

# Ep #293: The Relationship Shaping Your Coaching Business



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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## Ep #293: The Relationship Shaping Your Coaching Business

Hey, this is Lindsay Dotzlaf and you are listening to Mastering Coaching Skills, episode 293.

To really compete in the coaching industry, you have to be great at coaching. That's why every week, I will be answering your questions, sharing my stories, and offering tips and advice so you can be the best at what you do. Let's get to work.

Hey coach, today I want to talk to you about two very important roles that all of you, as long as you own your own coaching business, play in your business every day. We're going to talk about the CEO and the employee. And stay with me, even if you've heard this concept before. This is probably different than what you've heard. But these are still the best terms I could think of to use.

So before I dig in and tell you what we're going to discuss around these today, I want to start by framing this with just a couple quick things. The first one, CEO and the employee, these aren't necessarily my two favorite words for this because I think this is kind of a concept that maybe is talked about all of the time in a different way, and I don't want you to get confused by that, but I spent probably half an hour before I even started recording this and tried to come up with different words to use that made as much sense. But here is where I landed.

Even if you've never had a corporate job, even if you have never, you know, run a team or maybe even been in a corporate environment or held either of these roles, I do think that the terms CEO and employee are the most universally understood in the US and also internationally. So that is why I'm choosing to use them, okay? But feel free to replace them with whatever words you would like to replace them with. One example could be visionary and doer, or creative and implementer, or something like that. But I actually, as I went through all of the examples I could think of, I actually decided that none of those words held the same meanings, okay?

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So, here's what this episode is not, quickly. It is not, spend more time as a CEO and less time as an employee, or you need to learn to be the CEO and stop being an employee. That's not at all what this is. And that's probably the version you've heard before in 100 different ways. My belief is that as coaches who run our own businesses, we are always playing both of the roles. Not at the same time, always playing both of the roles, but that both roles are always and have to be present in our businesses. And what we are looking at today is the relationship between those two roles and how they show up in your business.

I also want to acknowledge that a little bit of this is going to sound a little like parts work if you're familiar with that. That is also not at all what it is. But if it helps you to think about it like that, then go for it. I do have a lot of clients that are trained in parts work and so if that's helpful, use it or don't. But that's not at all what we're doing here.

One of the things I want you to understand walking away from this episode is that the quality of that internal relationship between the CEO and the employee of your business is shaping so much more of your business than you probably realize. And even if you actually do have employees or you have a team in your business and you have a bigger business, that's okay. You still are playing both of these roles. You might have other employees, but you are still an employee in the way I'm going to describe it.

Okay, so for just a second, before we go any further, I want you to just really think about this and embody it a little bit. Wherever you are right now, just take a moment and think about your business and the way you show up to it every day. And I want you to see if you can notice both of these parts of yourself. Your CEO, that's the part of you that decides what you're building, that holds the bigger vision, that makes the decisions.

And your employee, the part of you that actually just shows up and does the work, that gets the stuff done. That opens the laptop in the morning, delivers the sessions, writes the emails, and does kind of the day-to-day tasks. They are both there always. And they are both you, and they've been

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in a relationship together in your business for as long as you've had a business. Since the day you decided you were going to be a coach, and maybe even a little bit before that.

So let me define a little more in depth what these roles are quickly so that we're on the same page, okay? Your CEO inside of you is amazing. She is the one who holds that big vision. Who really makes all or most of the decisions, who sets the direction for the company to be on, who decides what gets built and what doesn't, who does that job of looking ahead and saying, where are we going? Do we need to pivot? What's the best thing for us right now? The CEO is also the one who needs probably a lot of that bigger vision mindset and nervous system type of support. Right? The one that just needs to show up and hold the belief and the vision when no one else is doing it.

Now, your employee, she's also amazing. She's the one who shows up and does so much of the actual work, the day-to-day work. Like she carries out the decisions that the CEO makes. She delivers the work, the content, the client work, the emails, the admin. And she's the one who probably needs more the support of strategy. How do we do this? How do we implement this? Now, that support piece I talked about for each of them, that's not 100% true, right? They can both do identity work. They can both do strategy work.

