

# HOW TO START A COACHING BUSINESS AND MAKE IT SUCCESSFUL!



THE FULLY BOOKED COACH  
TIM BROWNSON

# HOW TO START A COACHING BUSINESS

## and make it successful

### Introduction

if you're reading this then I'm sure you have said to yourself at some stage, *I want to be a coach.*

A great many people have.

But, the sad reality is that most of the people who want to become a fully booked coach are woefully unprepared for what lies ahead.

They believe all that's needed is a burning desire to help others and to maybe take a cheap online course and acquire an almost meaningless certification.

Alas, that wasn't the case when I started back in 2005, and it most definitely isn't the case today.

It's hard to get coaching clients.

Really hard!

I wouldn't be surprised in the least if there are literally (and I do mean *literally*) more people claiming to be coaches than there are people looking to hire one.

**Scary eh?**

**Well, yes and no.**

The bad news is, supply far outstrips the current demand for coaches.

The good news is, that most coaches are very poor at marketing and never succeed in building a practice.

As such, you don't have to be a marketing genius to be considerably better than 95% of coaches wondering how to get paying clients.

You just have to be prepared to learn and implement the basics of marketing to be well on your way to becoming a fully booked coach.

Just being competent with your marketing will help you enormously in getting more clients and building a successful practice.

And being **good** at marketing will **ensure** you become successful because as I never tire of saying...

**A great coach who doesn't know how to market her business will not be able to keep up with a poor coach who does.**





# How to start a coaching business from scratch

To paraphrase the Chinese proverb, the best time to start marketing for your coaching business was the moment you knew you wanted to become a fully booked coach. The second-best time is now.

With this ebook, I'm going to outline a process for launching a sustainable coaching practice. I do not talk about training, I'm going to presume you're a competent coach. If you're not, then **check out Lumia**.

There is no timescale for this process. But as a rule of thumb, the longer you give yourself the more chance you have to dot all the i's and cross all the t's.

If you're just about to start, great, you can follow fairly closely.

However, if you are somewhere else on your coaching journey, maybe you have launched your website and it's just not working, for example, I have two words for you:

**Don't panic!**

There's nothing you have done that cannot be changed and nothing that cannot be improved upon.

There will be elements of this you will have done, just ignore those (presuming they're working that is).

There will also be elements you can't be bothered with, or don't want to do.

Do them anyway.

**So take a deep breath and let's dive in!**





# STAGE

## Figure out your niche

Here are a few advantages of having a coaching niche on your way to building a successful coaching business, other than just standing out from the crowd and they are:

- 1. You can charge more for your coaching service**
- 2. It's simpler to find and hone in on your target market on social media**
- 3. Writing blogs posts and other articles is more straightforward**
- 4. You can position yourself as an expert in your coaching field more easily**
- 5. It keeps you focused**

When figuring out a coaching niche, forget about what you're good at. *Unless* that is, you love what you're good at as that really is the sweet spot.

With over 20 years of experience working in sales both B2C (business to consumer) and B2B (business to business) at a high level, I would have had a lot of credibility as a sales coach.

But that ignores one very important factor.

I didn't want to work with salespeople – I'd had enough of the entire industry.

If your experience and coaching skills align with your coaching niche then fantastic, you're on to a winner when it comes to building your coaching business.

If not, then you need to look elsewhere in the online industry. Or, you need to review more coaching niches.

## Ask yourself this question:

*If my phone were to ring now and it was a client with the kind of problems that has me silently dancing around the room and pumping the air with delight whilst trying to sound professional,*

**WHAT WOULD THEY BE SAYING?**

**That's your niche.**





STAGE

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## Website design, domain name & photography

I am not in favour of you designing and building your own website. Unless that is, you have some serious design skills.

If you're looking to start a coaching business in the online world then your website will be your shop window. It will be your hub to attract clients.

As such, your website needs not only to impress people but be able to convert target audience onto your newsletter list, and then into new clients.

My website is the engine of my coaching business and almost all of my paying clients come from it in some way, shape, or form.

The same will apply to you and you cannot afford to roll the dice if you're to become a fully booked coach.



