

## **Aha! And the Art of Coaching...**

We use the expression *Aha!* when we get the point – when we connect the dots. Another definition of *Aha!* is a BGO: a blinding glimpse of the obvious. This term illustrates both the simplicity, and the subtlety of arriving at a deeper understanding of an issue under consideration. The simplicity masks the subtlety. Being able to describe something in a simple fashion does not mean this simplicity was easily obtained.

### For example:

Let's say I have finally concluded that I will be doing my phone calling from 10:30 - 12:00 on Tuesday through Thursday. My conclusion may sound simple, but if I've tried numerous methods to set up calling times, and they've all failed, then this new plan truly is a breakthrough. In this case, my simple *Aha!* came only after arduous and difficult encounters with phoning, and trying to find the right way to do it.

The theme of this article is that coaching deals with apparently simple issues. Hiring the right employee, effective prospecting, keeping a desk neat or keeping accurate sales records – each of these issues has been written about extensively. And if having an intellectual understanding of these issues were sufficient, then all salespeople would be millionaires, and no one would need my coaching services. Such is not the case.

Why is this so? How did I discover the difficulty of change and the elusive quest for progress? I've provided coaching services to all manner of agents/ reps/brokers, and I have discovered some recurring themes. Some examples:

- ***Having a dream or wish is not the same as having a plan.*** I've talked to countless agents who start each year with high hopes for increased production. When I ask them about their written, detailed plan for success, I usually get a blank stare, a stammer, or "I don't have a plan." Rare is the journey that succeeds without a plan.

**Teaching Point:** Discover what is truly important to you. Write it down. Check your progress. Be courageous when you encounter setbacks. Stick to your plan.

- ***Complaining will not change your reality.*** For a variety of reasons, we humans think complaining has the magical capacity to change behavior. Imagine that you're not successfully closing enough cases. Sample dialog: *I've having bad luck; it's tax time, holiday season, vacation time, wintertime, summertime.* Or perhaps you're not getting enough referrals. Sample dialog: *People hate insurance, pushy insurance agents, insurance companies.* We've all had these feelings from time to time. Yet I'm firmly convinced that complaining never obtained a referral or successfully closed a case.

**Teaching Point:** Stop complaining and start looking at root causes for your problems. It takes courage to face reality and change behavior. It is possible to change if you want a different outcome badly enough.

■ ***Confusion about what's important is another serious roadblock.*** Lack of clarity is the most common issue I encounter. When I hear a complaint or concern, I often ask: What do you want? Typically there is a look of confusion on most people's face when trying to answer this question. I used to think clarity or purpose comes easily. It does not. An example:

- Great anxiety is often expressed regarding getting good help – assistants, secretaries, clerks, etc. This seems to be a perennial problem. My *Aha!* allowed me to begin asking my clients these questions:

1. Do you have a written job description?
2. Can you describe your ideal employee?
3. How would you know if you found your ideal employee?
4. Do you have an employee training plan?
5. Are you settling for less than your ideal employee?

These are simple questions, but these questions cannot come to consciousness unless and until you have gained clarity about the person you are looking to hire, and you also have a clear job description.

**Teaching point:** Being clear about what you want is simple, but only after you have gone through a process of discovery. It is not possible to attain significant goals without having a clear idea of what you want.

Coaching sounds simple, but my experience reveals that timing is critical and the person being coached must be ready, willing, able, and fit in order to benefit from the coaching process. My guess is that only 20% of agents are ready for coaching at any point in time. And even if you are ready, willing, able, and fit, the coaching process is still a workout. Coaching is an art, and timing is critical; hiring a coach should only come after you have made a decision that you're willing to work to get better at what you do.

---

*Nick Ray is a personal and business coach.  
He can be reached at [nick@coachnickray.com](mailto:nick@coachnickray.com) or at 510-898-3245.  
A complimentary coaching session is available.  
[www.coachnickray.com](http://www.coachnickray.com)*

Nicholas R. Ray  
CLU, RHU, ChFC  
Personal & Business Coach