But kind of in general, that's how I think about it. And again, even if you really have a team and you have actual employees, this divide still is happening inside of you. You are still the one making those high level, vision-led decisions. And you're still the one doing at least some chunk of the day-to-day work. Hiring doesn't make the roles go away. It might just make them a little more complex.

So here's the first question I want you to sit with. How does your CEO talk to your employee? And how does your employee talk to your CEO? How do they interact and communicate? For example, when something doesn't go quite right? You fail at something, you don't hit a goal. How does the

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CEO, how does your CEO talk to your employee about it? What's the tone? Is she harsh? Is she super disappointed or is she curious? Maybe she's totally avoidant. Maybe she's judgmental. Maybe she's understanding and empathetic.

Now flip that, when your employee really doesn't want to do part of the job that your CEO is asking her to do. How does she communicate that? Can she talk about it honestly? Can they interact and think about, okay, well here's the goal and here's what I'm thinking and here's the strategy, here's the plan. Or does she, for example, quietly not do it at all? Does she maybe, I don't know, it's not like I've heard this once or twice, maybe she does the dishes while she's supposed to be recording a podcast episode or writing launch emails.

When your CEO sets a goal that your employee doesn't believe in, what happens then? Does your employee push back? Does she resist? Does she do it anyway, just show up and be resentful, just cross the tasks off the list? If you're my client, you know I've heard some of you describe it this way. You don't believe at all it's going to happen, but whatever, you're just showing up and doing the work anyway. Thinking it'll be better at some point.

When your employee is exhausted, does your CEO notice? Or does your employee ever tell her? Does your CEO allow your employee to take breaks or to have vacation days? Or is there like a little bit of, you have to prove yourself first, and then maybe you can go on vacation, but only if we have every single thing crossed off the list.

When your CEO makes a big decision, what kind of input does your employee get? Do they converse about it? Does the CEO have a big vision and make a big decision without considering the strategy or how it might get done? Does your employee get weekends off or maybe vacation time? Or does your CEO expect your employee to always be on call? No downtime?

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Does your employee actually show up and work when she says she will? Or does she sometimes ghost on the commitments of her job? Is your employee doing work that she loves? Or is she just collecting a paycheck and complaining about the company constantly outside of work because she's completely disconnected from the goal. I want you to really think about that.

I definitely know I could share so many examples of this from my own business. There have certainly been times when my CEO has made a huge goal, a big, big vision, and then not really cared how it's getting done. And just stayed kind of in the, I don't know, here's the big goal, someone else figure it out. It's been a while, but certainly that is something that has happened.

And some days, my employee does not like to show up for the work that she's supposed to be doing. I think some of this is so natural, and it's one of the reasons I really wanted to record this episode so that you can start thinking about the relationship between these two people, or these two roles in your business. This is really worth pausing to have a good look at.

Here's my second question. When you consider these two roles, what does the balance look like right now? Is one of them over-functioning? Are you showing up as all CEO and your employee is nowhere to be found? Here's what that could look like. That might be lots of vision, tons of planning, big picture planning. Lots of strategy, but only as far as, here's what I think we should do, but then the tasks never actually get done.

The big picture might even be really clear, or it might actually not be very clear and feel very kind of dreamy, what I call like the up in the cloud kind of goals, just some day this thing's going to happen. But the execution isn't actually happening at all. The real results aren't ever being created. Maybe you have tons of ideas just piling up and piling up. Your business might even sound so exciting and look great on paper, but it's not moving forward and creating the business that fits into your life the way you want it to.

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Now, let's think about the opposite of that, when you're showing up as all employee, not enough CEO. What that looks like is very heads down, execution. No space for vision work or breathing. No time for planning or dreaming or expanding what the company could be. The work is getting done like a checklist, but it might even be the same work over and over and over.

Maybe even no one's checking, is it actually moving us where we want to go? It's just lots and lots of tasks. Without anyone steering. It's like a whole ship full of people, all the people have a job, they're doing the jobs, but no one is steering the ship or even deciding like where are we going? And what are we going to do when we get there?

That's what it feels like when your inner employee is running the business by default. Either because the employee has just fully taken over, or because the CEO just isn't showing up to do her job, which are kind of the same thing and probably happen for similar reasons. That might sound sometimes like, and these are things I hear often, there's just so much to do every day. I don't even know when the last time I just paused and looked around.

