

The Democratization of Small Business Coaching

by

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Abstract

This paper explores the importance of increasing support for small business owners delivered by professionally credentialed coaches. Despite the availability coaches, most small business owners do not have access to coaching. Social exchange theory was used to explore the relational exchange dynamics in the small business coaching market including the influence of the International Coaching Federation (ICF) in the democratization of small business coaching. Case study methodology was used with primary data collected via interview methods along with the meta synthesis of existing peer reviewed literature. The results indicated that while small business coaching works, it may not be as lucrative as other sectors and at the same time offers a great personal reward to coaches. With so few ICF credentialed coaches working primarily with small business owners and with the need for coaching so high, an opportunity exists for positive change in this sector.

Keywords: coaching, small business owners, small business, International Coaching Federation.

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Democratization of Small Business Coaching

Chapter 1 - Introduction and Research Questions

In this chapter, I introduce my research and emphasize my interest in coaching for small business owners, highlighting the significance of this study. I present the research background and context to provide an understanding of coaching, particularly small business coaching, and its priority and status. The research question is discussed to clarify the scholarship's focus. In the opportunity and context section, I outline the intent, aiming to bring awareness of the need for small business owners to have access to coaching. Overall, this chapter sets the stage for an examination of the small business coaching market, emphasizing its importance, and providing context for the research study.

Statement of Opportunity

Imagine a world where small business owners have access to professionally trained coaches, supporting them in developing the skills, confidence, and resources needed to contribute to a healthy world economy—creating secure and meaningful employment for others while maintaining personal prosperity and freedom. If only it were that easy. According to Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada Small Business Branch (ISED), fifty one percent of small businesses do not make it to year five (ISED, 2021) (Turner & Endres, 2017). The surviving forty-nine percent struggle to get and keep their business profitable (Muthusamy & Kannan, 2023).

As it is to underestimate the importance of water for survival, so it would be to underestimate the crucial role of small businesses in local economic development, job creation, poverty alleviation, and overall economic growth (Gherghina, 2020). The International Labour

Organization's (ILO) reports, small businesses are responsible for seventy percent of all jobs globally (ILO, 2022). While small business owners are recognized as the drivers for economic growth (Ribeiro-Soriano, 2017), they are often the first to experience the effects of economic changes, whether positive or negative (Guidant Financial, 2019).

Start-ups and corporations often get help from government programs or venture capitalists (Mason & Brown, 2013). Main Street small business owners don't—especially not during years three through eight when most have a viable business, several employees, and more struggles than they expected (Afful-Dadzie & Afful-Dadzie, 2016).

Considering all these challenges, it becomes crucial to examine who could potentially help small business owners. Through my experience of coaching small businesses for over fifteen years, and as an International Coaching Federation (ICF) credentialed coach for twelve of those years, I have observed that small business coaching is a less common niche in comparison to other coaching specializations, predominantly executive and leadership coaching. And, to highlight the gap, according to the ICF, less than 5% of their coaches identify as a small business coach (ICF, 2023). For small business owners, support in the form of coaching may not be obtained due to lack of availability, concerns about the expense, doubts about value and lack of time (Mole et al., 2017).

This research explores how coaching by professionally credentialed coaches, specifically those who hold ICF credentials, can be an effective tool to help navigate these challenges and to gain understanding that can inform the development of more targeted coaching strategies and programs for small business owners.

Research question

The aim of the study is to explore the relationship between International Coaching Federation (ICF) credentialled coaches and small business owners. The overarching research question will ask “How can the ICF contribute to encouraging coaches to coach small business owners?” To help answer this primary research question, the sub research questions are outlined below:

- What are the unique characteristics of ICF credentialled coaches that would support small business owners?
- What are the coaching needs of small business owners?
- What influence does the ICF have on small business owner coaching?

Research Context

Justification for the study stems from the fact that a healthy small business community contributes to economic sustainability by creating jobs, generating revenue, promoting innovation and reducing poverty (Sawang, 2023) (Caldwell, 2017). Small businesses are essential to economic and social wellbeing (OECD, 2017). The COVID-19 pandemic continues to cause economic and financial disruptions for the small business community making it very difficult for many companies to continue (Zambrano et al., 2021).

The exploration of help from coaching for struggling small business owners makes for a timely research topic. With only 3% of ICF coaches having reported that small business coaching is their main area of focus (ICF, 2023), and with the needs of small business so high, it is fitting that we explore the gap in the small business coaching market.

When examining the application of coaching on small business, Compton (2012) research presents “strong evidence of business coaching’s effectiveness” (Crompton 2012, p.27). Entrepreneurs reported that having a business coach positively impacted their business

performance and growth. This may present an opportunity for ICF credentialled coaches to support small business owners through coaching. The exploration of coaching small business owners aligns with the stated studies objectives.

In Support of this Research

The Grand Challenge for Research on the Future of Coaching reminds us that “the integrity of any field of practice rests on its intellectual foundations and research” (Boyatzis, Hullinger & Penafort, 2022). I was inspired after meeting Dr. Boyatzis to bring a question related to the efficacy of coaching for small business owners, a market sector that post 2020 COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a great need for professional help. Additionally, “entrepreneurship and small business is a growing discipline” (Liang & Dunn, 2011) which presents an opportunity for coaches, who are most often a small business owner themselves, seeking to grow their practice. Why is this important now? It may be the worst of times and the best of times (Strauss, 2020) for small business. Inflation, globalization, climate change, the war on Ukraine, all add to the already heavy burden small business owners face every day (OECD, 2023). Based on the above, I see a strong need for research on the role of coaching in supporting the well-being and ongoing development of small business owners (Zambrano Farias et al., 2021).

Author’s Context for Study

During my attendance at the 2019 ICF International Conference in Prague, Czech Republic, I observed biases expressed by coaches regarding working with small business owners. The coaches appeared to hold negative attitudes towards coaching small business owners, instead preferring to work with corporate executives and CEO’s of larger organizations. They also said that coaching small business owners was consulting, not coaching. Upon further investigation, I learned that the ICF currently does not have a small business community of practice. I seek to

better understand the position of ICF coaches and find ways to encourage coaches to leverage their existing skills to serve the small business market.

Organizational Context

With the focus of the research on small business owners having access to a coach, the organization that may have some influence on the relationship between small business owners and coaches is the International Coaching Federation. The ICF is the “largest coach accreditation body in the world (Griffiths & Campbell, 2008). The role of the ICF as a membership organization that provides support, networking opportunities, continued education, and connections for coaches globally, will be explored through the lens of small business coaching.

