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My Conversation with Teri Scheinzeit Stevie Award Winner, Mentor/Coach of the Year

By Jim Armstrong

Do you feel overwhelmed, overloaded and generally unproductive? For many of us, I'm sure the answer is "yes"...and "yes" far more often than we would like to admit.

Meet Teri Scheinzeit, the Savvy Business Coach. Teri is an accomplished business coach who has received numerous accolades for her work with business professionals, her speaking engagements and her workshops. She was awarded Mentor/Coach of the Year by the Stevie Awards for Women in Business.

Teri came by her business expertise from working as an entrepreneur. She built a number of successful graphic design firms in New York City and profitably sold them. From there she went with her second dream—to coach entrepreneurs based on what she had learned, and to use her unique ability to inspire others to reach new business heights, both one-on-one and in groups.

How did you get into the field of business coaching?

I worked with my own coach for years while I was building my graphic design firm. She was wonderful. A friend, also an entrepreneur, recommended her. This was at a time when coaching wasn't even a recognized profession. I loved having a trusted confidant who could inspire, train and advise me. I quickly learned the power of coaching.

I loved having an experienced mentor who was *listening* to me. "What do you want your life to look like?" she would ask me. "What kind of business do you want to design? What are your strengths? How can you do more of what you love to do?"

During the 20 years of running my business I went through many transitions. I started my own firm, then bought another firm and merged them. Later, I took on a business partner, worked together for three years, and then sold everything so that I could try something different. My coach helped me with every stage as I kept growing and changing.

Coaching is all about the client and their agenda. My coach was great at keeping me in the picture. Running a business can really take over your life. My coach kept me connected to my goals, my interests and my vision.

When I decided to sell my design firm, my family, friends and associates practically shouted at me, “Are you crazy? You have a successful business and you’re making money. What will you do?” My coach’s response was very different. She said, “How cool. What’s next?”

How do you identify what areas business professionals need to work on? How do you help people and organizations?

I provide an initial questionnaire to my clients. The questionnaire is divided into categories, such as Time Management, Finances, Marketing and so on. From their answers I can clearly see what’s working in their business and what’s not. It also helps my clients acknowledge their strengths and identify areas that need improvement.

The first session with a client focuses on goal-setting, where we design three powerful goals based on the areas that need help. The process is very streamlined. In one hour, the client walks away with targeted, specific, inspiring goals. One client said, “Before the session, it was like having a low radio on all the time that was really annoying. After the session, I felt like the radio was loud and clear.”

How far do you lead them along? Do you handhold or let them do their own thing? What’s your strategy?

It varies from person to person. Each client is unique and learns differently. It also depends on how long they have been in business and what their challenges are. If clients need a lot of structure, I work within an organized, well-defined system. Each week the client completes specific actions. The next session, we talk about them, acknowledge the progress, and—if they got stuck in some spots—resolve their issues. We then create new actions. It’s a structure that works well.

Other clients are experienced, high-level entrepreneurs. These clients benefit by having an opportunity to look at the big picture, prioritize and strategize. They are often mired in the details and drama of their business. Coaching provides them vision and planning. I help them see their businesses in new, exciting ways. They learn how to become effective, inspiring leaders.

Sometimes I’ll ask a client, “How can I be most helpful to you today?” This allows my clients to work on specific issues they are struggling with. For example, they might be preparing a proposal for a big client in a new market. Or they might have an employee who’s acting out, or a longtime client who says he wants to move on.

I often utilize role-playing, which is extremely useful. Often people don’t know what to say professionally in challenging situations. How do you fire someone? What do you say to a dissatisfied client who’s yelling at you? What do you say at a networking event to promote yourself and not sound pushy?

When people don't know what to say, they either say nothing or say things they wish they hadn't. Neither is great for their business. Learning *what* to say is powerfully effective.

Before role-playing, I'll ask a client, "What's the issue? What's the ideal outcome?" We design the conversation based on the desired result and role-play in a variety of ways. For example, I might play a difficult client, then an easier one, then we'll switch roles so my client can experience what the other person might say or might be feeling. After one of these sessions, my clients are totally prepared. They often leave the session, seek out that difficult client immediately, and have the productive conversation they've wanted to have all along. It's often a breakthrough moment for them.

I also help professionals find the easiest ways to grow their businesses. I ask them questions: What's the simplest way for you to get clients? How can you find new employees quickly to get the job done? What systems can you set up to streamline that process?

What topics do you cover in your business workshops and professional seminars?

I cover four main business topics. The first is *Grow Your Business with LinkedIn*. Most everyone has a LinkedIn profile but few know how to use it. I often hear "Nothing comes from LinkedIn" or "I don't have time for social media" or "LinkedIn never brings in clients."

The truth is LinkedIn is a powerful marketing tool—if it's used correctly. I provide simple, clear steps with lots of examples showing how to create big results using LinkedIn 15 minutes a day.

Another workshop is *Strategies for Creating Work/Life Balance*. I recently presented this seminar to a group of MetLife financial professionals at a large women's conference in Orlando. I taught that in order to create balance, you must first design personal goals just like you create business goals. Participants had an opportunity to create personal goals, look at the issues that would get in the way of achieving these goals, design steps to counteract the challenges and finally get support from family and friends.

It's a popular workshop with great energy and results. I also provide workshops on Time Management, which is an issue all business professionals struggle with. I instruct how to create a *Daily Plan* so their days are easier and better organized. The goal is to make their schedules purposeful and their tasks prioritized, and to help them feel accomplished at the end of the day. Business owners have used my time management system for years and hire me to present the workshop to their employees.

How to Quiet Your Inner Business Critic is a fun work shop. Did you know that most people make negative comments to themselves 80% of the time during their workday? I offer techniques on how to learn what's constructive in these voices, counteract what's destructive in them, and use them to help grow your business. I thought this was exclusively a women's issue. But I now know how powerful this workshop is for men as well.

What's been your most rewarding experience in coaching?

Helping people get excited about their lives, work through issues and move forward—that is wonderfully rewarding. Most people don't have anyone who truly listens, believes in them and encourages them. People have huge inner critics constantly telling them “You're a loser” and “Just forget it” and “There's another mistake to add to your list.” People don't move through life feeling empowered. I love challenging that.

Hire Teri to speak at your next business event.

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