



## Coach Approach Ministries Podcast

### Episode 89: Improve Your Coaching to PCC

Published: March 1, 2018

**Brian Miller:** One of the toughest things for new and not-so-new coaches is finding paying clients. You need paying clients to get better as a coach, and especially if you want to be an ICF-certified coach. People don't always realize that bartering is an accepted form of payment by the International Coach Federation. That's why we put together the Coaching Exchange. The Coaching Exchange is your ticket to paid coaching hours with really good clients. In the Coaching Exchange, you get 40 hours of paid coaching experience, and you help other coaches do the same. Experience matters. Go to [coachapproachministries.org/coachexchange](http://coachapproachministries.org/coachexchange) to find out more.  
[coachapproachministries.org/coachexchange](http://coachapproachministries.org/coachexchange).

#### [Intro Music]

**Brian:** This is Brian Miller, strategic director for Coach Approach Ministries, CAM for short, and I have the pleasure of being joined today by Mr. Chad Hall. Chad, the president of Coach Approach Ministries. Welcome to the podcast.

**Chad Hall:** Brian, every time you introduce me, I feel like I'm on *the Price is Right*, and I should come on down, but I like it.

**Brian:** I was thinking *Let's Make a Deal*, but that's only because of the way you look. It's good that the podcast is audio only. I don't even know what that means. It's just a joke. Today's podcast is our first podcast in the month of March which we tend to have a focus here at Coach Approach Ministries, and our focus for the month of March is how to get to PCC. Those three letters just even tell us the context. What on earth is PCC?

**Chad:** I think it's like the Pacific Coast Highway. No, that's the PCH.

**Brian:** I have no idea.

**Chad:** Let's see. How to get to the PCC. The International Coach Federation has three levels of certification. ACC, which is the associate certified coach, and then there's the PCC, which is the professional certified coach, and then they also have the MCC, which is the master certified coach. The reality is that the PCC, professional certified coach, that's really the standard merit. If you're going to do professional coaching, if you're going to coach for a living, or a side income, or something, you want to

[Transcribed by Alyssa Miller](#)

be at the PCC level. That's where your coaching is good enough that you should charge for it, and that's the standard that the ICF kind of expects everyone to get to. There's not really an expectation that everyone eventually becomes a master certified coach. That's really for people who are directing coach training programs. PCC, that's what most coaches need to set their sights on. There are distinctions between an ACC coach and a PCC coach, and over the years, we've seen people wrestle with that migration from the associate certified coach to the professional.

**Brian:** Certainly, as coached trainers, we've seen very few people struggle to get their ACC. It's a lot of work, but you do the work, you turn in the paperwork. I'm sure you've probably seen somebody get rejected for ACC, but I have never seen the ACC, but the PCC. We hear stories of people saying, "What do I got to do to get certified at the PCC level?" They do turn, I don't know what the percentage is, but people do get turned away at the PCC level, and this is a hurdle. So, we're going to lay out four elements that you've described as the cornerstone elements that support the PCC level, but this is not a roadmap. We're not going step by step. This is not how to apply. This is just four ways of raising your competencies from an ACC to a PCC level. Not four ways, but four areas.

**Chad:** I would say these are four places to kind of look in your coaching to maybe assess, "How am I doing in these four areas," and maybe before even diving into them, just because someone holds the ACC credential, doesn't mean they coach at the ACC level. Most, I shouldn't say most. A lot of, at least one ACC coach I know, coaches at the PCC level. Seriously, quite a few ACC coaches are at the PCC level. They just haven't accumulated the hours of experience, gone through the hurdles, that kind of stuff, but there are no PCC coaches who don't coach at this level. So, just something to keep in mind for folks who are thinking, "Well, ACC sounds kind of like a beginner coach." That doesn't mean that all ACC coaches are beginner coaches. It just means they haven't gone through the hoops and hurdles to get their PCC.

**Brian:** But the PCC does go beyond the ACC, and there are four, what you described as, cornerstone elements that support PCC level. What would be one of those PCC cornerstones? I'm assuming there's going to be four corners.

**Chad:** That's right. This is a square, and it's not an octagon or anything like that... That's another webinar, but the first one is, and you can kind of flesh this one out, hopefully, Brian. The way I think about it is a PCC coach has a balance or an integration between focus and exploration, and a lot of ACC coaches, or at least a lot of beginner coaches, that they tend to overdo it with one of those. They either overdo it with the focus and become so rigid and going through the motions. It's almost like being coached by a machine, or they go to the other extreme and kind of overdo the exploration. The conversation just sort of wanders around. It sort of explores the topic but without intentionality. A PCC coach brings both of those together. It does both of them really, really well and doesn't see those as opposite but brings those together in an integrated way so that the conversation explores and ventures into new territory while also moving intentionally through a process that eventually gets the client to new actions.