The ICF’s mission is to advance coaching excellence, impact, and value worldwide and values professionalism, collaboration, humanity, and equity (ICF, 2023). Emphasizing the importance of responsibility, respect, integrity, competence, excellence, social connection, community building, kindness, compassion, and understanding the needs of others to promote equitable processes that create equality for all (ICF, 2023).

I am particularly interested in the ICF Core Competencies, the measure used to align, train, evaluate coaches and training providers for accreditation (ICF, 2020). The ICF has a commitment to empower coaches worldwide and with over fifty thousand members, the ICF represents one of the largest potential resources for small business owners to access a coach.

Theoretical Framework Perspective

To examine the research question, I will be utilizing Social Exchange Theory (SET) which is most often used in the explanation of business-to-business relationships (Lambe et al., 2001). The fundamental concept of social exchange theory is cost and rewards, (Roecklein,

2018, p 5). Homan adds that “any interaction between individuals” is an exchange of resources (Homans 1958, p. 597). These resources go beyond goods or money to include social amenities like status or friendship (Lambe et al., 2001).

My aim is to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics between small business owners and ICF credentialed coaches, identify shared objectives, and explore ways to facilitate stronger connections between them. The idea that cost and reward comparisons drive human decisions and behavior (Roeckelein, 2018, p 7) makes SET an idea theoretical framework to explore the topic. To better understand the impact of credentialing in the coaching field, articles related to training, education, accreditation in coaching were considered.

Definition of Terms

Small Business

There is not a standard definition of small businesses that is universally accepted. (Alsaaty, F. & Makhoulouf, H. 2020). A business seeks to provide goods and services to others (Nickels, McHugh & McHugh, 2020) and can take many forms. The precise definition of a small business can vary depending on the industry and country and is most often based on the number of employees (B.C. Ministry of Jobs, Economic Recovery, and Innovation, 2021). For the purpose of this study I have chosen the Canadian definition of a small business as one with fewer than 100 employees (Government of Canada, 2022). In the United States, the Small Business Administration (SBA) defines a small business as having fewer than 500 employees for most industries (U.S. Small Business Administration, 2023). In addition to size, other characteristics of small businesses can include being independently owned and operated, having a small market share, and serving a local or niche market.

Small Business Owners

In my own words, a small business owner is someone who owns a business, has a specific number of employees depending on where in the world the business is located, seeks prosperity and personal freedom and is both resilient and risk taking. The terms entrepreneur or self-employed are often used to describe a small business owner. For additional context, Turner and Endres defines small business owners as “individuals who conceive, launch, and assume the risk for new economic activities in the form of a business venture” (Turner & Endres, 2017).

Coaching

The primary definition of coaching I chose for this research comes from Whitmore, in *Coaching for Performance*, “Coaching is unlocking peoples potential to maximize their own performance.” This definition can be applied to all coaching disciplines, including sports, leadership, team, health, and small business coaching (Whitmore, 2007). Crompton defines business coaching as: a collaborative relationship between experienced business coaches and entrepreneurial leaders, focusing on business goals, entrepreneurs’ development, and contribution to firm growth (Crompton, 2012, p. 13). The ICF describes coaching as “partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential” (ICF, 2023).

ICF Credentialed Coach

Searching for an academic definition of a coach, I found no consistency. ICF credentialed coaches are “professionals who have met stringent education and experience requirements” and have “demonstrated a thorough understanding of the coaching competencies” that set the standard in the profession (ICF 2023). Additionally, they adhere to strict ethical guidelines as part of ICF’s mission to protect and serve coaching consumers” (ICF, 2023). A distinction between an ICF credentialled coach and other helping professionals including consultants,

mentors and trainers offering support to small business owners is that ICF coaches are not required to be the expert in their client's business. An ICF coach is trained to provide an environment for learning and personal growth through inquiry (ICF, 2020). The essence of coaching is fundamentally non-directive, instead encourages self-exploration (Clegg et al.,2005).

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations

A combination of a limited project scope and strict academic guidelines for carrying out the research, created a tight framework to explore the research question. Limitations included a cap of a maximum of three interviews which may not be fully adequate to explore the problem. The scope of the study was confined to the application of a case study methodology. Finally, only 200 hours were allotted as the time frame within which the research was to be completed.

Delimitations

I excluded articles that were more than ten years old unless it was identified as a reference from one of the more recent sources. By placing limitations on searches to those newer than 2013 and favoring articles from Research Gate, this helped develop a robust and recent list of peer reviewed papers to consider. I was also careful about accepting COVID-19 pandemic research as that event significantly changed a typical view of small business. Additionally, for primary data gathering, I excluded coaches with any personal connection to my own practice.

Chapter 2 - Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Chapter Two provides insights on the theoretical framework that will guide the study, namely social exchange theory, which aims to explore the relationship between ICF credentialed coaches and small business owners. The literature review examines the available research on coaching for small businesses and the importance of supporting the small business coaching market. Overall, this chapter sets the stage for developing the context of the research topic as it relates to the democratization of coaching for small business owners.

Theoretical Framework

Social exchange theory (SET) is valued as being one of the oldest theories of social behavior (Lambe et al., 2001). The basic assumption of SET is that individuals enter into relationship with each other based on doing so that they will be rewarded (Blau, 1960). Holman describes “any interaction between individuals is an exchange of resources” (Homans 1958, p. 597) (Blau, 1960).

Cost and reward are the most common words used when talking about SET. Emerson explains that the fundamental difference from other concepts when it comes to reward is “reinforcement” (Emerson, 1976). That the more an exchange is socially rewarded, the more it is reinforced. I like to think of it as being popular in high school, what the popular kid does, others follow and do the same thing, which reinforces the behavior. Emerson describes the word cost as “troublesome” (Emerson, 1976 p. 349) as it related to time and effort as “painful or boring” work. (p.349). An appropriate observation for me based on exploring what could be keeping coaches from working with small business owners and small business owners hiring coaches.

The theory relevant to the study proposes a framework for exploring the nature of the relationship between ICF credentialled coaches and small business owners and specifically aims to examine links related to "social status, influence, social networks, trust, affect, and emotion." (Cook & Rice, 2006). The costs in terms of status, reputation and training for coaches might be too high and the rewards might be too low.

For small business owners the resources exchanged may include the actual coaching service along with intangible social amenities such as status and friendship (Lambe et al., 2001). The ICF would be considered a social network, which provides a community for coaches to learn, grow and connect including International Conferences as one example. Earning ICF credentials can improve a coach's status and reputation in any coaching niche.

