

Group Coaching Success Club Call Transcript

Mentor Coach Interview with Leadership Coach Tim JohnPress

Hosted by Michelle Schubnel

MICHELLE: All right. Welcome, everyone. This is Michelle Schubnel, President and Head Coach at Coach and Grow R.I.C.H. and creator of the Group Coaching Success System. I want to start off by acknowledging you, whether you're here live on the phone or webcast or you're listening to the recording. If you can hear the sound of my voice right now, I want to congratulate and acknowledge you, because you're here. You're listening right now, and by doing that, you're demonstrating your commitment to yourself, your business, and even your future clients.

Building a coaching business or any business is not necessarily easy; it requires focus, commitment, dedication, and perseverance. To be successful, you need to learn new skills and take lots of consistent inspired action. You have to grow and stretch yourself, and perhaps even push yourself beyond your comfort zone. I want to acknowledge you for showing up, being committed, taking action, and continuing your education. Just the very fact that you're here tells me that you're already in the top percentage of coaches out there.

So I'm super excited to welcome you to today's Group Coaching Success Club Call. For every call, we have a specific topic or focus, and on today's call, I'm going to be interviewing our special guest, multi-six figure leadership and executive coach, Tim JohnPress. I'm so excited for this interview, and I know that you're going to gain so much value and insight from what Tim will be sharing. I really think that you'll find what Tim is going to be sharing will be valuable for you, regardless of the kind of coaching you do. I know we have some people on the line that are doing leadership and executive coaching – I know you're especially interested in hearing what Tim has to say – but I also know that he'll be sharing things and insights and philosophies around coaching that can be valuable to you even if you're in some totally different target market and niche.

The way we're going to run today's call, we're going to jump into that interview with Tim right away. We decided to switch it up a little bit, so I'm going to jump into the interview with Tim, and then once we're done with the interview with Tim, we'll have time for question and answer, and we'll also have that time at the end of the call where you can introduce yourselves and we can get to know each other a little bit that way.

As we're going through the interview, if something comes up, if you've got a question or a comment and you're here on the phone live, you can let me know by pressing *2 on your keypad. That's the way that you can raise your hand, and I'll take that when we have a break in the interview. If you're on the webcast, A) I would love to know who's here, so please type in your name and where you're calling in from, and B) also as we're going through the interview, if you have any questions, feel free to type them in during the webcast, in the webcast box. I will ask those to Tim for you.

As I said, at the end of the interview, we'll also take any questions that you have for Tim, and that'll also be the time when we'll do introductions, and that you can ask any question that you have around group coaching, so you can receive laser coaching, get feedback, ask about your designs, talk about your marketing plans, and that's what the end of these calls are really all about.

Before I introduce Tim, I just want to share that the Group Coaching Success Club will be meeting two times per month at least through the end of 2013. This is something we started this year, and we're definitely going to try out this format through the end of the year. We're currently meeting twice per month, so we meet on the second Wednesday of the month at 10 a.m. Pacific, and the fourth Wednesday of the month at 2 p.m. Pacific. Calls last up to 90 minutes, and we are continually adding new speakers and topics.

On our call in two weeks, on May 22nd, the focus is going to be how to turn your current connections into consistent referrals. This is an expert interview that I'm doing with my friend TR Garland. He's a #1 bestselling author of the book *Building the Ultimate Network*. Referrals really are the best source of new clients, so in this Success Club Call, you're going to discover what works and what doesn't when it comes to generating business by referral, three proven ways to demonstrate your credibility to your marketplace, specific tools for positioning yourself as a trusted expert in your field, the #1 easiest way to get referrals quickly, why people refer to some business owners but not to others, and two crucial reasons why you must add this to your marketing mix if you want to have a quantum leap in your business and secure a year's worth of business in just a few months.

I've met TR personally; he is fantastic. He's one of the most effective and passionate networker and referral person I've ever met, so I know we're going to have a great time in two weeks with him. Please mark your calendar and plan on joining us on Wednesday, May 22nd at 2 p.m.

All right, let's get focused on our focus for today, which is our mentor coach interview with Tim JohnPress. I met Tim in person – gosh, it was only about a month or so ago, a little bit over a month ago, at the Coaching Speaker Association. This is an association that my friend and colleague, Ted McGrath, founded. I just happened to sit next to Tim at lunch at the association meeting, and we hit it off. We had a great conversation, and I was just blown away by his wisdom, his experience, and how generously he shared during our conversation. So I asked him if he would be willing to be an expert on these Success Club Calls, and he said yes. Tim, I thank you for being here, and I'm super excited to be interviewing you for my community.

