

Group Coaching Success Club Call Summary

Mentor Coach Interview with Leadership Coach Tim JohnPress

Created by Michelle Schubnel

Tim's Thoughts on Being a Coach: Coaching is a deep calling and a very powerful profession.

Tim's Background: Martial Arts, Engineering, Graduate of Coach University, Certified Practitioner of NLP, Senior Consultant with The Leadership Circle

Tim's Experience Building His Business: I was very unsuccessful for about four or five years. I gave myself a five-year window to really make it, and at about the fifth year, things started to take off. It's been pretty much a rocket-ship ride ever since then. Today I have the opportunity to work all over the world, predominantly working with executives and still taking a lot of the philosophies and the lessons that I learned in the dojo from my master and applying them with my work in coaching.

The Key Skills for Coaches to Be Successful with Group Coaching:

#1- You have to be very, very mindful that when you coach somebody, you're also coaching the system.

The system meaning the individual that you're working with, the relationships that that person has with others; you have to be mindful of the culture of the group or the business; you have to be very, very mindful of the systems and processes that that group operates within. The group coaching has a degree of complexity, because you might have some great advice or some great coaching for somebody one-on-one, which may not quite align or fit with the larger system at play.

So my #1 rule, and what I've learned over many hard lessons and mistakes, is somebody will come to me and they'll say "We have a leader that needs a little bit of help" or "We need them to go to the next level; can you help us?" and I say absolutely, and I also request, will I have access to the people that that person works with? Will I have access to their boss? Will I have access to some of their direct reports? Because when you're coaching an individual, you're also coaching the larger system.

Holding those relationships, being mindful and respectful of the culture and the traditions of the business or the group, is really, really, really important.

So #1 rule in coaching groups is being aware of the system. Be aware of the relationships that people have with one another, be aware of the history that the group may have, be aware of the systems, processes, the structures in which the group plays.

#2 - Be humble and show respect. My master was a Korean master, and they're very big on demonstrating and showing respect. One of my gifts as a coach when I walk into an organization

or into a system is I align myself with the system, even if it's a dysfunctional system or a dysfunctional group.

So the next key is to respect the group or respect the system and what is there. It's not our job to change or tell them what they're doing wrong, or to even acknowledge what they're doing right. It's to demonstrate respect for where they're currently at. When you can do that, when you show the respect for the group and what they are – or even what they are not – you can get aligned with the players, the people in the system or on the team, giving you a little bit more leverage and influence when you decide to start stretching them and challenging them to go to new places.

So this concept of respect the system or respect the group where it is at, even if it's dysfunctional. When you can do that, when you can level set – and the way to do that is by showing deep, deep respect for what is – then your job – and you have a little bit of trust – is to tap the wisdom, the innate wisdom that's in that group.

Common Mistake for New Coaches:

Thinking that we have all the answers, or we know what to do. Well, what took me from a \$50,000 a year coach to \$250,000 coach was one piece of advice. My coach told me, “Tim, let go of everything you think you know about coaching. Get in a relationship with the people, ask them a lot of questions, and tap the wisdom that's already in the room.”

Now, of course we want to bring a couple new ideas and maybe some new practices and things of that nature to the group, but really, the real change and the real leverage is to open up the “space” for the people to share their innate wisdom, their learning, their insights.

The Power of Asking Open Ended Questions and Then Being Silent:

So when we do our work, literally I have people sit in the chair in a circle and I say “What's on your mind? What's important to you today?” And then I sit back and I cross my legs and I smile, and I just wait, and I wait. And there's silence, and everybody's looking at one another. And I wait. And then eventually – eventually – it always happens; somebody speaks up. That's where the ball starts rolling. Then my job as a coach is to keep encouraging the dialogue, the conversation. More of facilitating and lubricating the wheels, so to speak, then to give them things or to do teaching.

There is a ton of potential in groups; our job, in my opinion, as a coach, when you're coaching a group, is to tap that wisdom and have them share it with one another. Have them bring it forth to the room. People won't remember you, but they'll remember you because you allowed them to be themselves.