The ICF core competences, updated in 2019 include "emphasis on ethical behavior and confidentiality" (ICF, 2020) behaviors may positively impact the social exchange between coaches and small business clients and could be a deciding factor for a client in procuring coaching service. Other core competencies that may support a positive social exchange between coach and small business owner include the practice of creating a space that allows the client to share freely in a safe, supportive environment with a coach who is sensitive to their experiences, values, and beliefs (ICF, 2020).

Together SET is an ideal lens to view the research question. It is critical to highlight the importance of small business in terms of contribution to global economic sustainability and to develop strategies to better connect ICF coaches with the small business market. The interpretive paradigm would be employed. The interpretive approach is concerned with meaning and "seeks to understand an organizational member's meaning of a situation" (Swanson, 2005, p. 19).

Literature Review

To contextualize the study on small business coaching by ICF credentialed coaches, it is helpful to understand the elements, interconnections and purpose of the systems involved (Meadows, 2008). The understanding of these relationships can be developed by exploring the related literature through the lens of the theoretical framework. Specifically, the importance put on small business by stakeholders, the personal and financial needs along with challenges faced by small business owners and support sought through coaching and other helping methods. Exploring professional credentials for coaches, counsellors and even business bank managers may provide insight into perceived value.

There are several options to gain understanding of social exchange in coaching through the lens of similar business environments, including leadership coaching, executive coaching, and managerial coaching. Some options may include exploring research on the success and failure of small business, to identify any specific needs of the small business owner and looking for trends related to other helping professions, including mentors, advisors, and consultants.

The Importance of Small Business

Because small businesses are important contributors to the economy and can play a vital role in creating jobs, driving innovation, and supporting local communities (Antonio, 2020), then researching methods to provide greater support is more than just fair, it is essential. Significant research is available on themes related to small business (Caldwell, 2017) (Afful-Dadzie & Afful-Dadzie, 2016) (Burns, 2016) (Zambrano Farias et al., 2021). For this study, I focused on the current and future needs of small business owners to explore coaching as one way to get them the help they need to be successful.

Characteristics of a Small Business Owner

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and small business failure are two predominant themes found when searching small business literature. Small business owners often start their business out of necessity and are great at performing the work of the business but have low business management skills (Gerber, 1995) making them more vulnerable to crisis than a larger organization (Sawang, 2023). Entrepreneurs also tend to be higher in achievement motivation, have a risk-taking propensity and a preference for innovation”(Stewart et al., 1999). Small business owners have a preference for autonomy and the need for independent decision-making (Lechner & Gudmundsson, 2014) which may contribute to them not seeking support from a coach.

I found the literature review and global trends presented in "*Explanatory Factors of Business Failure*" to be particularly informative (Zambrano Farias et al., 2021). The study of 588 research articles from journals, institutions and countries sheds light on the various factors that contribute to business failure, highlighting the significance of supporting small business owners. By examining this research, it is possible to gain greater insight into the vulnerabilities and needs of a small business owner and align those needs with the stated competencies of a credentialed coach. Zambrano specifically states that “the study of business failure is more topical than ever” (Zambrano et al., 2021).

In 2015, the United Nations Member States shared the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which is “a blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future” (United Nations, 2015) highlighting the importance of supporting small business.

Small Business Coaching, Consulting and Mentoring

Coaching is a practice that is utilized in a variety of fields, such as business, sports, and personal development (Terblanche et al., 2022) and has shown to be effective. However, the

focus of coaching studies in the small business field has largely been on large corporations, resulting in an absence of literature addressing the needs of small businesses (Tsai & Barr, 2021).

Literature on executive and leadership coaching was specifically reviewed to develop an understanding of the impact of coaching in general including a “*Systemic Review of Executive Coaching Outcomes*” (Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2018), *Coaching as a Developmental Intervention in Organisations: A Systematic Review of Its Effectiveness and the Mechanisms Underlying It*” (Grover & Furnham, 2016) and “The Grand Challenge for Research on the Future of Coaching” (Boyatzis et al., 2022).

Small business owners seeking support may consider consulting, counseling, human resource management, training, psychology, therapy, teaching, and/or advising (Koopman, 2013) providing an abundance of comparative options to compare to coaching. An evaluation of research related to other helping professionals helps identify the differences and similarities between coaching, mentoring, consulting (Couteret, 2012).

While there is a growing body of literature on coaching (Haan, 2021), there are few studies that specifically examined the impact of coaching on small businesses. However, a notable study in this area, *Small Business Coaching: The effect of business coaching and Mentoring on small-to-medium enterprise performance and growth*, investigates the influence of coaching and mentoring on the performance and growth of small-to-medium enterprises (Compton, 2012) was an exception.

Professional Credentials associated with Small Business Support

Credentialing, a crucial yet complex process, represents professional competence through various means including national bodies providing registrations and certifications, governmental

agencies issuing licenses or registrations, and private institutes granting certifications for specialized practices (Potash, 2022). The three largest global coaching credentialing bodies are the ICF, the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC), and the Association for Coaching (Passmore, 2021) each providing non-degree coach market credentials. The ICF attracts coaches seeking to associate themselves with a professional standard of practice with widely known and respected credentials and has a globally recognized, independent credentialing program for coach practitioners (Passmore & Sinclair, 2020).

Looking for parallel professional credentials related to supporting business, I found certifications in project management, such as the Project Management Professional (PMP) designation (Giammalvo, 2013) which demonstrates proficiency in planning, executing, and overseeing projects to achieve business objectives, credentials in counseling, such as a Master's degree in Counseling (Lalande, 2004) and other academic certifications in business analysis, leadership development, or organizational development, all of which can contribute to supporting business owners. Non-academic credentials include a wide range of awards including certificates, certifications, and micro credentials, yet “despite their rising popularity, the environment in which these credentials are developed and awarded is a bit like the wild west.” (Van Noy et al., 2019, p. 1).

This chapter has provided a foundation for the research to follow, including the theoretical framework of social exchange theory, a literature review of coaching for small businesses and the importance of supporting growth, and support for the research. Additionally, personal context for the study has been shared, highlighting the value of exploring coaching for small business owners. Overall, this chapter sets the stage for a deeper exploration of the factors

that impact the coaching relationship between ICF coaches and small business owners and seeks to inspire coaches to engage in this vital market.

