big old bottle of Gatorade while you're staring at a trail map to the top of the mountain. You've got the directions in front of you and the energy to climb there if you want to!

- **Take a look at the procrastinator's time management skills.** She may need to learn how to schedule her time realistically to get tasks accomplished. Review very practical things like keeping a perhaps list (from Stephen Covey's "First Things First"), scheduling appointments with herself to get important things done, using a planner, etc. You'll be surprised how many clients KNOW about these things but just aren't using them!

Feeling overwhelmed

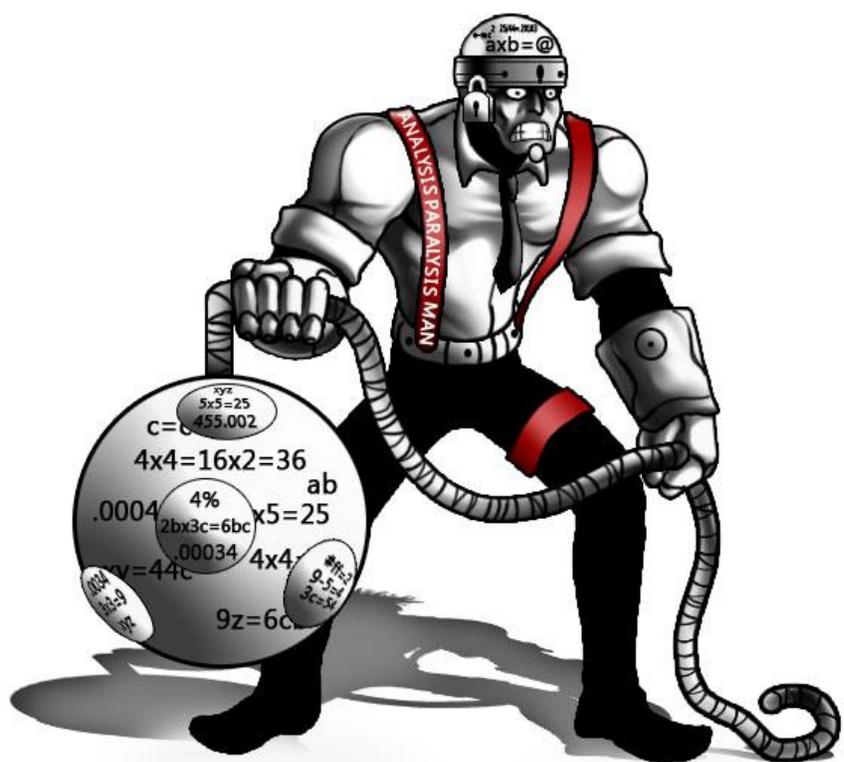
Clients who feel overwhelmed never start anything. They seem to be paralyzed by everything they need to do and don't know where to start. Sometimes you can help them by teaching basic project management techniques (*like the task breakdown reviewed above*), helping them create a schedule, etc. But because the feelings of being overwhelmed are usually linked to something else, like a fear of failure, you may need to do more to motivate your client:

- Ask the client to take a look at the *distractions* in their environment which may be adding to their stress. The telephone, email, texts or other constant interruptions add to almost everyone's overwhelm these days. Brainstorm ways your client can put the distractions on "pause" for an hour or two every day...
- Give your client a homework assignment of doing ONE thing they love to do every day. Sometimes looking forward to something pleasurable takes the pressure off.
- Most of us have jobs that are unending. A friend of mine used to be a newspaper reporter, and she actually could leave her work at the office because everything she did got finished by the end of the day. But most of us don't have this luxury. Our projects are ongoing and sometimes seem never-ending. And the fact is they *are* never-ending. People who are chronically overwhelmed realistically see no end in sight because *there isn't one!*
 - So instead of looking for endings, encourage your client to look at accomplishments, like reaching a milestone on a project. It's like stopping on a mountain to look down at how far you've come instead of continually thinking about how far the top is. (*Take it from an avid hiker, the latter WILL make you insanely depressed, but the former is inspirational!*)
- Teach your client to set priorities. When he feels overwhelmed, ask him to write down the one thing that has to be done that very minute and then do it. Keep lists of priorities is important when clients feel overwhelmed.
- Teach your client how to say NO. Sometimes people who are overwhelmed all the time take too much on because they simply can't communicate when they've got enough on their plate. Learning to say no is an important step in becoming self-confident, too.

