How to secure your first paying coaching client

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**SPEAKERS**

Zoe Hawkins, Jo Wheatley

**Zoe Hawkins** 00:03

The Coaching Crowd podcast is for compassionate courageous leaders, HR professionals and high achievers, people who are passionate about helping others to find alignment in their lives through coaching, and do a thinking of training and developing as a coach.

**Jo Wheatley** 00:20

Hello, and welcome to the Coaching Crowd podcast with me, Jo Wheatley, and my friend and co host Zoe Hawkins.

**Zoe Hawkins** 00:26

Hi, everybody. We are here this week to talk about how to secure your first paying clients, which is a question that we get asked, well, many, many, many times by coaches who are finally finishing up their coaching and stepping out into the world of either side hustle or self employment. And whilst there is no one solution to this, we do have some ideas that hopefully can help you to get going with getting your first paying clients. And I think the first thing that comes to my mind, which is something I did, all those years ago, when I stepped out at the end of my coaching training is to literally tell everybody that I knew what I was now doing. And whilst that can feel quite intimidating at the time, this for me, it was about really stepping into that identity as a coach. So I think I prepared an email and sent it to my network. And the most valuable piece of that email was about asking for help, though it was about saying, This is what I am now doing. If you know anybody who has work of this kind, please, could you connect me or put me in touch, I'd love to have some conversations. And I was astounded by the amount of people that came forward to help and support me with connections, suggestions of who to reach out to places to go, it was probably one of the best things I did to get off the ground from zero clients to having a good number of things in the pipeline for when I was getting going. How about you, Joe, what was the first thing you did?

**Jo Wheatley** 02:00

For me, it's, it's even that step before, it's about sharing your passion for personal development and supporting others. And being authentic and reliable, and all of demonstration are those kinds of qualities when you are in your paid role. So that as you are kind of exploring coaching, even thinking about coaching, training, tell people that you're thinking about doing it while you're thinking about doing it. When you sign up for the training, bring people on that journey with you. When you take on clients on your training, often it's pro bono, but it may also be paid if you've got insurance in place. So if you're doing pro bono first tell people it will be limited, I'm only coaching these clients on a pro bono basis, then I will be charging so that there's clarity around that. So people know if they're going to contact you after that, that it's paid for clients that you coach on a pro bono basis, we find with coachees on our training courses, that a lot of their clients want to continue coaching with them beyond the hours that they've had on the programme as pro bono. And so then they often become their first not only their first paying clients, but also their first testimonials, as well. And then outside of that, as you've described, reaching out to your network, telling them that you're doing this, there are obvious things like being visible, being consistent, bringing yourself and your own personality to the table establishing yourself as an expert in a particular area. Not worrying about how many likes you've got but just more making sure that people understand that if they're in X situation that you are the person for them, or if they know somebody that might be needing that kind of support that they could come to you and tell people the best way to contact you because sometimes that's the barrier is they'll see somebody that how do I reach out to them? Is it okay to drop into their DMs? Or do I need to email them? Or is there a phone number? So how do you make it easy for clients to have an initial conversation with you? And are you clear that you have a discovery call or a chemistry call? And how do they buy from you? That's another step that I think I remember starting out as like how on earth do I What do I do for the clients to pay me? How do I create an invoice? What's the process for that and obviously now there are many different platforms that you can use that can make that easy. And that you can integrate into your own website or maybe you'll have a different method of payments. So securing your first paying client is also about how they can actually pay you. You've mentioned

**Zoe Hawkins** 04:38

so many things I think there that are useful so if you breaking it down. I think that when you're trying to have a coach because you are really passionate about coaching and you've experienced firsthand the power of coaching you just think or everybody everybody wants and needs coaching. In reality, I think it's a really big step for somebody to sign up to a Coach, and it's even a bigger step for somebody to sign up to a coach that they don't know. And so when you think about who are my first paying clients, they're likely first to come from people who know people who know you. So it's that immediate network, or if it's going to be brand new clients, then they do need to be able to get to know you in some way. So as you talk there about being visible, Jo, I know many coaches, maybe social media shy. But personally, one of my beliefs is you really do need to show visibility somewhere, if you want to get paying clients on a consistent and regular basis. Where else are they going to come into contact with you. So it might be that you do this offline at different networking groups, but you've got to be visible somewhere. If you're not willing to be visible, then no one's going to know that you exist. And we've been on a journey with this over the 12 years, I remember, very early days of business, we literally had the discussion, Oh, if only people knew that we existed. It was like, Yeah, like there's the business strategy. And since we became visible and continue to be visible, our business has radically transformed. And so choosing somewhere to be visible and consistently being visible, is, is just fundamental to being able to secure paying clients. And then the second piece, and I see a lot of coaches, on a journey with this is coaching is a process. People rarely are walking around the street, saying, I really must book some coaching. I'd really like some coaching coaches, obviously know about coaching. So that's what they talk about. Most people will be walking around the street going, I hate my job, I really wish I could find a job that was going to light me up. Or they're saying, I would love to have a new relationship this year, I'd but I don't even know where to start. Or I really would like to be able to feel good about my body. You know, those are the conversations that clients are having. And so we know that coaching is an excellent process for solving those problems. But those clients don't necessarily know that. So when you are being visible, and you're talking about this wonderful service that you have, you need to be talking about the problems that you solve, and the solutions that you offer. And therefore this thing called coaching, not the other way around, because I see a lot of people leading with coaching. And there are still so many people who don't know what coaching is and how it can best help them. So that piece around niching, which we've talked about on previous businesses, whilst it may take you a while to niche, it's really important that you pay attention to the conversation that you're having, and make it accessible to people who are having those everyday conversations.