Let me read a little bit about Tim's official bio here – and in fact, Tim sent me two bios. One is a one-pager, and the other one is a very impressive – I'm just looking at this here – it's an 11-page document. We actually posted both of those documents in the Group Coaching Success Club area, so you can take a look at those. They're there right now; you can look at them after the call. But they also might be something you want to model, because I think the way he's got his executive bio, professional bio laid out in the multi-page format really comes across in a very impressive manner, so definitely take a look at that.

Let me read the shorter bio of Tim for you. “A seasoned executive coach, business advisor and keynote speaker, Tim JohnPress specializes in executive development, strategic alignment, and organizational performance. Since 1997 he has led and managed teams and programs in integral leadership, emotional intelligence, high performance teamwork, operational optimization and organizational design to maximize client capacity for sustainable execution and growth.

“Prior to founding Ascendte Advisors, Tim was a principal consultant for Stagen Leadership Institute, where he led a team of coaches and consultants instrumental in growing the firm over 300%. Preceding his business and coaching career, Tim served as a Field Engineer for Astronautics Corporation, managing performance of the U.S. army’s top secret communication systems in the Central Texas region. In addition, Tim worked as an engineer in the high tech sector, and for several years designed integrated circuits for companies such as Motorola and AMD.”

One of the things I was really impressed about with Tim when I met him is his background in martial arts. “For over 25 years he studied with master teachers from several martial art, yoga and meditation lineages, and is a martial arts master himself, holding multiple black belts in Tae Kwon Do and” – boy, I’m not even sure how to say this – “Tukong Moosul”?

TIM: That’s right.

MICHELLE: All right. “Additionally, he’s a graduate of Coach University, a Certified Practitioner of NLP, and a Senior Consultant with The Leadership Circle. He currently resides in Austin, Texas with his wife Tova and daughter Ally.” And he’s got a very impressive client list, which I won’t read those right now, but it’s a nice long impressive client list. So Tim, thank you for being here. Welcome to the call.

TIM: Thank you, Michelle. It’s a real treat and it’s an honor to be here with you all, and I’m humbled to be able to speak to your audience and the folks on the call today. Coaching is a deep calling, and it’s a very powerful profession, which many of you can attest to. To be able to share some of my stories and some lessons that I’ve learned with such an influential force of people, I’m deeply honored. Thank you.

MICHELLE: Well thank you, thank you for being here. Tim, I know you’ve been coaching for a long time. Can you tell us a little bit about your background and how you ended up entering the profession?

TIM: Sure. I got my first taste of coaching probably around the age of 21 when I got my first black belt. When you get your black belt, you’re instructed to start teaching. I was pretty shy, pretty insecure, but it was part of our requirements of being a black belt. I remember one day working with this young girl. Her name was Susie. Susie was pretty awkward; she had real thick, coke bottle glasses, she wasn’t real bright. But boy, she was determined to get her black belt. She really struggled.

Well, she was a bit of a kindred spirit, and I was able to work with her and to see her go to black belt and actually get her black belt. I was hooked. She gave me a big hug at her test and said “I

couldn't have done it without you." I didn't realize it at the time, but that was the beginning of my coaching career. I was hooked. I got the bug.

As life unfolds, I went to school and started doing my engineering work, but I continued training. I stopped teaching once I went into the workforce. Around I guess it was 1988, at a gym here in Austin, a few people there saw me working out and they said, "Wow, you're really impressive, your flexibility." Anyway, they asked me if I'd be interested in teaching martial arts, and I said sure. I was training on my own; I was still going to a different school.

Well, those years in the gym turned into the beginning of my coaching career. I had a lot of executives in my class, and they started coming to me for advice. My master had always taught me, he said "If you're going to teach people how to fight, you also have to teach good philosophy." So at the end of every class, I would teach a little snippet of information, how to live well, how to get along with folks. That caught the attention of a few people.

I knew that I wanted to get out of engineering because I couldn't sit in a cubicle one more day. So it was around 1997 I looked up, and I was in this big room at Motorola, doing work literally in an ocean of cubicles, and I said "I just can't do this." So when that contract ended, I hung my shingle out as a coach, completely clueless as to what I was doing. I had no experience in heading up a business. I was just very passionate about working with people, and I loved working with people and I loved seeing the spark come on in people's eyes when they got it, or they were able to accomplish something that they didn't realize they could.