Having Content Prepared vs. Being Willing To Release The Agenda:

I don't want to dissuade people from having great content, and even bringing great content forth. Every meeting I go into, I always have at least three new things that I want to tee up. Something I learned from one of my McKinsey buddies, he said “always be prepared to release the agenda.”

So I always have agenda; I always have content, skills, skill drills training, and I'm ready to deliver it. I love content. I'm a content junkie. But before I get to my content, I want to make sure that we level set as the group and we tap what's in the room first. I usually get to probably one of the three points in a group session.

About New Business Development / Client Acquisition:

To really be successful, your passion for the work, however that shows up – whether it's helping somebody turn the lights on within or just walking side by side with them, however you serve, it's got to come from a deeper place within other than just taking money.

If I can be respectfully honest, here's #1: if you're in coaching to make a lot of money, and that's your sole purpose, I think you may be frustrated, you may struggle, you may have challenges. That's what I think. That's been my experience. If you're in coaching because you have a higher vision of what's possible for people, if it's a sense of calling for you, I think you're going to be wildly, fabulously successful.

My first five years of struggling was about putting numbers on the board, numbers on the board, cold calling, all that kind of stuff. And I had to ask myself when I was really struggling, "Why am I doing this?" It became more about paying the bills than it did about serving. I got so frustrated I just said, "I give up. I'm just going to talk to people." And that's when things started to turn around.

So #1 is do what it takes to find your deeper sense of purpose behind this work. When you lead from a sense of purpose and serving, the money will come in spades. Seriously. It'll come in bucketfuls. If you're coming to put numbers on the board, I don't know how effective you will be. I'm sure there are people that are, but I really think the next level is about having a passion for this work. To me, it's my religion, it's my spiritual practice, it's my sacred calling. That's how I hold it. I take this work very, very seriously.

So having a deep commitment or passion or sense of calling or purpose, discover that. Find that for yourself. That'll show up in your work with people. It'll sell more engagements, bring more clients than any marketing promotion, things of that nature. That's my belief. That's #1.

#2 – "Uncle Rick's" Advice: "The first thing you need to do is forget everything that you've ever been taught about coaching and second, forget everything you've ever been taught, read, or told about selling. The next opportunity, a lead that you get or somebody who wants to talk to you, I just want you to have a conversation with somebody. I don't want you to try to sell them; I don't want you to talk about coaching. I just want you to ask questions and have a conversation."

Tim implemented this approach with his next lead and after 3 "Conversation Phone Calls" Tim closed the deal on the phone with two guys and it was five times larger than the biggest deal he'd ever sold.

The next lead Tim followed this same approach and after about two or three conversations on the phone, Tim closed the deal for \$250,000 over the phone with a guy that he'd never met about

working with him and his executive team. It was all just about the relationship. The difference between six figure coaches and seven figure coaches is the relationship. Forget about everything else; relate with the person and serve. However you need to serve, if it's a book, if it's giving them a hug, if it's just listening, if it's letting them vent. Serve and just work on deepening the relationship.

If you have the right relationship, you have the latitude to go wherever you need to go as a coach. Exploring the past beliefs, envisioning what's possible in the future, working through personal issues. Because I was always afraid to do those types of things, but if you've got the relationship right, it's like your best friend. You can talk to your best friend about anything. Since then, I've never sold, I've never promoted, I've never done any of these things. My business has grown just by word of mouth.

It's about the relationship, and I cannot stress that enough. New coaches in particular, they get very wound up in the business and they're very committed, and they forget about the real relationship. Well, the relationship is where the magic happens. So that's #2.

#3 - Don't go it alone. That was a big mistake that I made. Find a community of people, such as organizations and systems like this, where you can connect and you can share your ideas and get support. What took me from a \$50,000 a year coach to \$100,000 is I got hooked up with a team of guys and we developed a leadership program. We all grew in confidence and our ability to coach and lead and train, and when I left that organization I found a new community. I went from six figures to multiple six figures, and now pushing towards seven figures. So don't go it alone. I cannot stress that enough. Don't go it alone.