If it sucks it will not only kill any chances of you becoming a successful coach but worse still, it will do so silently without you even knowing it.

Nobody will call you to say that they're not sure what your coaching niche is, didn't resonate with your unprofessional selfie, or didn't fully understand how you could help them.

If you're a good designer AND you understand UX (user experience) and UI (user interface) AND you understand the basics of SEO, then sure, do it yourself.

If you have literally none of those skills and no money, then do one of these three things:

- **Put things on hold until you can save some money because whether you pay for a website or not, you do need cash to run a business**

- **Find a designer who would be willing to exchange services – I have done this loads of times for all sorts of things including 3 websites**

- **Go on a site like UpWork or Fiverr and see if you can find a young up-and-coming designer who looks like she does good work, but is still cheap because she hasn't built enough work history yet**

This really is important because we are at a stage in the evolution of the internet where you're probably better off not having a website than one that's awful – and I'm not even joking.

## Hire a photographer



Good photographs can make or break a website.

Using a selfie you've taken on your iPhone looks unprofessional at best.

I hate, hate, hate having my photo taken.

But we're in the connection business and people want to see you warts and all.

Or in my case, bald head and old face and all, so I have pictures of me in this ebook and on my website.

The photos on my site are the first ones I have ever paid for. On previous sites, I did as I suggested above, exchanged coaching services with photographers.

So, if cash is an issue call some local photographers and offer them some of your brilliant coaching sessions in return for them doing your photography. Win/win!

## Register the domain name for your coaching practice

You're going to need a **domain name for your website** and the sooner you start looking the better.

Descriptive domain names like coachthelifecoach.com (the old name of The Fully Booked Coach) used to be incredibly useful for SEO (search engine optimisation) purposes.

But that's no longer the case.

Unless you have some killer EMD (exact match domain) like lifecoach.com it's unlikely to give you much of a leg up.

Sadly, all the great domains are long gone unless that is you opt for a newer TLD (top-level domain) and go for something like a *.coach*.

These can be a tad pricey, but they give you more options if you're really serious about becoming a fully booked coach and see it as your long-term future.

Just make sure your domain isn't too long and is as relevant as you can make it without being too contrived.

If you want to write a book or do public speaking in the future, it's probably wisest to use your name as your domain, presuming you have it or it's available.

It will be easy for people to remember and avoid any confusion.

Another advantage of using your own name is that if you change your niche it won't mean you have to buy a new domain name.

***Note:** Certain TLDs have been abused by spammers. .info, .top. and .fit for example. If you have any doubts, email [tim@thefullybookedcoach.com](mailto:tim@thefullybookedcoach.com) or ask in the **Fully Booked Coach Facebook group***



STAGE

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## Plan your social media

I have a marvellous TV.

It's a 65" Hi-Def 4K Sony and I fucking love it!

I can turn it on like a boss.

Can whip through channels faster than my youngest dog can eat her dinner.

And I even know how to adjust the sound so it's not too loud and not too quiet.

But here's the thing.

**I have no clue how it works.**

None whatsoever.

It's like magic to me.

My guess is, you know how to use social media. But you probably don't know how it works.





And I'm not talking about the source code and algorithms that drive it, but how to actually make it work for you.

I'm referring to building an engaged target audience that will supply you with a few clients as you figure out how to start a coaching business.

Before you dive in headlong on any social media platform posting pointless quotes and memes with gay abandon, learn how to use it successfully.

## To begin with:

Pick one,  
or **maybe** two,  
social media platforms  
where your potential  
clients will be hanging out.

Then learn them inside out  
before you move on to any  
others.

It's okay to open accounts on as many social media platforms as you like under your name, in fact, I recommend it.

Just really focus on one or two because otherwise you'll overwhelm yourself and end up doing everything badly.



# This is the time to do your market research rather than just diving in.

Taking the information you have from working on your niche, where do your ideal coach clients hang out?

**Note:** I go much deeper into helping you figure out your niche in my free book [\*\*3 Pillars to Becoming a Fully Booked Coach\*\*](#)

What platforms do your target audience naturally gravitate to?

What Facebook groups are they in?

What content do they like, share and engage with?

Who are the people they already follow?