From there, I went and got trained, Coach University, and as they say, the rest is history. I started my practice; 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.

MICHELLE: I love your story, Tim, about how you started off both as a 21-year-old, teaching that girl to help supporting her and getting her black belt, but also then as just at the end of your martial arts class, just sharing your philosophy and how that ended up evolving into you becoming a coach.

I also think it's really interesting that you said you gave yourself a four to five year window, and that at the end of that fifth year was when things really took off, because I think it's really interesting how it seems like whatever timeframe we put on ourselves, once we hit it, that's when – it's like do or die time, and that's typically when we hear that things really take off.

TIM: That's right. I pushed it almost to the very end, but then things started to really – and then when they took off, they took off real fast.

MICHELLE: Yep. It's really true. It's interesting. Well, as you know, this is the Group Coaching Success Club, and so I'd like to start off by just asking you a little bit about what do you think are the skills that are really important for a coach to have when it comes to group coaching?

TIM: Sure. Coaching people one on one is a very rewarding experience, and you get the joy of sharing your heart and mind with your clients and helping them work through challenges. When you're working with a group, be it let's say a group such as this, or let's say a group inside of an organization. Let's say a leadership team, for example. 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. For example, I have a client I've been working with for five years. His boss, the CEO, called me, and he said, "Tim, he's a great leader, but he's so in the weeds doing day-to-day tactics that he's falling short on some of the strategic initiatives to scale the company, to help the company grow." I said, "Great. You have to be mindful. First question: how is this person being paid?"

Well, the leader, my client, being incentivized to drive profitability and customer at, because that impacts his paycheck. So of course, he was focused on making sure they have high customer sat scores, and tweaking revenue, expenses, to really create strong margins because he was incentivized to do it. Now, the leader said, "I want to grow the company. I want to scale the company and sell it." So you can see there's a disconnect between what the individual wants and what they need to work on and also what's at stake in the larger organization, the system, so to speak.

The solution is tweaking how the performance and pay was structured; also, obviously, working with the individual, helping them to realize that for them to go to the next level as a leader in this particular case, they had to engage in some of the more strategic initiatives to move the business forward, to scale, while still maintaining strong margins and strong customer sat scores.

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.

MICHELLE: That's an important point, and it's something that, you're right, that doesn't really come into play when we're doing individual coaching.

TIM: Right. As a coach, coaching a group, part of our job is to help the system become more self-aware. I'm sure everybody on the call here today has had the experiences where their client has that "aha" moment, the moment of enlightenment, the expanded perspective. And that expanded perspective, or that new insight, drives new behavior and it drives new results. Well, in every group, there's a soul or a spirit that's also at play.

Our job as a coach is to help the system wake up, to have the system become more self-aware, to have all the people in that system have the same kind of moments of enlightenment where their perspective is expanded. Our job as a coach is to be mindful that it's not to change the system and tell the system what to do; it's to help the system itself evolve on its own. Think of the fish; we want to teach the system how to fish and how to grow versus giving them fish, giving them answers.

But this mindfulness of the soul of the system and being able to help the system wake up, help the system start teaching itself what's needed to go forward or achieve the particular goals, results that they're looking for.

MICHELLE: Wow. That's such an important topic for coaches to think about, especially when doing group coaching and organizations. So that's obviously one of the key points, is to really be aware of the system and just that consciousness of it. Are there any other key skills that you think are really important for a coach to have when it comes to doing group coaching?

TIM: Yeah, something that just came to mind as you were speaking. In the martial arts, as many can probably attest to on the call, one thing that is taught extensively is respect. Be humble, respect, respect, 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.

A lot of times I'm called in – I'm teaching in the university system here in Texas, and it's going through a major transformation. Budget cuts and things like that. So there's a lot of dysfunction.

I'm working with large groups of people at a time, 20, sometimes 50, coaching them as a collective. The way to move forward is to help them. They say, "What are the answers, Tim? What do we need to do?" and I keep giving the questions back to them. "What do you think you need to do?"

A common mistake for new coaches – and I'm very guilty of it – is 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. In the university, I was always amazed – obviously a lot of Ph.D.s, doctors, very, very well-trained and educated people, but they weren't able to bring forth it – for a number of reasons, cultural, fear, things like that. So I realized that there the potential is in the room. The potential is there for change; these people are very bright. But there was no forum, no modality for them to bring forth the wisdom.

