How long should a coaching session be final edit

Sun, Apr 16, 2023 10:38PM • 14:10

**SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

coaching, session, coach, client, hour, coaching session, programme, minutes, work, learn, laser, transformational coaching, boundaries, arrive, conversation, package, achieve, podcast, joe, voxer

**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. Hello, and welcome to the coaching crowd podcast with me Zoe Hawkins and my friend and co host, Jo Wheatley.

**Jo Wheatley** 00:27

Hi, everybody. Great to be with you today. Today, the topic that we are discussing is how long should a coaching session be? I think people that are new to the coaching world, you know, wonder that or if they're engaging with a coach, it's like, how long should I look for the sessions to be? How many sessions would there be? So we thought we'd talk about the practicalities of that today.

**Zoe Hawkins** 00:48

Absolutely. And I guess we start with on our programme, what we teach people is to be able to learn a transformational coaching programme, where there are six sessions, which are 1.5 hours in length, you know, so that is kind of a standard package. That is how we started out coaching, you know, with our clients offering packages of nine hours and one and a half hours, I would say it's a, it's a luxurious amount of space to do coaching, you don't have to rush, you can achieve a number of different coaching, activities within that and also do a real deep dive, I guess, into the topic that your client might want to focus on in that session. So I really enjoy those hour and a half sessions, because the pace for me feels comfortable, you know, I don't feel rushed as a coach. And I don't think my client feels rushed, as a client either to have to have something neatly wrapped up like there's plenty of time to work through the different phases of a coaching conversation. So that's usually our starting point, with certainly our learners. And that was the starting point with us as practitioners as well.

**Jo Wheatley** 01:55

Yeah, and the learners initially feel like an hour and a half, how on earth am I going to know what to do to fill an hour and a half. And then, obviously, as they cover content on the course, and then they get used to coaching and they start working in their triads, and then they're like, how do I fit all of this into an hour and a half. And then there's that recalibration. So as you were saying, so by the time you've had like a 15 minute check in, so that's the client arriving, the two of you kind of greeting each other, exploring maybe what's happened since the last time that you were together, and the client then has landed into the session, and the two of you have oriented to what you're going to be focused on in that session. If you take quarter of an hour at the end of the session, as you're wrapping up and reviewing what you've discussed today, the progress that you've made, the client has made towards their goals, you might be talking around what the focus is going to be in the next session, that leaves you with an hour in the middle of that to maybe focus in and deep dive on a particular aspect of the client's goal or the gap that they've got to achieve their goal. Or maybe it's more of an exploration and really discovering those things. So that's why that tends to feel nice and airy. And it's great for transformational coaching, where you're doing deeper work around the client's beliefs. That's what we tend to mean by transformational so that creating change at that level for the client enables them to really develop their own inner coach so that when future challenges arise, they are able to to self coach and not feel the need to come back to coach Yeah, believe

**Zoe Hawkins** 03:28

it or not, like I remember us overrunning this hour and a half. It took that learning, didn't it? I remember us in these early days having conversations around Gosh, how do we keep it contained to an hour and a half, like something interesting always comes up like right towards the end of the session, I feel a need to work with it. And I think as a coach, what you forget, I think around some of the skills that you learn in being a coach to actually time management is really important because you have to respect not only your own time and your own boundaries, but your coaches time as well. And I think sometimes you can go into coaching with the mindset of like, I'm giving value, I want to give more and more value. So if my coachee brings something at the end of the session, then I really want to deal with that with them because that's more value. But what you're forgetting is often the people you're coaching lead busy lives and have very full lives, they may have a pattern of not honouring their own boundaries. And so you can accidentally play into their their script, right, their actual problem that they're coming to coaching to help resolve by not respecting the boundary of time. And so regardless of the length of your session, time management is really important. saying that out loud I'll have some clients listening to this going on sometimes my session is over you know, I'm so I'm not sat here saying that I get that right every time. You know, sometimes my sessions will overrun and sometimes I'm really disciplined. And with time and in supervision, I'm always exploring why outcome like, why is that? So it's something that I think is useful for all of us as coaches to remember that it's not just about the skills of questioning and listening and developing, you know, that ability to genuinely coach, the practicalities around coaching are also up for debate too.

**Jo Wheatley** 05:22

Yeah, that comes to the coach pacing the client through the session. So where I gave the example of like the amount of time to check in and the amount of time to check out and then spending time in the middle, if you're very transparent with your client around that. So at the beginning, you know, it's great, we've got an hour and a half today, we're together until x time. So we've just spent 15 minutes or 10 minutes checking in whatever it is, we want to hold some time at the end for debriefing on today's session. So then, in the next hour, or hour and 10 minutes, whatever's left, how do you want to engage with this outcome that you want from today's session, so that you're co creating how you use the time together, and you've got that mutual respect of each other's time boundaries. So going back to the hour and a half, it's important to say that that's not the upper limit of a coaching session. So you and I have both run intensive whole day coaching. With clients where we've had a pre session separate to that day, we have a post session, as well. So there's a different, totally different end of the spectrum. And then if we go back the other side, there is something called Laser coaching that is becoming quite popular. And that is where you might have a 15 minute session with your coach. So the way that that's different is when we talk about the hour and a half sessions that will generally for us be on a monthly basis. So we might be working side by side with a client for six months where they have one one and a half hour session per month. With laser coaching, it may be that a client engages with you as a coach over a three month period or a one month period. And during that period of time, your coaches are able to book into your diary for these 15 minute laser coaching sessions. So it would be on something very specific that they want to explore. I think it's possible with the time pressure for a coach that then those sessions could become a little bit more mentoring, than coaching, because of the pressure that you've got. But obviously for very disciplined coaches, that won't be the case, and they will be able to coach that. So I think it's about really making sure that the client understands what they're getting from the different length of sessions as well as the different style of coach that you are.