**Brian:** So, an ACC coach has thought about the process, knows the process, and if they're not careful, they're too rigid about the process. Now we're in this phase, now we're in this phase, now we've got to finish this way, or they know that, and they want to be explorers, but they don't know how to bring that into the focus. They don't know how to bring that into the process. It just feels a little too loosey-goosey of a conversation.

**Chad:** Yeah, it feels like pouring a cup of water on the floor. It just goes everywhere, and that's kind of useless and just makes a mess. So, the ACC coach who overdoes exploration. "What do you want to talk about?" "I want to talk about my marriage." "Great. What about that? What about? What about? What about? What about? What about?" Sixty-two minutes later, the client has talked about their marriage, and their mother-in-law, and their kids, and the yard work, and all of this spaghetti noodle topic but doesn't really have anything of substance to take away. They haven't gone through those steps of, "What are your goals? What are some options? What would you do?" Think about a coaching model. They haven't really gone through the steps of a model in the conversation. They just wandered around at the topic. That can feel good for a client. They might even have a takeaway from that, but don't submit that recording to the ICF. You're not going to pass.

**Brian:** If I'm hearing you right, and as I train coaches, this is the point where there's been a little bit of exploration around the topic, at least started. We need to explore the topic a little bit, and then I might just stop the session and ask the coaches listening, "What do you think the focus is out of everything," kind of like you talked about, everything's on the floor, but I think a PCC coach can more easily identify what it is that's being talked about, what it is that's truly important to the client. At least use the process to focus back in to bring us back into a focused conversation.

**Chad:** You hit it there, Brian. It's that the PCC coach has access, or they have a competency, around questions that both explore and focus. They have either an intuition, or at least an intentionality of when to stop exploring and go into focus, when to stop focus and do more exploring, what kind of questions might combine those two. They've just got a really nice integrated balance of those throughout the whole conversation, whereas an ACC coach is going to tend to overdo one and underdo the other one.

**Brian:** I like that. I see exactly where you're going. So, that's one of the four cornerstones. What's the second cornerstone?

**Chad:** This is one of those you know it when you hear it, but it's hard to describe how to do it. It's just the PCC coach is easy to talk to. I identified this one several years ago because I realized it was a theme in some of the feedback I was giving in mentor coaching, and I would just say, "Wow. You are easy to talk to. I could just tell the client... They were able to open up. They were able to share. They were able to explore. They were able to do the hard work of being a client because you were easy to talk to." By the way, some people with no coach training are easy to talk to. You just come in naturally with that. Whether you have it naturally or you have to nurture that as a competency to be PCC level coaching. You don't have to be the Johnny Carson easy to talk to, but you at least have to be good enough at that that people can share being open with you, whereas the beginner coach, sometimes they're too judgmental. It feels like an interrogation perhaps. They just do things that make it hard to talk to them.

**Brian:** The easy to talk to person, easy to talk to coach, for me, certainly, truly has no agenda except your agenda. They want to talk about what you want to talk about. They're not going to hijack the conversation. They certainly are not going to bring their own solutions, their own biases. As I think about that, it's just so funny, as a human being, you think, "They need my bias. I can feel it. They need to know what I'm thinking," but if I switch it around and think about them bringing their bias to my thinking, nothing more irritating than that, or judgmental of, "That's a good idea, but that one's not so good." Those are the pieces that really make someone not easy to talk to.

**Chad:** The person who's easy to talk to, they don't do the things that shut down or distract the other person, and they do things that draw out and engage the person being coached. I'd say if there was one super-competency on this one, it's just that you're interested in the other person and what they're talking about. If you want to be easy to talk to, be truly, genuinely interested in the other person, and man, people will open up and talk. By the way, that doesn't mean you just sit there quietly hearing what they're saying. It means you really are actively listening, really interested, asking questions, and not faking it. If you're not genuinely interested in someone, I think it really comes through.

**Brian:** We'll be right back after this brief message. Coach Approach Ministries is like that roast beef sandwich shop, "We have the meat!" In April of 2018, we're offering three high-level coaching classes for coaches who are ready for what's next. *Coaching and the Brain* introduces you to the neurological dynamics involved in learning. You'll learn about the five brains and how to take advantage of all those good chemicals floating around in our brains. *A Coach Approach to Evangelism and Discipleship* gives attention to how a dialogical approach can be effective in evangelism and discipleship. My partners, Chad Hall and Bill Copper, literally wrote the book on this subject with *Faith Coaching*, and if you love assessments, you'll want to take *Using Assessments in Coaching*. You'll learn the when, who, and how of using assessments to promote effective client engagement. These are all online classes which start in April of 2018. So, go to [coachapproachministries.org/coachadvance](http://coachapproachministries.org/coachadvance) to sign up now and keep your coaching skills sharp.