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.

MICHELLE: It's so powerful, and you just shared really a great example of a low content coaching group. One of the things that I teach in the Group Coaching Success Program is that there are a wide variety of coaching groups, and sometimes a coach might put together a group program and it's high content. It might be for new business owners that, in addition to coaching, they actually want some training, instruction, and information.

But then on the other side of the coin, we've got low content groups, where it's much more pure coaching and facilitation, and that is what we see so much more in corporate coaching, leadership coaching, executive coaching. Thank you so much for sharing that, painting such a clear picture of what really powerful coaching can look like.

I've met you in person, and I can just totally picture you asking the question and then sitting – I love that, crossing your legs, sitting back and smiling, and waiting. You and I both went to

Coach U, and I remember just learning that importance of holding the silence and just being comfortable with it, and asking that question and just sitting there until either the individual client or someone in the group answers.

TIM: Yeah, and 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.

MICHELLE: I want to circle back, Tim, and I love how you said it's really important to respect the system and the group for where it's at, even if it's dysfunctional. Could you give us an example of what that might look like? How do you actually do that? Like if a coach is listening and says "Okay, I get it, but what do I actually do to respect the system and really align myself with the system and the group wherever they're at?"

TIM: You just gave me a flashback to my very first business client. Again, I don't know anything, and I managed to get a couple of clients. My first business client I was hired, it was a small business here in Austin. I remember talking to the CEO, and I convinced him that I knew what I was doing. I don't even know how, but I managed to convince him. His challenge was he said, "Tim, I'm not sure if I got the right team to grow this company. Can you help me?" I said, "Sure. I guarantee that we'll get an answer within 30 days."

I did a lot of one-on-one interviews before we gathered as a group, and there was just a ton of angst, a lot of frustration. Basically, everybody was afraid of the CEO. It wasn't that the team or the people weren't there; the team was great. But the CEO had everybody in such fear by his leadership style. When I did the interviews, people would vent and they would yell and scream, "He should do that," and I'd just say thank you. Thank you, this is great information. I didn't make them wrong or right for what they were sharing with them. I said "thank you, this is very valuable."

When we gathered in our first group meeting, I sat at the head of the table, and I think there were seven executives and the CEO in the room. I said, "Guys, we're here to talk about what we need to do to take the company to the next level. Where do you think we should begin?" I just put it out there. Everybody's looking at me like "What do you mean? You're supposed to tell us." I said, "Let's hear from everybody in the room first." They didn't know what to do with it. We sat in silence for literally a minute – it seemed like 10.

Finally the head engineer said, "You know what?" He slams his fist on the table, he goes – the CEO's name was Bill – he goes, "Bill, you just seem really blankity-blank unhappy." And the CEO kicked back and he was very animated, and he kicked back and he looked at me, and I said, "Damn it, you seem angry. Are you upset?" He said, "Yeah, I'm upset. This sucks." I said, "Great, thank you for sharing." I didn't make him wrong; I didn't judge. I coached the CEO to just let people speak.

Within 30 minutes, everybody had got all their grievances out on the table. We made it safe for them to put it out on the table. There was a collective sigh, and I said, “So guys, what do you think is necessary for us to go to the next level?” And literally strategic plan, action items, accountability, it all kind of unfolded in about the next hour. So allowing what was in the room, the silence, the fear, to just be, not judging it, and giving people a chance to vent or to even express their fear, making it safe, that’s how I was able to – I got a lot of trust from those guys. They said, “Okay, we can do this.”

It took us about six months where they were able to really move on their own, take the ball and run with it, and they didn’t need the coaching anymore, because they had developed new ways and new ways of being together. We had to appreciate and acknowledge and respect what was in the space first.

MICHELLE: Got it. Thank you, that’s a great example, and it really painted a picture for me of exactly what you meant by that and how a coach might go about building that respect and showing that respect. That’s a perfect example.

Let’s shift gears a little bit. I’d love to talk about new business development, client acquisition. You’ve been in business a long time; I know you’ve worked hard, you’ve served and impacted a lot of clients, and you’ve created a business and a lifestyle that many leadership and executive coaches would love to have. So what’s the secret for consistently generating new business and being able to create a multi-six figure coaching business year after year after year? And in particular, one that you’re not a slave to and enables you to live your life the way that you want to, so that you can come home to meet your daughter when she gets home from school or enjoy the sunset from the beautiful deck at your house with your wife. What do you really think is the secret for keeping ht new business coming in but also having that balance to live a great life?