**Hint:** You should be following them too.

Watch, read and learn.

Do your research.

And gradually start to engage people through your social media posts.

Do not pitch your private coaching, or start spamming people via DM. Just look to help and offer value, support and maybe some advice if and when appropriate.





**STAGE**

## **Choose an ESP (email service provider)**

You're going to need a platform for delivering your newsletter emails.

Don't consider using Outlook or Gmail because you'll get hit for spamming people. Get a professional account.

**I use Active Campaign and I love it.**

I have previously used Constant Contact and Aweber and both were okay, just not quite as good

I have had a lot of coaching clients use MailChimp and it's totally fine, but whereas it used to offer a great free version, this is no longer the case.

The free MailChimp offering doesn't give you the ability to run an autoresponder sequence as was once the case and you must have one.

An autoresponder allows you to schedule emails for new subscribers so that you can gently onboard them with your best content.

They are free ESPs like MailerLite which may suffice to begin with, but if you're serious about becoming a coach and in it for the long haul then it may make sense to invest in a robust scalable ESP.

**If you're to going to build your coaching practice successfully then your newsletter is going to be critical, so take it seriously.**





**STAGE**

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## Develop your lead magnet and write content

Your lead magnet is going to be imperative as you strive to start a coaching business. You are now reading one of my lead magnets.

Also known as a bribe, or freebie, it's the gift that you kindly give to every soul good enough to give you their email address, like I did to you.

It was easy getting people to subscribe to your newsletter list back in the early 2000s.

**Here's how you did it.**

*'Hey, do you want to sign up for my newsletter?'*

*'Yes please'*

*'Great, fill in this form'*

Now people are more protective of their (main) email address than they are of their firstborn.

If they are to give it to you there better be a damn good reason and 'Join my mailing list for free updates' won't even cut the mayonnaise, never mind the mustard.

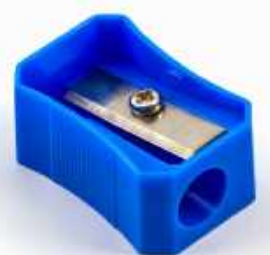
A lead magnet can be your online courses in the form of an ebook, an e-course, an audiobook, an audio course, a free report, or even a video course.

It can be anything you like with the proviso that it can be delivered electronically, is relevant to what you do and the recipient, and has real value.

A 500-word blog post converted to a PDF may get people on your list if you big it up enough.

But the resulting sense of disappointment when they open their exciting gift and see something so worthless will create a swift adieu as they unsubscribe.

## Write, write and write some more



If you're going to start an online coaching business successfully then you're going to have to write...a lot. (Or master AI platforms like ChatGPT!)

You can (and should) do podcasts and/or videos because both can be highly effective, but if you cannot write, then how are you going to tell people about your coaching program?



## **If you think your writing sucks, then it probably does.**

I can still remember the day I first picked up a golf club and hit a drive 320 yards off the first tee straight down the middle of the fairway.

## **Er, no I can't because it never happened.**

Just making contact with the ball no matter where it went was a cause for celebration.

Writing (and making videos) is a skill and like any skill, you will suck to begin with. But you will get better the more you do it. If you're already a good writer, awesome, you're about to move from good to great.

And if you do intend to start a podcast, there's no reason you can't start recording interviews now so that you can then drip-feed them when you go live.

Something else you may want to consider that has helped me build my business.

**Have somewhere you can record every idea** for a newsletter or even a social media post that pops into your head before you forget them.

That way, you will have a treasure trove of great ideas for the days when you can barely remember your name.





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## **Publish your website and lead magnet**

But, but, but.....I've not finished my coach training yet, I'm not ready to start an online coaching business Tim.'

### **Here's a bad problem**

You launch your website when you need to generate income and you can't even hear the crickets through the hurricane of tumbleweed blowing through.

### **Here's a good problem**

You launch your website before you complete your coach training and somebody wants to hire you even though you think you may not be quite ready.

You can offer pro bono private coaching or reduced-price coaching if you like.

You can refer your first client to another coach as you look to build your confidence.

Or, you can say you're booking 3 or even 6 months out and if they'd like to join your waiting list then you'd love to work with them when you're ready.