#### [Intro music]

**Brian:** I think what goes along with that is that you're very conversational. You know that process well enough that you don't need to put out landmarks every time you move from one part of the process to another. You can just talk. It feels like a conversation. Not everything you say is a question, and that's certainly what a PCC level is. A great conversationalist, honestly, isn't going to ask question after question. After a while, even if they're open-ended, it just gets a little odd, if you will.

**Chad:** That's right, and that's a great point, Brian. A hear some beginner coaches try not to have an agenda or not sound judgmental. The client will say something like, "I'm thinking about running a marathon," and a normal, human response to that is, "Wow, that's great. Man." Some kind of awesome, but the coach who's trying to do coaching right will say something stupid like, "What's got you interested in that?"

**Brian:** "How far have you ever ran so far?"

**Chad:** "Who do you know who's run a marathon?" Those might not be terrible coaching questions. Some of them might be, but not all of them are terrible coaching questions, but to your point, coaching is more than questions, and part of what makes you easy to talk to is when somebody says something amazing, you say, "That's amazing. That's great. Wow. What you said impressed me." Not like impressed me, I think you're the god of the universe, but it made an impression. I am responding out of what you said. Coaches who try not to have any kind of judgement or they try to be so super objective, that's not a conversation.

**Brian:** I was just thinking of another response to your marathon. "People who can run marathons have a tremendous amount of discipline." It's a statement of truth. I'm just responding with a statement of truth, not kind of what question can I ask to make this exploration, and it's still exploration to make a

[Transcribed by Alyssa Miller](#)

comment about, goodness, how much discipline it must take to prepare and to run a marathon. You must feel an unbelievable sense of achievement after running, putting that on your car, the marathon, right?

**Chad:** I'd like to talk about the things not to say. The one I've heard too often is the coach will say, "Oookay." It's like, yeah, that's not an appropriate response to, "You know, I'm thinking of running a marathon."

**Brian:** Isn't that terrible.

**Chad:** "I started working on a book." "Oookay." That's not easy to talk to. I don't want to say another word to you.

**Brian:** One that still stands out to me. It was one of the first coaching conversations I ever heard, and one of the topics was time management or something, and the coach said, "Ugh." That's not conversation. That's like I don't want to have this conversation any more than you do.

**Chad:** It sounds like going to the doctor.

**Brian:** Alright. So, we've got two cornerstones in place. Let's add a third.

**Chad:** PCC coaches create new awareness, and this is one of the 11 core competencies as outlined by the ICF. So, the listener who's familiar with those core competencies might mistakenly gloss over this one. "Oh yeah. Create new awareness. Got that," but you and I have both seen the distinction between a beginner coach and a professional coach. The beginner coach is going to be pretty good at drawing out awareness that the client has already had. They kind of collect awareness rather than create awareness, but where the beginner coach runs up against the end of their ability is where they say, "So, Brian, what are three options for addressing that," and you say, "I don't know." The beginner coach says, "There you go. The client doesn't know. The client's the expert. I don't know what to do with a client who doesn't know. Coaching doesn't work if the client doesn't know." In contrast, the professional coach says, "Of course you don't know yet." They are able to either ask questions, create exercises, facilitate processes that stimulate thinking, and man, that's what a professional coach is good at. They're good at stimulating the client's thinking, so the client does get some new awareness. They create awareness, not just collect awareness they've created at some other time. Boy, that's one I really see people struggle with.

**Brian:** I think this is the absolute hardest one. This is the one where it's almost like our advice is, "Go capture a unicorn, grind up the horn, and mix it into your cereal." It just seems like magic. It's so easy to say, "Here's what not to do," but I think it's incredibly difficult to know how to raise your level and this idea of creating new awareness for your client.

**Chad:** Yeah. A couple of things that you could lay on top of this cornerstone for this one. One is to have just an unbelievable belief. That's contradictory. Let me put it another way. One is to have an outstanding belief.

**Brian:** An unbelievable belief?

**Chad:** Unbelievable belief. The client really is creative and resourceful, and you have to believe that

about the client. That doesn't mean the client is infinitely creative or infinitely resourceful, but they are creative and resourceful. If you believe that, you're going to coach them differently. So, if they say, "I don't know," you're going to anticipate that they can find it out, that you're going to coach accordingly. That's a big one. Believe in the client as creative and resourceful. Another thing is to be creative, but the thing is, you don't create content as the coach, so you're not trying to be creative to come up with ideas, or options, or perspective, or whatever for your client. Instead, you're being creative in how to stimulate their thinking. You're willing to take a risk, you're willing to try something, a visioning exercise, a brainstorm exercise. You're willing to take a risk because it might not work. In that way, you have to trust the process. Even if this doesn't work, we're still going to get somewhere. I think that really helps with creating new awareness.