TIM: Yeah, thank you, Michelle. 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.

Now, you may be asking yourself, “I’m not sure. It’s a great business, lifestyle.” I understand that and I respect that. 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.

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, it took me – I think it was about seven or eight years to crack six figures. From where I started, very insecure, self-conscious, all that, that was a miracle that I even cracked six figures. That was around I think 2002, 2003. I had reached this pinnacle, and being the martial artist, I said "Okay, I've got my \$100,000 a year black belt; what's next?" I said, "Well, I want to endeavor to make seven figures."

As luck or providence would have it, I met a gentleman – I call him Uncle Rick – and we were in a team meeting at the company I was working with, and he was an invited guest. He came up to me afterwards and he said, "You know, you really didn't say much. How come?" I said, "I'm just learning. This is stuff that's a little bit over my head, so I'm just learning." He goes, "Well, here's what I think. I'm pretty impressed. First of all, you have a very strong presence, Tim. There's something that I'm just sensing. I'd like to help you go to the next level if you're interested." I looked at him like "Who are you and why are you talking to me? You seem a little odd." But I said, "Okay, I'm game. Can you teach me how to go to seven figures?" He said yeah. I said, "Are you a seven figure coach?" He goes, "Absolutely." This guy, him and his wife, he makes \$1.5 million a year. That was appealing to me. So I said, "Okay, I'll listen." We had dinner, downtown Dallas one night. He said, "You ready to learn how to become a seven figure coach?" I said "Great."

I got my notebook handy, and I'm ready, and literally, the nice fancy restaurant in downtown Dallas. And he said, "Tim, first of all, first thing you need to do is forget everything that you've ever been taught about coaching. Just throw it out the window. Can you do that?" I said "Sure." Empty your cup, beginner's mind, all that stuff. I get that. He said, "Great. #2, forget everything you've ever been taught, read, or told about selling." I said "Okay." He goes, "Can you do that?" I said, "Sure." He goes, "You're sure about that?" I said yeah. He was playing me a little bit. I said, "Okay."

He goes, "Great. That's what you got to do to become a seven figure coach." And I said, "Wait a minute. Wait a minute. Forget about coaching, forget about selling." He said, "Yeah." I said, "Okay, what do you do?" He goes, "I just told you. Forget about selling, forget about coaching." I said, "But what do I do?" He goes, "Do you know how to have a conversation with somebody?" I said, "Sure." He goes, "Do you feel comfortable meeting a stranger and engaging them in a conversation and enjoying that person?" I said, "Absolutely. I can do that." He goes, "Great. 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.” I said, “Okay.” I’m a good student. The master says do this, I can do it.

My partner at the time said, literally about a week later, he said, “Hey, I got this lead. It’s too small, I don’t want to deal with it.” I said, “I’ll take that. I’ll practice.” I got on the phone with two gentlemen. They were partners in a business. One partner lived in the Colorado area and the other person lived in Texas. They had this really rapidly growing little business intelligence group, software company. They did not get along at all. Because we were all in different locations, I said let’s get on a bridge and let’s talk.

I spent an hour and a half just asking them what’s going on, what’s life like for you, what’s business. We just had a conversation. It was very good. I learned a ton, and I was very relaxed, and I was just having a conversation. They said, “What do you think we should do next, Tim?” I said, “I think we should have another conversation.” They said, “Great. Do we need to do anything?” “No, let’s just get on the phone again.”

So a week later, we had another conversation, about an hour, hour and a half, just learning, exchanging some ideas, dialogue. Not really talking about coaching, not really even talking about what we’re going to work on together. Just getting to know each other. “What do we do?” “Let’s have another conversation.” My coach said never close a deal until you’ve had at least two or three conversations.

We get to the third phone call. Now, these are two guys that I’ve never met in person and have only spent just a couple hours on the phone with. By the end of the third call they said, “Tim, we’re ready to go; how much and when do we get started?” I didn’t have to ask for the business. I didn’t ask for anything. They said, “We’re ready to go. We want to get started next month. How much?” I closed the deal on the phone with two guys; it was five times larger than the biggest deal I’d ever sold. I worked with these guys for about a year. They got on the same page – and they weren’t best buddies by any means, but they got their business to the next level and they sold it, and now they’re both retired.