Chapter 3 - Methodology and Methods

Chapter three shares the methodology as well as the methods used and provides a step-by-step description of the process taken for gathering data. A detailed portrayal of the research subjects, report of data gathering tools and processes chosen, and the ethical considerations are explained. Following the steps outlined in this chapter paves the way for others to further explore the challenge identified in the research question.

Methodology

The research was conducted using meta-synthesis as its main methodology and drew on case study methodology for the primary research. Based on the interpretive paradigm makes it suitable for qualitative research (Braun 2019).

The process of meta-synthesis involves several stages, including identifying the research question, searching for, and selecting relevant qualitative studies, appraising the quality of the studies, extracting data from the studies, synthesizing, and analyzing the data, and reporting the findings (Hoon, 2013). Meta synthesis is an evidence-based method of developing new ideas and theories (Scazziota et al., 2023). To gather enough data to fully explore small business coaching, literature related to coaching in general was included along with scholarship that mentioned the International Coaching Federation.

Case study methodology is used to gain a deeper understanding of subjective experiences, through the interpretation of the meanings that individuals attribute to their experiences (Aberdeen, 2013). Primary data from three participants to gain their personal experiences and views were collected through interview methods with the addition of extensive exploration of existing peer reviewed literature.

Methods

Part 1 - Primary Data Gathering

Using interviews as my research instrument, I was able to collect, measure and analyze data from participants (Teachers College, IRB 2017). Interviews are where verbal questions are presented to elicit a verbal response from the person being interviewed (DePoy, Elizabeth & N., 2016). The focus on rich individual human perception, experience, and sensemaking serve as the hallmark of qualitative research (Lanka et al. 2021).

Each participant in the study – an ICF credentialled coach, a small business owner, and a representative from the ICF has experienced the topic based on their unique perspective, which considers the "social, cultural, and theoretical contexts" of their experiences (Larkin, Eatough & Osborn, 2011, p. 64). Steps taken to collect and analyze the data as well as the methods taken to derive insights that may inform any recommendations were clearly documented.

Steps for Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with one participant from each of the targeted groups, signing a consent form ensuring that they both met the criteria and that there were no conflicts of interest. The topic was presented followed by open ended probing questions, lasting one hour in duration. Meetings were held via Zoom Communications, a video conferencing platform, and were recorded using an application called Otter.ai (<https://otter.ai/home>). Otter is a voice to text transcription software that records and tracks individual participants voice and provides a script of each conversation. Careful consideration was taken to develop interview questions that would allow participants to express their personal views freely and fully on the topic. The interview questions are shared on Appendix 1 – 3.

Part 2 - Meta Synthesis Process

Key words: Small Business, Small Business Owners, Coaching, Coach credentials, International Coaching Federation, Small business coaching.

The method applicable to the research assignment was gathering data for meta-synthesis. Meta synthesis is an evidence-based method of developing new ideas and theories (Scazziota et al., 2023). Using Google Scholar as a starting place, I searched for articles related to the research question, both as single words and phrases and by combining key words. For example, small business coaching and business success, International Coaching Federation, and small business owners. To read the full text of many of the articles, I then went to the Royal Roads University Library where students have greater access than typically granted to an online researcher without an affiliation with an academic institution. I was also provided with a helpful tutorial on finding appropriate material using the Royal Roads University database.

All found documents were saved into a reference management system called Zotero, that helped organize and synthesize the key themes and ideas from the selected sources. As each article was added, I spent the time to evaluate the presented data. I highlighted findings by copying and placing key ideas in the notes section of Zotero and then used the tag feature to ensure I could later easily retrieve what was offered. The Royal Roads Student services department provided valuable tutoring with tips on the use of Zotero. After making my selections and adding them to Zotero, I took time to download the files (if permitted) and saved them as a .pdf on my computer. Looking further, I then searched the reference section of each paper to select additional sources that would deepen my understanding and provide further context on the research question.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis (TA), a foundational method for qualitative analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was the technique chosen to examine, discover, and interpret themes and patterns located in the data collected. Using the theoretical framework of Social Exchange, specifically considering relational exchanges of cost and reward through the lens of small business coaching, brought meaning when observed from multiple perspectives. Braun invites researchers to use TA to capture what is important about the data in relationship to the research question. (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Transcriptions from the interviews were printed, and then using a unique colour I highlighted statements related to the studies key words including coaching, small business and the ICF. Further, while reading through each interview, I asked myself, ‘why are they telling me this?’ to gain deeper understand and to document underlying ideas, themes, and perceptions from the participants. Reflecting then on the interviews, connections were made to further source and analyze emerging themes from the literature.

During the literature review process, I searched for the current state of knowledge related to my research question, key authors, articles and theories related to the topic, and sought to identify any gaps in the literature (Bhattacharjee, 2012). After categorizing the literature in Zotero using the same keyword groups and taking notes relevant to the research question during data collection, I was able to generate a report from Zotero that compiled my notes for analysis. I then printed the notes and again using colour highlighting of key words to assist in the data analysis process.

Ethical Considerations.

Due to the fact of this being a qualitative research project, I was aware that I would not be able to fully “separate myself from the research” (Fusch et al., 2018). I am, by the nature of

my work, intimately connected to the research question. As an ICF credentialed coach, a small business owner and someone who teaches other coaches on the topic of small business coaching additional transparency and accountability is needed.

Several strategies were used to mitigate researchers' biases. The first was to recognize the biases as stated above and design the research in a way so that data could be collected as independent of my perspective as possible. I did this by focusing on the research question and my academic goal of presenting an integral and unbiased paper. The second was to read everything related to the topic that came up in the scholarship based on the keyword search, even if I did not instinctively connect with the authors views. The third was to ask my peer reviewers to specifically provide focused feedback related to biases.

To address ethical considerations for this research project, participants were provided with a consent form that described both the risks and benefits of contributing (TCPS CORE, 2022). The research was conducted in accordance with the Royal Roads University ethical guidelines provided in the Applied Coaching Project Handbook. As a student and novice researcher I am aware of the responsibility to ensure that the social and psychological well-being of research participants would not be adversely affected. To address reliability of the study, I approached the research in a way that could be replicated by providing the steps taken in the methods section of this paper. To ensure validity and trustworthiness of the study, I have adhered to the academic requirements and limitations, in delivering what I set out to do and attest to the results being sound, demonstrating thoughtful reasoning and a persuasive case.

Chapter 4 - Findings and Analysis

In this chapter, highlights of the key findings from both the interviews and literature are shared along with summary descriptions of the findings. Primary data findings are grouped by participant and corresponding participant group, an ICF credentialed coach, a small business owner and a member of the ICF team. To keep focus on the research question, “How can the ICF contribute to encouraging coaches to coach small business owners?” I have grouped the qualitative research findings into three categories; the challenges and importance of small business, exploring the benefits of small business coaching and scholarship related to credentialed small business coaches.