**Brian:** For me, just creating an expectation, which might make me even pull back and explain what coaching is and what coaching is not. I find very often, one of the funniest comments I think a client gives me, especially with newer clients is, "I don't know. I'd have to think about that." I think, what kind of expectation have I set that they think, "Well, this is not a place for thinking."

**Chad:** Right, "Better warn Brian that I'm about to think." That's what coaching's about.

**Brian:** That's why we're here and make some space for you. This is a place to brainstorm. This is a place to really take your thinking to a new level. Just create that expectation in your client, and I've gotten to the point, right or wrong, certainly at the beginning of almost every coaching conversation, I'm sure we should, is this idea of confidentiality. We really harp on explaining to the client that this is a confidential conversation, but I have started putting in to every conversation, alongside that that I want to help you get new thinking today. I want you to think and not in any way regurgitate what you know, but I want you to walk away with something new today. I put that right up front.

**Chad:** I think maybe a thread that runs through what you're talking about there is an expectation and a safety because, let's face it, in most areas of life, when we're asked a question, we're supposed to have an answer. If we don't have an answer, it shows a weakness, a lack of intelligence, something wrong with us, and there's a safety in coaching that says no, actually, the design of the coaching process is to get you to where you don't have ready answers, or solutions, or haven't thought of it. It is the exploration of getting somewhere new in your thinking. If you don't have a safety there, it's really hard for people to lean into that. It just feels like they're doing something wrong. Finding some kind of way of reminding or reinforcing that in practically every coaching session. That's a good practice.

**Brian:** I think that goes along with your previous one, number two, which is a coach is easy to talk to, that there's a sense of safety in easy to talk to. It's easy to talk about things. I don't feel like I have to watch myself or be too careful because you're just so easy to talk to.

**Chad:** Maybe we could carve out another little category there which is it's easy to not have to talk, so sometimes you ask those stimulating questions for where the conversation is. The best thing for the client is to not talk for a few minutes. If they feel a safety that they don't have to fill a moment with words, but they can reflect, they can think, they can go somewhere new, and then they can talk. So, a PCC level coach is not only easy to talk to, they also make it easy and safe to not talk when the moment's right.

**Brian:** A resource I might point people to is episode number 83 where Chad and I talk about outlandish  
[Transcribed by Alyssa Miller](#)

questions. This is not everything there is to do with creating awareness, but there is a piece there I thought was interesting to help us stimulate, that's a word you were talking about, stimulate thinking. Sometimes outlandish questions can work there. I might point people to episode 83. Chad, let's wrap this up with the fourth corner of elements that support PCC level coaching.

**Chad:** This one is that PCC coaches really know the difference between designing an action and merely identifying an action. So, the beginner coach, they get the client to, "I want to run a marathon." "Great. What do you need to do to get that?" "I need motivation. I need a plan. I need a blah, blah, blah." Maybe they get the client to identify, "I need to buy shoes. I don't have running shoes," and the beginner coach says, "Super-duper. You've got an action. Alright. Talk to you next week." They identify the action. The professional coach really takes seriously designing the action, which includes identifying it, but once you identify it, you have to design it. Design meaning, what are the details of it? What's the commitment level? What's the motivation?

The who, the what, the when. "So, you're going to buy shoes. What's your first step? Where are you going to look? What's your budget?" Just exploring all of the elements around that action because the PCC coach wants the client, when the session is over, they want the client to have zero obscurity or uncertainty about what exactly they're going to do next. In fact, they want them to feel like they've almost already started taking the action. In fact, they might do the action in the session itself. There's no gap. There's no confusion between session and action. Part of what goes with doing a good job designing action is be good at managing time. So, you're not coming up with an action with two minutes to go in your one-hour conversation, but you've just managed, and you're adapting to the time that you have to design that action really well.

**Brian:** Chad, these are four great cornerstones that I think are going to help people get to the PCC level. I sure appreciate you taking the time to join me and help our listeners think this through, and we want to thank our listeners for joining us. We would just be talking to ourselves, which we'd probably still do, if nobody was listening, but there are lots of people listening, and we appreciate it. Don't miss any of our podcasts. Subscribe to our podcast at iTunes, Overcast, Stitcher, or Google Play by searching for Coach Approach Ministries Podcast. We'll see you next week.

#### [Outro Music]

**Brian:** Want to know more about how coaching enhances discipleship? My partners, Bill Copper and Chad Hall, literally wrote the book on the subject with *Faith Coaching: A Conversational Approach to Helping Others Move Forward in Faith*. We are hosting a free webinar on Thursday, April 12, 2018, and even if you can't attend the live event, register now and we'll send you a link to the recording afterward. To register for this free webinar, go to [coachapproachministries.org/freewebinar](http://coachapproachministries.org/freewebinar).

#### [Outro Music]