About a couple months after that gig, I had the same thing, another opportunity with a home builder. A gentleman I had never met. We had about two or three conversations on the phone, and I closed the deal for \$250,000 over the phone with a guy that I’d never met about working with him and his executive team. It was all just about the relationship. My coach said, “Tim, 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 he said, “If you’ve got the relationship right, it’s like your best friend. You can talk to your best friend about anything.” I said, “Boy, that was key.” 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. So it's all been people that I've worked with, other people that I've networked with such as folks like Michelle.

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.

The third piece is 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. That's all I've got on that piece.

MICHELLE: Wow. That's all you've got. Boy. I remember when we prepared for this interview and we were talking about client enrollment and business development, and you shared that story with me. It was so powerful, and it's interesting because I'm a sales and marketing trainer, so I teach coaches client enrollment, and we have all kinds of coaches that go through our program. We've got life coaches, business coaches, executive coaches, corporate coaches.

“Uncle Rick's” advice is completely counter to what everybody teaches. How many people, of all the coaches that have gone through coaching school and have learned client enrollment and sales and marketing, to let go of all of that and to just focus on having a conversation, being present, enjoying the person, and really allowing that relationship to develop. When you shared that story, it became so crystal clear why it's so important and how so many of us are probably forgetting to do that. Super powerful.

TIM: I don't want to put a downer on coaching skills or selling skills. Those are very, very valuable. But the real accelerant to generating new clients is depending your relationship, opening yourself up to a deeper connection with people, and that is what I call a turbo boost to all the coaching skills, the selling skills, the marketing skills. If you lead with the skills, you're not as effective in my opinion. I wasn't as effective. If you lead with relationship and the big heart connection with people, all my training from martial arts, from Coach University, all the training came online even stronger.

MICHELLE: Yeah, makes sense. Let's talk a little bit about the structure of group coaching. I know that you do both in person and phone-based coaching. I'd love to get your thoughts on the best way to structure a phone-based group call.

TIM: Yeah. There's a little bit of preparation – not much – 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. So I go through a little process

of just quieting myself and asking, “What’s my intent for this call? What is it that I would like to have show up and created with this call?” That’s important. Set a crystal clear intent.

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.

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. And usually – depending on the group, but usually you create so much momentum that you have to do very little coaching on the group call. The group will actually take control of the call.

So that can go on – an hour or an hour and a half can go by very, very quickly, particularly if the group is very engaged. In there I may be interjecting my little learning nuggets or trying to weave in other stories.

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.

MICHELLE: Wow. Sounds like a really good call, a great way to structure it. I just love how you structure your session work with clients. It's clear to me that this really is your calling and your practice and the way that you engage the room and the group. I mean, I'm sure it's just poetry in motion to see you work with your clients.

I'd love to tap in, speaking of connecting with the people on the call, before we wrap up, before, Tim, you share any kind of closing thoughts or comments, I'd love to hear from the people that are here with us live, especially those of you that are on the phone. If you would like to share with Tim what's been most valuable for you on today's call and interview, and then also if you have any questions for Tim based on anything that he shared, now would be a great time to ask those.

So if you're on the phone live and you either have a question for Tim or you'd be willing to give Tim some feedback and let him know what's been valuable from today, we'd love to hear from a couple of people that are here live. You can let me know that you're willing to play by pressing *2 on your keypad. If you're on the webcast, you can type in your comments in the webcast box. And if we don't get someone *2-ing, I see we've got some long-standing members of the Coach and Grow Rich community on the line – I'm going to end up calling on people. But we do have a lot of people here, so I wanted to give the people that most want to share a chance to let me know and do that first.

All right, I'm going to see if I can get my friend Pat in Chicago to get the ball rolling. Pat, would you be willing to share with us what's been valuable today for you, and then also do you have any questions for Tim?

PAT: Of course I knew you would call on me, so I got myself prepared and put my headset on. (laughs) That's actually what I was doing. Tim, thank you so much, first of all, for just your authenticity and just how great you laid out how you show up for your clients and for your group. So I just wanted to acknowledge you first of all.

The first thing I'll say here is it was just very confirming. I just facilitated a Board retreat over the weekend, and a lot of the points that you raised in terms of allowing that wisdom to rise up from the group, I loved it. I hadn't done a Board retreat in awhile. I facilitate executive groups and teams; that's a little bit of a different dynamic. They came with some elephants in the room. I gave them some pre-work before we even got into the actual retreat.