Interviews

I conducted a series of three, one-hour interviews, for the purpose of gaining insight into the current and future state as described by participants to gain insights into the research question from various perspectives.

The first was a small business owner who shared their experiences working with both an ICF credentialed coach and two non-credentialed coaches. The second was an ICF credentialed Professional Certified Coach (PCC) who has more than 750 hours of experience coaching small business owners. The third, was a representative from the ICF, who is currently engaged with the learning and development team. These interviews provided valuable insight into the experience each holds related to small business coaching. Each overall finding is supported with a descriptive summary of what was shared in the interview.

Needs Analysis

From a high-level analysis, the three interviews identified seven shared themes including the value of coaching, the importance of the ICF to provide standards in coaching, the

challenges, and opportunities for small business owners of obtaining coaching, the impact of technology, specifically AI, the need for sector specific coaching, the value of the human element in coaching and the importance of community and connection.

Table 1

Interview - Small Business Owner

Theme	Summary of Findings from Interview
Emotional and Spiritual Reward	The small business owner found the reward of coaching to be more on the emotional and spiritual side, providing someone to talk to and navigate the challenges of running a business.
Value and Benefits	Despite the costs involved, the small business owner perceived the benefits of coaching to be significant, outweighing the expenses. They emphasized the importance of finding the right coach and leaning into the coaching process.
Feedback Loop	Coaching played a crucial role in maintaining a positive feedback loop, bolstering confidence, providing a sounding board, and facilitating self-reflection.
Perspective and Objectivity	The small business owner valued the perspective and objectivity that a coach brought to their business challenges. They appreciated having someone outside their immediate space to discuss difficult situations.
Confidence and Support	Coaching contributed to maintaining a high level of confidence throughout challenging periods, and the emotional support and friendship aspect of the coaching relationship were highly valued.
Accountability and Goal Orientation	There was an expressed desire for more clarity and goal-oriented sessions, as well as increased accountability to work towards long-term goals.

Active Listening and Challenging, Evokes Awareness	The small business owner highlighted the coach's skills of active listening, providing feedback, and gently pushing them out of their comfort zone to see things differently or make changes.
Methodology and Personal Connection	They experienced differences among credentialed vs non credentialed coaches, with non-credentialed coaches following a methodology or script, that lacked personal connection and seemed less attentive or responsive to their needs.
Understanding Small Business Owners	The small business owner felt that the coaching industry should better understand the significant ups and downs faced by small business owners, as well as the unique challenges and turbulence of running a small business.
Sector-Specific Coaching	It was noted that the ICF could focus on specific sectors of the small business world to provide targeted coaching services based on the needs and goals of those businesses.
Credibility and Stories	The small business owner suggested that the ICF, if seeking engagement with the small business world, should have credible stories and demonstrate an understanding of the pains and challenges faced by small business owners.

Through the lens of social exchange, the small business owner stated that “the reward was more on the emotional and spiritual side of things” and the cost was “nominal” considering the value of having someone to talk to about what was going on in the business. They also shared that “the most successful people in the world have a coach” and having a coach “allowed me to maintain a high level of confidence.” They noted the primary difference between the ICF credentialed coach and others employed previously was not having to follow someone else’s script of what they should be doing, instead with the ICF coach being able choose their own

agenda for meetings. They also valued the ICF coaches' skill of listening and to stay focused on what it is they wanted to talk about.

Table 2

Interview - ICF Credentialed Coach

Theme	Summary of Findings from Interview
Energy and Resilience	Small business owners exhibit great energy and resilience despite facing significant challenges which in turn gives energy to the coach to continue to work with this sector.
Service and Altruism	The coach finds reward beyond money in providing service and helping small business owners, and their motivation is described as altruistic.
Financial Rewards	While the small business coaching market may not be highly lucrative financially, the coach values the return on investment in terms of service and fulfillment. Specifically saying that “they are small and they have some income issues”.
Supportive Resources:	The coach appreciates the invaluable training resources provided by the ICF, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.
Community and Connection	The ICF plays a vital role in connecting coaches and fostering a supportive community. Talked about ICF developing a culture to support small business coaches.
Investing in Small Businesses	The coach has experienced NGOs supporting small businesses with coaching, as it facilitates market connections and benefits for local entrepreneurs. Coaches can benefit from these connections which in turn provides greater access to coaching for small business owners.

Future Focus	The future of small business coaching may involve leveraging AI tools for efficiency and emphasizing communication skills in the face of technological advancements.
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The ICF credentialed coach described their small business owner clients by saying “we call them small business, but what they are dealing with are big challenges” and shared how much appreciation they have for the energy small business owner clients bring to meetings. Being able to support clients by providing them space to think and focus was central to the success of their small business coaching practice. Paramount to the coach’s success was the support received by the ICF through training, connection, and community. Being an ICF PCC coach afforded the credibility needed for them to earn NGO funding to support small business owners in their community, a nice example of social exchange for this study. The coach noted that the reward of working with small business owners was less about money and more about the reward of personal satisfaction received in the exchange and noted that “small business owners have no money.” The discussion in this interview of NGO funding for small business owner coaching led to the author exploring further the theme of the democratization of small business coaching.

Table 3

Interview - ICF Representative

Theme	Summary of Findings from Interview
Democratization of Coaching	A novel theme of democratization emerged and how small business owners may not be able to afford coaching. The need to make coaching

	more accessible to businesses of all sizes, not just large corporations. May include the use of AI.
Standards and Accreditation	The importance of setting and maintaining high standards for coaching and the value of accreditation for coaches.
Community and Connection	The significance of communities of practice, webinars, and local chapters in fostering connection and collaboration among coaches.
Coaching in Small Business Settings	The unique challenges and opportunities associated with coaching small business owners, including their resource limitations and the potential for growth and empowerment.
Technological Advancements	The impact of technology on coaching, including the potential for app-based coaching platforms, the role of technology in leveling the playing field for small businesses, and the need for coaches to adapt to technological changes.
Coaching as an Enabler of Human Development	The transformative power of coaching in enabling human development and its potential to contribute to the advancement of society.
Mindset Shift and Generation Gap	The changing mindset towards coaching, particularly among younger generations, and the potential for coaching to become more widely accepted and valued in various industries and sectors.
Sector-specific Coaching	The role of coaching in specific sectors such as healthcare, family-owned businesses, and education. A doctor for example, owns a small business.
International Perspectives	Exploring coaching from non-Western perspectives, international aid connections, and the global impact of coaching initiatives.