Making excuses

Reframing is the coaching trick of choice with people who make excuses about getting stuff done, but you can give them some additional tips while they are working on changing their perspective:

- **DE-BUTTING:** Spend a session focusing on just ONE thing your client needs to do to reach their goal. It may mean additional education or moving to another part of the country. Stop them every time they say the word "but." Ask them to take every "but" statement and write down a solution to it. For example, "But I can't move to Seattle because I don't have the money." The solution would be to create an item in their budget to save for moving expenses or to get a second job temporarily.
- **Make a resource list.** Work with your client to determine where they really need help and a list of people or other resources that could help them. Want to start a business? Contact the Small Business Administration for free classes on what you need to do. Need help determining what food you need to eat for your diabetes? Find out if there is a nutritionist through the doctor's office. Once your client has the information they need to get to the right person or place to help them, excuses are no longer valid.
- **Keep from falling into the Analysis Paralysis trap.**



Analysis Paralysis Man

People who chronically make excuses tend to overthink things. Here's an example: I could start a business, but what if the free help I can get at the Small Business Administration doesn't apply to my business model? What if a nutritionist tells me I can only eat food I hate? Clients who make excuses have to be encouraged to just act once they have the information they need to move forward.

Problems with criticism

Some clients receive criticism and spin into despair or lethargy. They feel like giving up, and often do. Much of clients' problems with criticism often lies in perfectionism and low self-esteem that can be handled through reframing. Here are some other tips to help clients who go into a tailspin after receiving constructive criticism:

- Teach them constructive criticism. Criticizing someone's work or habits isn't effective over the long-term unless it comes with some advice about what specific changes need to take place. For example, it does no good for your boss to tell you aren't doing a good job without giving you specific examples and tips on the behavior they prefer. Teach your clients to ask for some constructive feedback when they are being criticized and specific examples of what they are doing wrong.
- Have them look at the criticism like a police detective. Who are the people involved and what knowledge do they have about the area in which you've been criticized? Is there more going on than meets the eye? What is the take-away the client should take away from the criticism? Is there any pattern? Are there additional clarifications she needs to make necessary changes?
- Remind your client that he is not his mistakes. Failure is one of the most profitable lessons we can learn because we can change course to move toward success. Criticism is a positive that will help with improvement.

Lack of self-confidence

Not having enough self-confidence also leads to excuse-making, procrastination and other avoidance behaviors. In addition to changing those tapes in your client's head that reinforces this mindset, try these techniques:

- Together, make a list of the client's strengths and weaknesses. You'll notice that your client will focus primarily on the weaknesses, which is something you can work on with reframing. Be sure to point out strengths that your client doesn't acknowledge, whatever they may be. Having someone else pointing out their strengths will help.
- Encourage your client not to focus so much on outcomes as much as the PATH to get to the goal. Changing their focus to the tasks at hand will keep them from focusing on their shortcomings in the long term and zero in on what they *can* do NOW. For example, your client may not think they can lose 50 pounds, but if they focus on just doing a little exercise each day, they will begin to build confidence.
- Help your client identify places where they can take some risks with relative safety. Start with something that doesn't have a significant amount of importance to the client, like taking a cooking class or learning a craft. Once they've experienced mistakes and successes in those endeavors, encourage them to take more risk in areas that are more important.
- Work with the client to learn to accept compliments and praise. People with little self-confidence shrug off compliments with humor or minimize their worth. The first step in accepting praise is to say "thank you." For a homework assignment, ask your client to say thank you to everyone who praises them or pays them a compliment, then say nothing else. It's a good first step to self-acceptance.