That's where my question lies: the pre-work really did set us up powerfully, and there were some dynamics that of course, as I was not there to have them digest the pre-work, if you know what I mean – I'll make this really concise – I gave them the pre-work, I gave them an exercise to come together, the Friday night get-together round table, and work through the pre-work before the Saturday retreat. So I want to hear from you or get your advice in terms of ways to, even when you're not there, to help create a facilitation of maybe pre-work or assignments prior to the group session.

TIM: That's a great question. 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. Doing the one-on-one pre, you develop some trust and you're able to get a little bit of buy-in to the process. 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.

It's the best way that I know to get some of the pre-work done, but you have to be mindful, if there's challenges or some dysfunction or a little bit of drama, even if you give them pre-work, they may not be very good at it because there's stuff in the group. The elephants in the room, so to speak, that people are not comfortable working through, and they're looking for you, as a facilitator, as a group coach, to help them navigate those stormy waters.

The best way that I found is to do the one-on-one work, get some trust built one-on-one, set some expectations, let them know what you're going to be looking for from them when they come into the group. Set the expectations; say, "If this is going to be successful, this is what I will do for you, and are you comfortable with me asking these things of you?" so that they know the rules of engagement when you walk into the space. I hope that helps.

PAT: Definitely, definitely. And just quickly, I had the one-on-ones with what would be the more senior level leaders in that organization, so I was able to have that, and I did something right. They want me to come back and run their quarterly retreats going forward.

TIM: Congratulations.

PAT: Yeah, absolutely. So I will build that in. I'll build that into the budget as well, to make sure that I can actually meet with, or at least over the phone, virtually, have a call with each one of the members as well. So thank you. And it went really great. I know it's also from Michelle's coaching as well; she's always in our ear somewhere.

TIM: Yeah, so when you do those interviews, something that just came to me – particularly if you're going to do it every quarter – you're doing an exercise in what I call tapping the voices of the system. There's a lot of voices in the system, and when you gather them as a group, you as a coach want to be mindful of as many of the voices in the system as possible and what the voices have to say or what's on their plate, so that you can coalesce that and bring it forth and orchestrate it to have a successful retreat. So being able to tap the voices of the system. That's an ongoing practice when you do group coaching; always be mindful of the voices in the system and what they're up to.

PAT: Thank you so much.

MICHELLE: Powerful. Thanks so much, Tim, and great question, Pat. And congratulations on your new client and the ongoing work.

PAT: Thank you. Thank you, Michelle.

MICHELLE: You're welcome. I see on the webcast, Pamela from Alaska wrote in that what was most valuable for her from today's call was "letting the group drive the agenda and letting the group coach themselves." Just that whole allowing piece. Excellent.

I'm going to call on one more person, and then we'll see if there are any other people who want to volunteer. Judi in Florida, would you be willing to share with Tim what's been valuable for you today, and do you have any questions for Tim?

JUDI: Oh, sure, I'd be willing to share. I think two things were valuable. The first was, of course, letting the group drive the agenda. I think it shows a level of confidence on your part as a coach when you're more interested in their agenda than yours. So I like that a lot. And I really loved the "permission to be messy." I thought that was great. I'm coaching around money, and that's very messy, so that's definitely something that I'll be implementing.

TIM: Thank you. You bring up a great point around having the confidence to allow the group. Couple of things there. As a coach – and I have a number of coaches that I coach – one of my core touch points with them is how are you developing personally? How are you growing as a coach? I know you can coach, but what are you doing to grow and expand and develop yourself?

One of the principles that my master said, he goes, "Tim, you want to become a master; it's not a destination. What are you doing? How are you living your mastery?" I got that ingrained for me over 25 years. It drives my wife nuts, because I'm always trying to push myself into new levels of learning. But as a coach, for me, the continued sharpening of my blade or sharpening of my saw is critical, and by doing that you develop the confidence as a coach that you can walk into really sticky situations.

The first time I actually tried this, it was in West Texas, and I was coaching a bank, the Board of Directors of a bank in West Texas. The Board members were all these old, curmudgeon-y cattle guys. I was down in West Texas, so this is not the most sophisticated group of folks. Lots of money, lots of power, not a lot of sophistication. And I let them have the table, and I was there. Well, it almost ended up in a fist fight – and this is a true story. I had to stand up and pound my fist on the table. I said, "If we're going to fight, we're going to step out and fight with me first, and then we'll fight with each other."