The Best Way to Structure a Phone-Based Group Call:

Before every call that I do. I go through a little ritual, and I just ask myself, "What's my intention for this call?" So internally, I'm already what I call laying down lines of energy of creation, what I'd like to see happen in the call. So I set an intent. I have a structure, but I'm not attached to the structure. I am committed and attached to the intent, and having that be created on the call.

When you have an intent, magic starts to happen. It starts showing up. It starts to want to be created. You as a coach have the ability to influence that kind of activity and energy with the group. No intent, you don't know where it's going to go. It could get a little fragmented, drama might show up, things like that. If you have a clear intent and you hold that intent as a coach, you're able to steer and guide the group to what's going to serve them the best. So that's a little ritual that I go through personally.

When I get people on the call, I have an agenda – and I'll speak to what the agenda is – and I let people know that I'm prepared to release the agenda based on what's most important to the people on the call.

The first five minutes I welcome people: "Hi, this is Tim. You just joined the call," and do a check-in, so give people a chance to check in so you get a lay of the land on who's on the call. That's the first five minutes or so.

Then my next five minutes – and this is how I structure them – I say, “Is there anybody that has something important on their mind, something that they’d like to either have a question be answered, a concept they’d like to explore, or something that’s puzzling to them, that if they got it answered or addressed, would make this call meaningful and valuable for you?” I repeat that like a mantra. “What’s on your plate that would make our time together meaningful and valuable for you?”

Usually I get about maybe 10%, 20% of the people that say “Could we talk about this? Could we talk about this? Could we talk about that?” I make a list and say “Great, thank you.” What I’m doing is I’m having them create the agenda with me, so the buy-in, the focus, their attention increases because now it’s more about them than it is about being on the call. So that’s the next little piece in a group call.

The I go into something I call wins, to sharing wins. Depending on the size of the group, I usually like to hear from as many people as I can. “What’s one thing that you’re proud of? What’s one thing that you’ve learned that you’d like to share, that you’re excited about? What’s something that’s gone well that you’d like to share with the group?” What that does, it sets an energetic tone. It builds up momentum. Getting people to share – again, we love talking about ourselves, so when you give them a chance to own the room, their engagement goes up. It becomes more meaningful for them. So we’ll go through a quick round of wins, having people share what’s working for them or share their progress on projects, things like that.

Permission to Be Messy:

Then I dive into guidelines and say, “Guys, here’s what’s on our plate. Here’s what a few people want to work on.” Just one rule that I have on group coaching – and you can write this down, because it’s a good one: I say, “Permission to be messy. May I have permission from the group to be messy today?” I ask this in almost every class, whether it’s a group call or when I’m teaching, or even when I do keynotes. Permission to be messy. People get a good chuckle out of that. I say, “This work is very creative, it’s very iterative. It’s never 1, 2, 3, A, B, C. My job is to help you get to where you want to be. Sometimes it’s a little messy how we get there. I promise we’re going to get there; just permission to allow the conversation to go where it needs to go.” What that does, it kind of puts people at ease. They have a good laugh, they say, “Okay, good.”

Then we dive into the structure of the call. Now, I always have, as I said earlier, my one to two, maybe three points – maybe I want to teach active listening or maybe I want to talk about how to conduct a strategic planning session. Some piece of new information that I want to share with the group, and I’m completely unattached to sharing that, based on what the group brings forth. So then, great. We’ve got our topics that people have brought to the table; I’ve got my one or two, maybe three points that I’d like to share. We dive into the call.

While I’m doing this, I’m sifting and sorting through the three or four items that people want to focus on, and I’m looking for a way to see if I can weave the three or four items together so that I can get to them all. Probably I’d say about maybe 75% of the time, I’m able to do a good job of saying, “Amy wants this, Joe wants that, Bob wants that – I can weave those three topics

together to make them meaningful and valuable, and also to make sure that the people are getting their questions answered.” Sometimes you have to do a hard stop and move on to the next topic, but if you can find ways to weave the subject areas that are important to people together, that’s also very helpful.