Research and Data	The importance of research and data in understanding the impact and effectiveness of coaching and its relevance to small businesses.
Resource Limitations	The challenges faced by coaches and small businesses due to resource constraints and the potential for technology to address some of these limitations.
Transformative Goals	The alignment of coaching with global goals and initiatives focused on democracy, inclusion, and human development, such as the 2015 UN Sustainable Development Goals.
Marketing and Business Development	The need for coaches to effectively market themselves and develop business skills to reach and serve their target clients, including small businesses. Coaches are small business owners.
Evolution of Coaching	The evolving nature of coaching and the need for coaches to continuously develop and improve their skills, mindset, and understanding of various industries and coaching themes.

Clarity that the ICF is a membership driven organization that takes direction from and for members was an important positioning statement that came from the interview related to social exchange. This member-centric approach ensures that the ICF's initiatives and focus align closely with the needs and interests of its membership base. The participant shared that the “value of connection and community” are central to the organization’s role in their relationship with coaches. They noted the limited resources small business owners have for coaching and that coaches themselves are small business owners.

Overall, the interviews provided rich insight into the value of coaching for small business owners, the importance of the ICF to provide community and connection for coaches, and the value of the human element in coaching. Multiple social exchanges were noted from the cost of coaching not being an issue to the cost being a complete barrier to obtaining coaching. For the coach, having an ICF designation meant being able to obtain funding for their clients, and for the client interviewed in this study, the coaching led to them having the support they needed to confidently sell their company.

Meta-Synthesis Scholarship Review Findings

Challenges and Importance of Small Business

Overall, there was evidence in the literature to suggest that small business owners struggle at the best of times. When searching small business, the topic of failure was one of the most common themes. Scholars underscore statistics on business failure of up to 80% in the first five years, as if it were the normal characteristics of a small business entity (Hunter, 2011).

Equally evident is just how important small businesses are to the economy as highlighted by this statement: “The welfare of the whole country and regions depends on the development of small business” (Hryhorash et al., 2018). The importance small business play in the overall economic and social environment cannot be understated (Gherghina et al., 2020). In the US, small business owners represent 99.9% of all U.S. employer firms (Turner & Endres, 2017) making them the most significant market for coaches. A study on community resilience noted the importance of small business beyond the products they sell (Buckman & Tremblay, 2021).

Small Business and the 2030 UN Sustainability Goals

According to Zambrano et al. (2021), the establishment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2030 by the United Nations has made the study of business failure

more topical than ever. Specifically, the achievement of Goal 8, which focuses on decent work and economic growth, relies on the survival of small businesses. The authors stress that without the presence of smaller organizations, it becomes impossible to address other goals such as poverty reduction (Goal 1), eradication of hunger (Goal 2), promotion of health and well-being (Goal 3), and the reduction of inequalities (Goal 10). It is essential for individuals to have “decent jobs to sustain themselves, acquire dignified housing, and achieve a reasonable quality of life” (Zambrano et al., 2021, p. 2). An updated report by ILO shared concern global crisis making it even more challenging to accomplish the SDG’s, specifically mentioning those relating to long-standing decent work deficits and deepening inequality (ILO, 2023).

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development states the outlook for 2023 remains highly uncertain for small business owners due to “high inflation and rising interest rates, exacerbated by the effects of Russia's war against Ukraine” (OECD, 2023) . Reasons identified on why small businesses fail including going into business for the wrong reason, getting worn-out, underestimating the time investment, pressure from family, pride, lack of market awareness and lack of financial responsibility (Titus, 2006). Turner shares “that there is no single theory on the cause of small-business owners” failures after launching a small-business initiative” (Turner & Endres, 2017). The small business sector does not get the help they need from governments, banks financial institutions, and corporations which prevents them from being more competitive (Afful-Dadzie & Afful-Dadzie, 2016).

Benefits and Challenges of Small Business Coaching

Today, coaches work with individuals and teams to help them achieve their goals, enhance their performance, and overcome obstacles (Tate, 2021). The benefits of coaching include improving work/life balance, enhancing social competencies, increasing self-awareness,

boosting self-confidence, developing relationship and interpersonal skills, adapting to change, setting, gaining role clarity, and changing behaviors (Blackman et al. 2016. p. 18).

Dr. Anna Blackman published findings of a critical review of 111 published empirical papers investigating business coaching, theory and outcomes resulting in themes of benefits of coaching including improving work life balance, psychological and social competencies, increasing self-awareness and building confidence (Blackman, 2016). Grant describes a full list of application of coaching including business related challenges of leadership development, team building, communication, enhancing sales performance, and dealing with resistance to change (Grant, 2012).

There is a common perception that coaching small business owners is more akin to consulting rather than "pure" coaching (Clegg et al., 2005). However, renowned consultants, such as Edgar Schein has shown in his book *Humble Consulting* (2013) that building strong relationships, problem-solving, and progress are achieved by asking the right questions. This highlights the importance of coaching small business owners through inquiry and open-ended questioning rather than providing solutions or advice, as one would expect from a consultant.

As a facilitator and catalyst, a coach focuses on the person running the business versus the business itself (Couteret, 2012). David Rock, a neuroscientist who employs a brain-based approach to coaching, discussed the diverse origins of coaching in an interview with Jeffrey M. Schwartz. He stated that coaching is the product of a fusion of multiple disciplines, including training, adult education, consulting, change management, the human potential movement, psychology, and systems science (Rock, as cited in Schwartz, 2009). The various schools of thought agree on little, except that coaching works, and that more of it should be done (Rock & Jeffrey, 2006).

Crompton's study further revealed that various component variables of business coaching collaborate to create a positive coaching experience, which generates a sense of satisfaction (Crompton, 2012, p. 12). Other examples of works on the impact of coaching executives and leaders in business included a literature review on negative effects of coaching (Schermuly & Graßmann, 2019), a blended recovery and burnout coaching for small-business copreneurs (Busch et al., 2021) and an in-depth read on the effectiveness of managerial coaching (Dahling et al., 2015).

The perceived benefits of the coaching process outweigh its costs, as both parties experience positive outcomes (Crompton, 2012, p. 7). Small business owners are more concerned about the outcome of the coaching process, and this could be a major determinant of hiring a coach or going through the coaching process. (Norman, & Judith S. Lederman, 2005, p. 172). Expanding on the definition of coaching, the process is described as unlocking "previously untapped sources of imagination, productivity, and leadership" (ICF, 2023). This definition aligns seamlessly with the requirements of small business leaders.