It's unlikely you will get inquiries to begin with, but what you will get if you have hired a decent designer is Google nosing around your site like a curious puppy sniffing a warm pair of smelly socks.



Hmm' it thinks, 'a new site, I'd better index it'

Then it will probably pop back a few weeks later and if you have new content it will index that too.

The more new content you offer it, the more it will come back. It takes a while to get your site indexed so don't wait until you need traffic.

Also, because you now have your newsletter set up you can have that integrated into your site so any people looking for a coach who stumbles across your site can sign up for your newsletter.



STAGE

## Write your intake forms & terms of service

If you have had good training you may well have been supplied with a template to use for your client onboarding forms.

If not, there are paid services such as [The Coaching Tools Company](#) which supply a huge array of different forms for anybody wanting to start a coaching business.

You can also opt for coaching-specific CRM (customer relationship management) system that combines booking, billing, intake forms, and almost anything else you may need.

In my experience, these tend to be expensive and you're paying for the convenience rather than the functionality. But they can be useful if you can afford them.

For your terms of service, you can pay an attorney/solicitor to draw them up.

Or you can email [tim@thefullybookedcoach.com](mailto:tim@thefullybookedcoach.com) and I'll send you mine which you can then edit accordingly.

Mine are sent via email and I won't work with any client who doesn't sign and return them.

You can use an official document signing service online but they will cost you money.

And it's probably money you don't actually need to spend as you build your coaching business.



STAGE

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## Set up your accounting

If you're anything like me, then you're going to need an accountant if you want to start a coaching business.

They make it easy to track your business expenses.

However, this is one area where I'd say if you're good with numbers and any local financial legal requirements, then, do it yourself.

You're going to need a business bank account and then probably an online service like PayPal and/or Stripe. PayPal isn't the cheapest but they are universally known and trusted by most users.

I use PayPal and it's dead simple to issue invoices and set up recurring billings, or monthly payment plans.

Note: You can use a service like BACs in the UK or ACH in the US, but if you offer products or have recurring payments, then PayPal and Stripe are probably better suited.





But, taking payments through an API (application programming interface) so that people can pay on my site for a course or coaching mastermind has been more problematic.

For that reason, I have migrated some automated payments to Stripe.

With Stripe the payments are processed and then deposited into your bank account, whereas with PayPal you have to move money manually and hope they don't put a hold on it.

There are other options and I'm sure some are good, but even if I were setting up again now from scratch I think I'd still use Paypal for my manual payments.





**STAGE**

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## Open a Zoom and scheduling service account

**I really cannot say enough good things about Zoom,**

I've been using it since 2016 and where the service isn't quite where it was pre-pandemic, it's still a fantastic and highly reliable service.

I've used it for sales calls, one-on-one coaching, masterminds, and other coaching sessions to ensure my client and I are on the same page. It works well, even when my internet connection sucks - which it frequently does.

If you have already used it (and you probably have) then you will know what I mean, but if you haven't, think of Skype.

But a Skype that actually works every time and offers good technical support.

Plus, if you offer group coaching and training at any point you can have as many as 100 people on a call.

I never do telephone private coaching these days because Zoom is so good and so easy for even the most techie-challenged people to use.

I use Calendly for my one on one scheduling and it's as brilliant as Zoom, although the support isn't that great.

As a rule, I only tend to use it for people to book coaching consults as I prefer to be more flexible for my coaching clients.

## SEE WHAT MY BOOKING PAGE LOOKS LIKE HERE

Having said that, if I'm playing email tag with a client I do have a calendar link I can send them.

Not only does Calendly synch with Apple iCal (it will also sync with Google Calendar), but it also syncs with Zoom.

Anybody wanting to start a coaching business and have me help them can **click on this link** and find a date that fits them.

It will then ask them to fill in a few questions so I have a bit more information about their current situation.

Then it sends them an email confirmation with the link as well as populating all the details in my calendar and sending me an email.

They will then get a reminder prior to the call.

Calendly is so flexible and has so many options that it's a total no-brainer for me and at around \$100 it's a total bargain.