**Jo Wheatley** 07:52

I mean, there are other ways to secure your first paying client, you might decide to offer different levels of ways for people to engage with you. So when we talk about your first paying client, it may not even be in coaching. So you might have set up a coaching business or predominantly a coaching business, maybe it's more of a consultancy, and your first client might still engage with you for your maybe more your original area of expertise. Let's say you worked in HR as an example. And they want you to do a scoping piece of work or something like that. But actually what comes out of that is the need for coaching. And so that then becomes your first piece or like one of our first pieces of work was designing elearning for another organisation. And it was founded on coaching principles. But that was our client. And the one to one clients that we had for coaching actually came through corporate. So again, that wasn't an individual coming, direct. But when I think about the point in time where because I'm looking at the word secure, you know, haven't written down what we're talking about here. How do you secure your first paying clients security is such a big thing for new coaches, isn't it feed achieving financial security, feeling secure in the identity that you are a coach, that you provide value and that you can feel good about the exchange that you have with your clients? So I'm thinking about that point at which people come and ask you to do something that isn't coaching or isn't like what you primarily do? And then you feel like I am known like I am trusted and they trust that even though this is the primary thing I do, they also believe that I can offer value here. So flexibility I think is what I'm saying is important sometimes in terms of securing your first paying client. I think what

**Zoe Hawkins** 09:41

you've talked about there around the different things that clients might work for you for, for somebody to invest in like a full package of coaching might be a leap too far but they may invest in a one off. I don't know we see power hours don't we all focus goal setting or whatever it is in the niche that you work in making something that's more accessible as a taster of like, Oh, I've heard I've heard about this person, I think they could really help me, I'm not quite ready to invest in that package. But yeah, I could probably invest in in that hour with them. So, you know, creating offers that enable people to sample your experience can help to build confidence. And then I think a level down from that, which I think we've talked on previous podcasts about these concepts called lead magnets, which are free resources for clients to be able to get to know you hear what you're about, build some trust and faith and confidence in what you offer, and then eventually sign up to something that is paid. And you listening to this podcast. In many ways, this is a lead magnet, we know that many people will be listening to this, who will become clients of ours, in one or more of our programmes at some point, many of you won't, and that's okay. We love the fact that we can give value for free to those who aren't able to access paid services. And we enjoy meeting those people who do become clients. So it's not creating a lead magnet for the sole purpose of getting clients. It's about thinking about who Who do I want to offer something to how can I be of service? And how can I be valuable, and therefore then some of them converting into some of your paid services. That's how we approach the sort of lead magnet mentality to make sure that we are there offering value and in doing so, bring clients into our world in that way.

**Jo Wheatley** 11:36

And I think the final thing to say for now on this is about patience. So, you know, if you stop comparing yourself to other people, and you know, the other person on your course, that's already sharing that they've got three paid clients, well, they may have started talking to people about this years ago, that they're going to do it and had people lined up saying, When are you going to leave, because we've got some stuff we really want you to do. You might have only not had that thought before you've started doing this, and you're at the very start of your journey. And what we see people doing is then panicking, and thinking, I'm doing these things, then they panic, it's not the right thing. So they stopped doing those things, they start doing other things, as bit of a scattergun approach, people that are watching them on, you know, social media or their journey, maybe thinking about joining them, then they're like, obviously, what are you doing now? Are you still doing that? Or are you now coaching these other people, so whilst you're going to tweak things, it's also about really backing yourself in the process, you know, being clear, giving yourself a runway into coaching, so making sure that you have got some financial security so that you can plug away at the activities and choose the things that bring you joy. So if you don't like being on video, maybe a podcast is for you as a regular way to build your audience, or you create a group or a community because you enjoy the dynamics of that. And you can be in there in the evenings, maybe more than the daytime, or, or so on. But patience is key, I think, because the activities and the visibility pieces that you do, people are watching, and they are wanting you to succeed. I think that's another core piece around this is believing that people are out there and they want to work with you, you can add value, and they are watching. We had a big learning curve early on in our careers, which was, it's actually quite a long lead in to getting clients particularly when you're first starting out in business. But then the risk is you get the work and then you take your eye off other people knowing that you exist.

**Zoe Hawkins** 13:38

I have a really classic example of that that's happened in the last few weeks. So I would say five years ago, I went and did a presentation at a law firm about the value of coaching, I think it was on transactionality drivers, and struck up a relationship there with somebody. Five years later, this person has recommended me to somebody in their network who has come forward for private coaching. Now, I'm not saying you have to wait five years for your first paying client. What we're saying is all of the activities that you are doing now will pay off. It just may not be obvious to you in the here and now because you're coming from a place of luck. But if you come from a place of believing that what you're doing is working paying attention to the feedback that you're getting, tweaking but not pivoting every two months, but continuing to tweak and refine your message. Those results will come and if you feel that you want some help and support for growing and developing your business with many people in a similar situation to you growing and developing their coaching business in our coaching crowd business lounge. We'd love for you to come and check that out at IG company.co.uk forward slash lounge Thank you for listening to the coaching crowd podcast with Zoe Hawkins and Jo Wheatley. We'd love you to join our inclusive community to learn and grow in the coaching space go over to Facebook and search for the coaching crowd to be in good company with other aspiring coaches