When examining benefits, it is prudent to consider the challenges and risks. Without a universal understanding of what small business coaching is and is not, small business owners may not want to engage in the process due to “concerns about the expense of obtaining expert advice, doubts about whether it provides good value for money and concerns about the time needed to fully implement and benefit from the advice” (Mole et al., 2017).

Credentials and Small Business Coaches

There is a noticeable gap between the number of ICF credentialed coaches available and those who identify as providing coaching to small business owners. According to the 2023 ICF Global Coaching Study, over 67% of coaches report business coaching as their main speciality,

however, only a mere 3% are primarily doing small business coaching (ICF 2023), which highlights the gap in the market.

Coaches seeking ICF accreditation go through a rigorous process of coach and ethics training and practice leading to one of three ICF recognized credentials, ACC, PCC and MCC (ICF, 2020). The main tenants that set an ICF credentialed coach apart from other coaches, are the adherence to the ICF code of ethics and professional development requirements. At the heart of the ICF competency model is ethical practice including confidentiality, creating relationships built on trust and safety, active listening, questioning to evoke awareness, while leading to client learning and growth (Passmore & Sinclair, 2020).

ICF coaches are required to “demonstrate personal integrity and honesty in interactions with clients, maintains confidentiality with client information, and acknowledges that clients are responsible for their own choices” (ICF, 2019), a favorable approach in any human social exchange. An ICF coach differs from a consultant in that their methodology involves asking questions to stimulate learning in their clients, rather than providing direct advice (Hargrove, 2008). As stated by Schein, asking the right questions is crucial in consulting, as opposed to offering recommendations or guidance (Schein, 2013). This is because people generally do not respond well to being told what to do (Rock, 2006).

With so few ICF coaches identifying as a small business coach, through the lens of social exchange theory, suggests a lack of social approval needed (Blau,1964) in the ICF coaching community to grow this market.

Chapter 4 reviews a wide body of literature relating to the challenges and importance of small businesses, their role in achieving the United Nations' 2030 Sustainability Goals, the benefits and challenges of small business coaching, and the role of ICF credentials in small

business coaching. The data emphasizes the significant role small businesses play in our economy and society and the potential of coaching by credentialed coaches to support their growth and success.

By viewing the data through social exchange theory, the ICF credentialed coach, the small business owner and the ICF team member belong to different groups and yet they have common affiliations (Blau, 1960) related to the study's purpose. The ICF clearly cares about and supports their members, the ICF credentialed coach clearly cares about and supports their small business owner clients, creating a shared affiliation of supporting small business owners through coaching.

Chapter 5 - Conclusion and Recommendations

In this chapter, I will link the findings and analysis found in chapter four to my recommendations. A total of six recommendations are explained, followed by a suggested timeframe and any barriers to implementation are noted. A concluding paragraph closes the chapter.

Recommendations

#1 – Advocate for the democratization of small business coaching.

Bring awareness of the needs of small business owners to have access to coaching, including resource constraints, psychographics, hopes and dreams to inspire coaches to consider charging less so that all who seek coaching can afford it. Consider using Artificial intelligence (AI) as a tool to support the coaching. Awareness can emerge from a collective of current small business coaches, economic development agencies, NGO's, the ICF and/or others concerned with the cause. Activities to include the development of social media awareness campaigns.

Timeframe: 6 – 12 months.

Barriers: Coaches may not agree with lowering fees and continue to ignore this market. AI could replace the coach.

#2- Develop an ICF Small Business Community of Practice

To create awareness of the needs of small business owners for coaching, and to develop some social capital for the idea of being a small business coach, an ICF Small business community of practice would be an ideal incubator to move the cause forward. Members could be from the 3% of ICF coaches who already identify as a small business coach. A first step could start with a Social Media group as a means to gather interest. The approval of small business coaching would be enhanced if the ICF created space for dialogue on the subject.

Timeframe: 6 -18 months.

Barriers: Resources many may not be available and interest from ICF coaches in the newly formed community could be low.

3- Compose a market definition of small business coaching.

Studies show that there is confusion in the market on exactly what a small business coach is and does (Clegg et al., 2005). Together with existing ICF credentialed small business coaches, in an ICF organized focus group, craft a specific definition for the purpose of reducing ambiguity in the market. The definition can be based off the existing ICF core competencies that “explicitly explains what coaching is and is not and describes the process to the client and relevant stakeholders.” (ICF, 2020)

Timeframe: 6-12 months

Barriers: Not agreeing on a definition. Lack of interest in the idea. A continued biases that business coaching is consulting and not in alignment with ICF core competencies.

#4 – Increase the awareness of the need to support small business owners through coaching.

Coaches may not be aware that ninety plus percent of all businesses are considered a small business (OECD, 2023) and a great market for them to further develop and grow their own practice. Coaches themselves may be coaching CEO’s who are considered a small business owner. coaches can tap into this market and contribute to the growth and success of small businesses while enhancing their own professional opportunities.

Timeframe: 3 to 12 months

Barriers: no risk

#5 - Increase the Number of Credentialed Small Business Coaches

Address the discrepancy between the number of credentialed coaches and those specifically focused on supporting small business owners. Encourage more coaches to specialize in small business coaching by highlighting the importance of small businesses in society and the market demand for specialized coaching services.

Timeframe: 6 – 18 months

Barriers: Without interest and direction from their members, the ICF would have no interest or authority to pursue this recommendation. Current statistics highlight a lack of interest in this market which might be hard to change.

#6 - Promote Professional Development in Small Business Coaching

Coaches working with CEO's, physicians, clergy, and non-profits may not be aware that they are coaching a person who by definition runs a small business. By the ICF including professional development on the topic of small business coaching at conferences, chapter meetings and social media they can significantly contribute to a greater understanding of the small business coaching market and start to build greater capacity within the ICF coaching community.

Timeframe: Immediately and ongoing

Barriers: Again, with the ICF being a member driven organization, there may not be an interest by members to participate in the training.

Conclusion

To further democratize the small business coaching, making coaching more accessible, it will take a collaborative and considerate approach. This includes creating a dedication community of practice, establishing a clear market definition, increasing awareness of the needs of small business owners, and promoting professional development within the ICF community of

coaches. The International Coaching Federation, driven by the needs and interests of its members, plays a vital role in this process. Together access to coaching will increase, providing support for small business owners who are currently in an underserved market.

