

What Is Coaching Worth?

By Molly Gordon

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Molly Gordon
molly@mollygordon.com

Molly Gordon, Professional Coach <http://www.mollygordon.com>

As a professional coach and as a coaching client, I often reflect on how to place a dollar value on this work. How can we assess what coaching is worth, and how can we ground that assessment?

One way to establish the value of coaching is to look at potential performance results: increased productivity, more efficient use of time, better sales, greater information retention following training. These are typical outcomes of coaching, and it is relatively easy to determine a dollar value for them based on the financial benefit of these measurable changes. It's easy, but it misses 90% of what coaching delivers.

The other 90% resides in the space of possibilities that coaching opens for the client. Here's an example drawn from the coaching I've received in the past 30 days.

For almost two years my practice has been quite full, and I've been wondering about the next step for my business. Should I create a coaching company? (Do I have to give up my wonderful home office?) Write a book? (Won't I have time to travel or work with clients one on one?) Move into corporate coaching? (Do I have to wear shoes that hurt and learn to sleep on airplanes?)

No sooner would I formulate a possibility than it would be closed by an objection. I didn't have much basis for the objections, I just felt that these possibilities would all have higher personal costs than the professional gains they might generate.

Meanwhile, my passion for coaching and my appreciation for its value was growing daily. I was getting better and better at my work and I was getting to know other really good coaches. The gap between my enthusiasm for building a coaching community and my capacity to expand my coaching business was widening. Finally, this gap started to come up in sessions with my coaches. (I'm fortunate that I am working and learning in a community of coaches, and that I give and receive coaching with several colleagues.)

Long story short, in under five weeks, coaching has moved me from a place where growing my business felt like an impossible dream and a sure route to emotional and fiscal bankruptcy to a space of wonder at the possibilities available to me. I am still at the very beginning of growing my business; there is still much that I do not know. The difference is that now what I do not know is an emblem of what may be possible rather than a roadblock.

Today I am living a bigger adventure with bigger rewards than I was living a month ago. I'm not pretending that risk has vanished or that the path will be free of obstacles. The point is that I am on

a path that wasn't open to me 30 days ago.

So, what's the value of the coaching that makes it possible for you to found a company? Write a book? Live a dream? Heal a friendship? Design a bigger life? Will you calculate the value of coaching by counting the steps it helps you take along a familiar road, or by looking at how much bigger your map is and how many new roads it makes available?

For me, there is no one-size-fits-all way to assess the value of coaching. However, I offer these questions to help you assess the right coaching investment for you.

Am I willing to be fundamentally transformed by coaching? (The more of yourself you bring to coaching, the more coaching can bring to you.) Am I willing to get lost, and is this coach someone that I trust enough to get lost with? (Unless you are willing to "get lost," your gains will be limited to incremental improvements in known areas.) What are the costs of remaining where I am? (When the status quo is keeping you from playing a bigger game, then coaching can have tremendous value.)

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