***Note:** I used to use Acuity and it was ok, but Calendly is slightly cheaper and a little simpler to use.*



## Purchase Insurance (maybe)

If you are never going to coach face-to-face coaching or run any in-person events and you plan to utilize a business model that's completely online, then you **probably** don't need insurance.

Even though it's not actually a bad idea for coaching businesses to get insurance if money isn't super tight.

The chances of you getting sued for being a bad coach even in this litigious society are remote.

I've never heard of it happening to any online coaching businesses I know (if you have, then please email [tim@thefullybookedcoach.com](mailto:tim@thefullybookedcoach.com) and let me know)

Especially if you make sure that all your clients sign your terms of service and **you never do any of the following:**

1. Offer financial advice
2. Offer medical advice, or give a medical diagnosis
3. Offer nutritional advice
4. Be lewd or suggestive
5. Threaten to have your client murdered if she's late for another meeting

In other words, be sensible and you should be good to go.

However, if you are meeting people in person, or they are coming to your house then you need some form of liability insurance.

If they trip up and put their head through your expensive glass coffee table then you probably need to put a claim in.

Oh, and call them an ambulance.



## Now put the champagne on ice

Most of the hard work should be done by this stage and you're ready to launch.

Keep stoking the social media fire and telling people you're about to launch and allow yourself to get all excited.

Start making a list of people who are your friends online because you're going to need their help come launch day.

## Run around like a headless chicken

This is it, this is the day you have worked so hard to get to and now the fun starts.

Hopefully, your site has been launched for a while, but whether it has or whether it hasn't, that doesn't affect what you do now.

Have a fantastic blog post ready to go and you hit publish as soon as you bounce out of bed.

Then call in every online favour you can think of.

And then some you can't.



Hopefully, over the previous few months, you have been helping other people on social media and being a resource and now you can ask for their help in return.

There is zero wrong with asking people to share your stuff on Facebook, LinkedIn, or retweeting on Twitter etc.

Presuming that is you didn't 'meet' them 5 minutes ago and you're just looking to tap into the followers.

If I have people who I know have helped me ask me for my help I'm grateful to have the chance to reciprocate.

The online world is a busy one and I don't want to miss an opportunity to give back to somebody because I had no clue they were launching.

You want to build momentum and traffic to your blog and get as many eyes on your genius as possible.





# Feel deflated



## WTF?

Seriously Tim? Why would I feel deflated?

It's unlikely all that action will lead directly to more clients and you will probably think your efforts to start a coaching business were a big fat waste of time.

Seth Godin calls this 'The Dip' and it almost always happens after any business launch.

**But if you're expecting it, you can manage it.**

So, pick your chin up off the ground Tiger because now the real work starts.

This is your opportunity to separate yourself from all those other coaches that think succeeding at this is a walk in the park.

**It absolutely was worth your effort because you are now a professional coach!**

**NEXT**

# **STEP**

## **Hire a marketing coach**

This really should have been the first point, especially for new coaches, because the sooner you get help the better.

But if I'd had it right at the beginning it would have looked like nothing more than a lame sales pitch and it really isn't.

I know 90% of people wanting to start a coaching business cannot afford me and if that is you, then I still want to help with my blog at [TheFullyBookedCoach.com](http://TheFullyBookedCoach.com) and through my newsletter.

But I genuinely believe that every coach trying to build their own business should have their own coach.

Since I first took the huge decision to hire a coach back in 2007 I have hired eight more and I'm rarely not working with my own coach.

Some have been better than others, but every single one of them helped me in some way. An experienced coach is your short cut to success in the same way as it has been mine.

Don't be the coach who thinks you don't need a coach because you undermine everything you do. Coaches fail because of this mindset.

A coach not working with a coach is like a hairdresser with a combover, or a dentist with half his teeth missing.

Yes, I think you should hire me as I have done what you want to do.

But, if you think I'm not a good fit, then that's totally fine, find another coach.

**But do hire a coach - you need one!**

Almost all the successful people you see coaching, have sought help from other coaches

**And you need that help too.**

[www.thefullybookedcoach.com](http://www.thefullybookedcoach.com)  
[tim@thefullybookedcoach.com](mailto:tim@thefullybookedcoach.com)



**Book a Consult here**