Chapter 6 - Research Implications

The Organization

The International Coaching Federation is member driven organization and responds well to the needs its members. While it is not up to the ICF to promote small business coaching, they will support member coaches interested in specific sectors to speak at chapter meetings, conferences and contribute to ongoing research including this paper. Moving forward, it is up to the individual ICF members to create the urgency for dialogue on the importance of coaching small business owners and to support the development of a community of practice to continue this valuable work. By doing this study and continuing to advocate for small business owners, my hope is that more small business owners will benefit from coaching, and in turn this will reduce the overall failure rate and improve the quality of lives for individuals who provide such value to our communities, economy and the quality of our lives.

Small business coaching will continue to grow outside of the ICF. If these recommendations are not undertaken, small business owners will not have access to the ethical and professional standards of coaching that ICF accredited coaches adhere to.

Future Research

Future quantitative studies could measure the impact of democratizing coaching for small business, specifically focusing on the creation of jobs. A larger case study project on the success and challenges of coaching small business owners would add valuable insight into the potential barriers of expanding the market. Future research could also explore the relationship between the UN's 2030 Sustainability Goals and how coaches and coaching in general can contribute more significantly to attain these important global goals.

Other projects might consider technology, specifically the use of AI in small business coaching, or a comparison of coaching versus other approaches to supporting small business owners success, along with a study taking a deeper look into why coaches may not want to engage in the small business coaching market. Finally, exploring the role government funding and public policy play in promoting small business success through the lens of coaching support as one intervention would be valuable.

Research Contribution

This research contributes to the understanding of the challenges small business owners face, the concept of using coaching to support small business owners and the influence of professional credentials to further develop the small business coaching market.

Applying social exchange theory to my research on coaching small business owners contributes to the broader body of research by providing a richer understanding of the reciprocal coach-client relationship and the motivations behind it. It brings clarity to the role of organizations like the International Coaching Federation (ICF), illuminating how such entities draw guidance from their members and reciprocate with targeted support.

Additionally, it reveals insights into market dynamics within the coaching industry, offering an understanding of how factors like perceived value and pricing models can influence coaching accessibility for small businesses.

Finally, my research could serve as a framework for other scholars exploring different topics, thereby enhancing the theoretical richness and practical applications of social exchange theory in the overarching fields of coaching and small business research.

In Summary

In conclusion, we have established that small business owners are the cornerstone of our economy and the ones responsible for job creation, innovation, and the development of a healthy community. However, they continue to face several challenges, making them susceptible to failure. As this research highlights, coaching can be a viable option to get small business owners the support they need to navigate these challenges, improve their performance and in turn be the drivers in creating secure meaningful employment for others. Yet, there is a gap in the market, with few ICF credentialed coaches specializing in small business coaching.

The research highlights the opportunity for positive change within the small business coaching market. Leveraging social exchange theory and case study methodology, the potential for the democratization of small business coaching, making it more accessible and affordable, facilitated by the ICF and their member coaches emerged as a key theme. It offers the opportunity for both coaches and small business owners to work together to make having a small business coach a norm in support of goals greater than themselves. There is an obvious need to continue this dialogue as it holds unlimited possibilities to make life better for all concerned.

Despite the challenges associated with coaching small business owners, the deep personal rewards, the sheer size of the market and the ongoing need for support all emphasize the viability of pursuing growth in small business coaching.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions for Small Business Owner

1. Your name, business industry, length of time as a small business owner.
2. How long have you had a business coach?
3. What led you to hiring a business coach?
4. When choosing your coach, what impact did the coaches' credentials have on your search and hiring decision?
5. What if anything, do you know about the International Coaching Federation? (ICF)
6. What has been your experience of small business coaching in terms of cost and reward?
7. What are the most significant outcomes from coaching for your business?
8. What are the most significant outcomes from coaching for you personally?
9. What value would you put on your coaching experience?
10. What impact did confidentiality have on the coaching relationship?
11. What is different about the coaching experience over other helping professionals you may have employed?
12. If you were to describe your coaches' top skills, what would they be? How were those skills demonstrated in your meetings with your coach?
13. Based on your experience, what was your coaches' role in your meetings together?

Future State:

1. When would you hire a business coach again?
2. What could be added to the experience of having a business coach that would make it better?

3. How much on an annual basis would you be willing to invest in business coaching when needed?
4. What does the business coaching industry not understand about small business owners that you think they should know?
5. What else would you like to contribute to this study?

Appendix B

Interview Questions for ICF Team Member

Present state:

1. Your position in the organization.
2. What is the main mission of the ICF?
3. Describe specifically how ICF supports coaches?
4. How does the ICF prioritize attention in the various coaching fields?
5. What influence do you think the ICF has on the coaching market?
6. Specifically, tell me more about any influence in coaching small business owners?
7. Only 3% of ICF coaches identify as a small business coach, why do you think that number is so low?
8. What if anything is ICF doing now to increase that number.
9. In your opinion, What does the 3% mean for small business owners? (In terms of cost and reward)
10. How does ICF status as an MCC coach, help coaches (1) attract and (2) serve Small Business Clients?
11. What are the most significant outcomes for coaches having ICF credentials?
12. Besides credentialing, how does the ICF currently support small business coaches?
13. What impact does the ICF core competencies have on small business coaching?
14. What question have I not asked?

Future state:

1. What could the future of small business coaching look like for the ICF?

2. What role do you see the ICF playing in that future?
3. What would it mean to in the world to have more small business owner coaches?
4. How can the ICF supporting the development of small business coaching?
5. What else would you like to contribute to this study?

Appendix C

Interview Questions for ICF Credentialed Coach

Present state:

1. Your name, coach training history, currently held coach credentials.
2. Tell me about your coaching practice. (Types of clients, your niche, how long you have been coaching)
3. Specifically, tell me more about your experience coaching small business owners?
4. What is different about the small business owner coaching experience than other clients you work with?
5. What does it mean to you to coach small business owners? (In terms of cost and reward)
6. How does your ICF status as an MCC coach, help you (1) attract and (2) serve Small Business Clients?
7. What are the most significant outcomes you notice from coaching small business owners?
8. Besides credentialing, how does the ICF currently support you as a small business coach?
9. What impact does the ICF core competencies have on your small business coaching practice?

Future state:

1. What does the future of small business coaching look like for you?
2. What role do you see the ICF playing in that future?
3. What would it mean to you to coach more small business owners?
4. How can the ICF supporting the development of small business coaching?

5. What else would you like to contribute to this study?