Fear of failure

Reframing fear of failure into a learning experience is the key to helping a client overcome the fear of failure. Did you know the most successful business people are those who fail fast, fail often, fail cheap, and fail quickly? It's true. The reason is, nobody is really a genius who knows exactly how to hit a home run the first time at bat. You've gotta get out there and take a lot of swings first. A LOT of swings! Here are some other techniques to reduce the fear of failure:

- Ask your client to consider all possible outcomes of the action they are afraid of taking, then walk through them with her. What is the worst possible thing that could happen? My wife's technique (which we teach in detail in our coach training and certification at www.TryTheProgram.com) called "Wild and Crazy," is a great tool for processing this information. Basically you spend a few minutes enthusiastically brainstorming ways to make the problem WORSE. The worse the better. Then you read them back and look for positive solutions.
- Work with your client to develop a Plan B. Or maybe even a C, D and E. Clients with a fear of failure are more likely to move forward if they have a contingency plan or an escape route. Allow your client time between sessions to knock themselves out thinking about every single thing that can go wrong and developing a contingency for it. Once the plan is made there's no more need for second-guessing and over-analyzing.

Lethargy

Some people just can't seem to get motivated no matter what. They have difficulty getting anything done. Their friends and family think they're lazy. Most people are driven to achieve in some ways, but sometimes negative thinking paralyzes certain people with fear. Try reframing negative thoughts with these clients, but also do the following:

- Tell your client to get a physical. There easily could be something physically or mentally wrong, like depression, adrenal fatigue, heart disease, diabetes, thyroid disease or a variety of other problems that lead to lethargy. Once any health problem is treated, your client can easily bounce back. *(There's nothing worse than assuming a problem is in your head when it's actually in your body. I see coaches do a lot of damage with this type of thinking all the time. So make sure your client has ruled out physical obstacles before you make this assumption please)*
- Determine if your client is using guilt as a motivator. You can usually get a clue because she'll use a lot of language using words like "should" or "ought." Guilt is a temporary motivator for most of us, but over the long term it doesn't work for most people. They find a way to explain away the guilt, ending up exactly where they were before.
- Ask your client to spiff up their wardrobe or change their grooming style. A makeover does wonders to boost self-esteem and can provide that little push to get a client off the sofa. Looking good isn't the answer to the lethargic person's problems, but it can help until you help them find a way to create the intrinsic motivation
- Encourage your client to get organized and to create to-do lists. Tell them to give themselves a reward of one day a week when they don't have to accomplish anything on their list.

Most clients respond to a number of techniques to get (*and stay*) motivated. It's a good idea to find out what makes your client tick and what they respond to. And sometimes long-successful motivations stop working. That's when it's time to reach in your coaching bag of tricks for a new motivation method.

Conclusion

Learning new skills to help your clients stay motivated is imperative for a successful coaching career. There are almost as many techniques as there are clients, so never pass up an opportunity to learn a new way to inspire and challenge your clients. Motivation tends to feed on itself. When your clients start to take action, they make progress toward their goals. The more progress they make the more likely they are to keep pushing forward. And pushing forward *always* equals growth and achievement!



Glenn Livingston, Ph.D.

FREE BOOK How to Motivate Your Coaching Clients



Sharon Livingston, Ph.D.

The
New York
Times

Entrepreneur

ADWEEK

C
CRAIN'S
NEW YORK BUSINESS

Originally trained as a psychologist, Dr. Glenn Livingston has helped literally thousands of clients. Along with his wife Sharon, he's sold consulting, teambuilding, and workshops to big names like AT&T, Nextel, Panasonic, Whirlpool, Novartis, Lipton, Colgate-Palmolive, Kraft, and Panasonic. Their work, research, and theories have been seen in major media publications like The New York Times, Entrepreneur Magazine, Crain's NY Business, AdWeek, America West, and more!

"According to Our Students We Run One of the Most Powerful Certification Programs for Coaches Who Want to Grow a Thriving Practice...And Now You Can TEST-DRIVE It for a \$25 One Time Payment!"



© Psy Tech Inc.
All Rights Reserved

DISCLAIMER: For education only as per the Disclaimer and Terms of Use Agreement on www.CoachCertificationAlliance.com (If you do not agree, Psy Tech Inc. is unwilling to license you the use of these materials)