When they realized that I was serious and the confidence that I could hold the space and say, "Hey listen, I'm really committed; you've got people's families and lives at stake, and you guys are acting like a bunch of teenagers," they got the message. They said, "Okay, we got it. We got it. This is unacceptable." It takes courage to be able to hold that group energy, and if you don't have it, I suggest you continue to work on yourself. But yeah, it takes a lot of confidence to be able to allow them to have just enough space to work through an issue and to keep it on track.

JUDI: Yeah, confidence comes from making mistakes and overcoming them. You can't get it any other way. You can have all the book knowledge you want, but until you put it in practice, and you make a few mistakes and get challenged on it, you don't develop the confidence.

TIM: Absolutely. And I promise you, I've made millions of mistakes. (laughs)

JUDI: Yeah, ditto.

MICHELLE: That's great. Thanks, Judi.

JUDI: You're welcome.

TIM: Thank you.

MICHELLE: Is there anyone else here on the line that wants to give Tim some feedback, share what's been valuable for you, or have a question for Tim? You can let me know by pressing *2 on your keypad. If not, we'll wrap up this portion of the call with Tim, and then we'll move on to open Q&A. Great, I see we've got one other person that has a comment. Go ahead, Cassandra. Thank you. (pause) Are you on mute?

CASSANDRA: Yes, I was on mute. (laughs)

MICHELLE: Now I hear you.

CASSANDRA: Hi. Yes, and thank you so much, Tim. That was wonderful.

TIM: Thank you.

CASSANDRA: One thing that was very, very valuable for me was just considering the concept of letting the group drive the agenda. I happen to be one of the coaches that Michelle was talking about who tends to be very content-driven. So it was interesting just to hear another perspective on how that could be valuable. I'm still kind of thinking, though, that they're going to want what they're paying me for, so I don't know. That's where I am with that.

My question was, though, what advice do you have for someone who is putting a group together of unrelated individuals rather than walking into a scenario where the people are already there?

TIM: Yeah, wonderful question. 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, the guy who did a lot of consulting books. Very good stuff. He had three questions: "what do you want?" – so you could say, "What do you want from this group?" – "what are you willing to give or risk to create what you want?", and "what do you want for others?" What do you want for the 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.

Clear intent, asking those questions, having people share their intent, and then you can start driving into your agenda, your content, things of that nature.

CASSANDRA: Okay. Thank you very much.

TIM: My pleasure.

MICHELLE: Thanks. Excellent. Great question, Cassandra, and excellent answer, Tim. Thank you. All right, I think we have gotten feedback from people, answered the questions that people had for you, Tim. To just wrap up this portion of the call, I wonder if you have any parting – you already shared so much, so thank you; the amount of valuable information, wisdom, knowledge, great stories and examples that you shared today, I have to say this is probably the best Group Coaching Success Club call that we've had so far, so thank you for making it that way for us.

As we wrap up today's interview, do you have any parting thoughts or words of wisdom for the people who are here with us live or who will end up listening to the recording?

TIM: I do. 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.

MICHELLE: Great advice. If people want to connect with you, what's the best way for our listeners to get a hold with you if they want to reach out and touch base?

TIM: Sure. I'll just give you my email address. It's tim@ascendte.com.

MICHELLE: Great. Thank you, Tim. We'll post Tim's email address as well as, I mentioned in the beginning of the call, Tim, you've got these two great bios. You've got a short impressive one, and then you've got this really knock your socks off 11-pager. I'm going to ask you one more question. I thought we were done, but I'm curious, how do you determine when you use each of those two bios? And in particular the longer one, do you find that that is important or it's valuable to have this detailed of a bio to give to an organization?

TIM: Yeah, the story behind the longer executive bio comes from a friend of mine, a guy named Mark Sobel. Mark is a global coach, multi-seven figure coach who I worked with for a little bit. He works with very large multinational corporations, and they bring him in. Obviously he's a high dollar coach. They really want to know his background, and that's why he has a seven-page executive summary. It gives people a really deep, deep understanding of who this person is, their background, the things that they've done.

So 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.

MICHELLE: Perfect. Yeah, it's very impressive, so I encourage everyone, where we post the recording in the Success Club member area, we'll also post Tim's one-page and 11-page bio and executive summary so you can take a look at those. All right, thank you again, Tim, for joining us. Really appreciate you for being here. This was an awesome call.

TIM: Thank you to everybody on the call. Have a wonderful day.