**Zoe Hawkins** 07:43

And I think with laser coaching, typically those sessions would be quite content free. So you can spend a lot of time in, in story in coaching sessions, you know, where your client may arrive and wants to tell you the ins and outs of their week or conversations that they've had or challenges that they're facing. Whereas when it comes to laser coaching, and you're in and you're like, Hey, how are you arriving today? Great. What do you like to bring today? You don't go into the story, you're just like, right? What, essentially, what's the gap? What are you struggling with? Which bit do you need coaching on in relation to this girl? Okay, let's go. And you can do a huge amount of work, content free and coaching. And we we cover this quite quite well on the programme like some of the content that we offer to clients to coaching each week, we only have 15 to 20 minutes of practice on different activities each week where clients get to use the coaching activities that we are bringing. And in those 15 minutes, what you learn is you can achieve a huge amount in a short space of time. And it limits the amount of story that you can go into. So that can create quite powerful coaching.

**Jo Wheatley** 08:54

I think another aspect of this is on a coach's website, or let's say on my website, you might have the opportunity to book in with me for six one and a half hour sessions if you didn't, but you also have the opportunity to choose or build a bespoke coaching package. So you might be somebody that thinks right, I am transitioning into role of a CEO or a new position. And I think it's going to take me a year to really embed into that role. And I'd like to have the support of a coach during that period as that objective resourcing space, and you might not see that on your coach's website. So there is no there's no reason why you can't approach a coach, if they have a particular package and you want something else and say, you know, I really like you know, I'd love to have chemistry call with you. You're having that conversation. You think oh yeah, I would really love to work with this coach. And to say that I know on your website, you offer this but would you be able to do that. So some clients might think an hour and a half. I can't fit an hour and a half in but I could do 45 minutes and actually I'd prefer to have 45 minutes session every other week. so that it feels like it's got a bit more of the just in time support that I'm looking for, or actually I'd like six one hour sessions rather than an hour and a half. So depends on the coach that you're working with. But certainly you and I are always open to discussion with the clients around what they need based on where they're at, and what it is that they're looking to achieve.

**Zoe Hawkins** 10:19

Yeah, and and what we know is that it's not all about the session, is it that there is stuff that takes place in a session, but the growth of your client is often what happens in between sessions, the actions that they choose to take any homework activities, that they may choose to want to engage in the reflections that take place between sessions. So I think sometimes when you come to coaching or designing your packages, you can think I need to give value, I really want to make my clients feel like they've got, you know a lot to a lot to work with here, it's not really all about the time that is spent in the session. So if you are somebody who actually finds it harder to concentrate for longer periods of time, you may find that actually you are on your best, when you know that you've got half an hour or 45 minutes, don't shy away from offering those shorter sessions, you know, because there will be people who relate to that too. So work with your own energy, in terms of what you want your coaching packages to look like. And think about the range of clients that you may be working with. And, and making it clear that, as Jo, you've described there, there can be different options available.

**Jo Wheatley** 11:30

So what we've been talking about, there are the different lenses of what the client as the coachee needs and wants in terms of the length of time of the sessions and what they're looking to achieve. And then also considering it through the lens of the coach and what's going to fit into your diary. What do you want your diary to look like in terms of length of sessions? How do you manage your energy? How does the client manage their energy? And how do you co create something that's going to really work for both you as the coach and also your client?

**Zoe Hawkins** 11:58

Yeah, and ultimately, you can play with it, can't you, you know, offer a range of different sessions, you know, to experiment for yourself, what do you most enjoy. And, and I do think it tests your skills as a coach. So to be able to coach for an hour and a half is one set of skills to be able to do laser coaching, as you've described earlier, Jo, for 15 minutes are different skills. So if you're looking to challenge yourself and to look into grow and develop as a coach, try out different sort of shapes of your coaching sessions to really see what you can do, and the dexterity of your own coaching, when you arrive at sessions of different lengths.

**Jo Wheatley** 12:38

And of course, you know, there are other ways in which people coach as well. So there's lots of people doing Voxer coaching, which is, you know, shorter again, and more frequent. So, you know, there are lots of ways for you and your the way you're in style and the coach's style. We hear a lot of positive feedback about that we ourselves don't do Voxer coaching. But we know that there are lots of coaches and clients that really enjoy that too. So you and your client get to design the length of the session. And that's really the way to answer the question. There is no really no answer as to how long a coaching session ought to be in order for the client to get the most out of it.

**Zoe Hawkins** 13:18

Yeah. So thanks again for listening. If you've enjoyed this podcast, please come and subscribe rate and review us if you can. We love to hear your feedback on our show.

**Jo Wheatley** 13:29

And if you'd like to learn more about how to design a coaching session or a coaching programme for a client then you are welcome to come and join one of our accredited coaching qualifications and you can find out information about that on our website. Ig company.co.uk.

**Zoe Hawkins** 13:49

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