Then I go into the call and I say, “So, Amy wants to talk about how to deal with a difficult personality. Could you say more about that, Amy?” and she’ll give a little case. Then I’ll go to the group: “What kind of coaching would you offer Amy?” I give the group the opportunity to coach, offer advice, give their input, give their perspective.

I wrap the call by doing a quick round of takeaways. “What’s the one thing that you got from today’s call that really was valuable or important to you?” Hear from as many people as you can, and then say “thanks” and then you’re off the call.

Q&A: What is the best pre-work before facilitating a group retreat or planning session?

What I do, particularly with Boards or different types of strategic planning and retreats, when I set up the engagement, I ask the person who’s going to hire me, whether it’s the chairman or CEO or HR, “Can I have 15 minutes with everybody, 15-30 minutes with people on the phone, just to ask them a few questions?” I know that’s not always available, but I want to stress how important it is. Depending upon the group and the context of where the company or the organization is at, it’s very important.

Here’s why: when I get them 30 minutes on the phone, confidentiality is in play, so they’re going to be more comfortable sharing with me what might be going on, what’s going on with the group, the cultural norms, relationship nuances that I need to be aware of. So I get a clear picture of what’s going on in the room when I walk into the room.

The second piece is by doing that one-on-one, you develop trust. So if you have the opportunity, do your pre-work by getting some one-on-one time with people, and they trust you. You’re the center that holds the group together. You’ve built some relationships, you’ve built a little bit of trust in the process. That’s a good way of what I call warming them up or softening the beaches, where you might be able to get them to do some of the pre-work.

Q&A: What advice do you have for someone who is putting a group together of unrelated individuals rather than in a company or organization?

When you’re coalescing – let’s say you’ve got 10 coaches or 10 people trying to improve their financial situation, and these folks don’t know each other. Very important for you to have a crystal clear intent. What is the purpose of this group? What is it that we are trying to create? You as the coach have to be crystal clear of that, and that energy is what starts forging the collective will.

The next step is, once you have that and you articulate it, and you get people that are interested, then you invite them to share what it is that they would like. What are their intentions for this

group? There's a set of questions that I use in my opening workshops. It comes from Peter Block:

#1 - "What do you want from this group?"

#2 - "What are you willing to give or risk to create what you want?"

#3 - "What do you want for others in the group?"

I found those to be very, very powerful questions. It starts forging the collective will and the bond. It says together we're stronger than just individuals.

So have a clear intent, ask those questions, have people share their intent, and then you can start driving into your agenda, your content, things of that nature.

Is it important to have a detailed Executive Bio to give to an organization?

I tend to use it only in very high-end, high dollar engagements. Sometimes I'll ask people, "Would you like the one-page bio or the 11-page executive?" Sometimes they say, "Just the one page is fine," some people ask for both. But I created the 11-page for people that really – I do a lot of contract work for other organizations, and they want to have a deeper understanding of who I am, for larger consulting firms like McKinsey and things like that. They like those executive summaries. But when I do events and speaking, the one-page summary is just fine.

You can see Tim's 1 Page Bio and 11 Page Executive Summary in the Group Coaching Success Club Member Area.

Tim's parting thoughts and words of wisdom:

When I tested for my master, which was a few years ago – it was about 10 years in the making – my master told me – it was 100 degrees in the school and I was almost passing out – he said, "Tim, would you do one thing for me? You passed. Would you do one thing for me?" I said, "Yes sir. Whatever you say, sir." And he said, "Just make sure you keep learning and growing. Make sure you keep walking the path of mastery. You've crossed this hurdle, but the mastery just begins now. Would you just make sure you stay committed to your own development? Could you do that for me?" I said, "Yes sir. Absolutely."

As coaches, we hold a lot in our hands. The lives, the families. We're helping people change a lot. That's a big responsibility. And the better that we get, more conscious, more aware, the more that we grow, the more impact, the more skillful that we can be, the greater the change that we can impart in the world. That comes – it's an investment. We have to keep working on ourselves. I don't know if that's parting words or that's a request. Please just keep working on yourself as a coach. Keep sharpening your blade.

You can contact our Guest Mentor Coach Tim JohnPress at tim@ascendte.com.