Now, I'm not suggesting that this balance should be 50-50 all the time, every day at all times. That doesn't even make sense. And some days, in ways we can't control, are a little more chaotic and you're switching on and off different hats. But what I really want you to notice about this is if immediately when I said these, when I gave you these examples, you noticed, oof, you feel really out of balance in one direction or another. And usually this imbalance correlates with either a role that you have been in before or just a role that feels safer for you to learn first.

So some of you, maybe you've been in a corporate arena and you've been an employee for a long time and it's really easy to fall back into that role and feel very productive and that can feel very safe. And for some of you, you might be all CEO because the vision work feels so much more safe, maybe more important or even more interesting.

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And when that balance is off, it's going to show up in the relationship between the two and it's going to affect your business results. Typically, the over-functioning role will start to get really mad at the other one, at the results that the other role is creating. And the under-functioning role will just kind of step aside and kind of watch it happen.

Here's what a healthy interaction between these two roles can look like for you. When it's working well, both roles have space to do their work. Your CEO has actual time set aside to think and to plan and to make that vision and to decide, and is getting the support they need to do that. And your employee has time set aside to do the actual work. Without being interrupted or constantly second guessed or doubted or hovered over. And they communicate openly and honestly.

Your employee can tell your CEO when something isn't working. And your CEO can give your employee real direction without being mean about it. And for the most part, when it's working well, they stay in their own lanes. Your CEO isn't trying to also do all of the execution while planning the vision. And your employee isn't making lots of big decisions that aren't hers to make.

And when there is conflict or when something doesn't go the way you want it to go, it's handled efficiently and with empathy and respect. So that would look like your CEO not saying mean things to your employee when they don't hit a goal or when something doesn't work. Or your employee doesn't quietly sabotage the whole company by doing the dishes and watching Netflix instead of doing the tasks that they're supposed to do.

A healthy relationship looks like these two roles coming together and saying, okay, we had a goal, we had a plan, we had a vision. We worked towards it. Now let's evaluate. Did it work? Did it not work? You've heard me say this a few times if you've listened to other episodes.

And then they don't get mad at each other or shame each other or blame each other if it didn't work. They just problem solve. They say, okay, here's

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what worked, amazing. They celebrate. And then they say, okay, here's what didn't. What are we going to do about it? What do we want to try next? Why do we think it didn't work? And when they're problem solving, they're going to do that in both roles with the support that they need.

What many of you are doing, and I know this just from coaching hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of coaches, is that when something doesn't go as planned, your CEO looks at your employee and says, I knew the way you were doing that wasn't going to work. Or why would you even have tried it that way? Or that was so stupid, what were you even thinking? Or your employee looks at your CEO and says, I can't believe you were that ridiculous to set a goal that big. Or I can't believe you've never let me have a vacation day or something along those lines.

Obviously, this is the part where you have to access those roles for yourself and hear how they talk to each other. One thing that becomes available once you start to see this is you'll start to notice that a lot of what we might call or frame as harsh or mean self-talk or being hard on ourselves is really your CEO talking to your employee in a way that you would never let a real CEO talk to an employee if you saw it happening in real life. Or if you couldn't step in, you would at least be mortified that it was happening, right?

If a CEO said to an employee, ugh, you should have known that wouldn't work. Why would you even try it? That's so stupid. If you heard a CEO talk to an employee like that in real life, you would be horrified. You would think that is the worst CEO ever. But somehow, when it's happening internally in our own minds, it just feels true. It's just like, I'm just being honest with myself.

And one thing that's really powerful about starting to separate those two roles and kind of those two voices as you're running your business is that you don't have to fight the self-talk. You don't have to like get rid of it altogether or replace it with just beautiful affirmations. You can just think about it as, oh, here's what's actually happening. My CEO is being mean to

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my employee right now. And maybe once you see it, you can tone it down or stop it altogether.

Or on the other side, right? The shame some coaches feel for setting a huge vision and not hitting it. That is like your employee resenting your CEO for setting a goal that she never thought was realistic. Which, okay, honestly, fair. But the answer isn't that you tell your CEO to stop creating amazing visions or stop dreaming or stop doing her job. Setting a big, amazing goal that feels fun to you is not a personality flaw or evidence that you're delusional. It's your CEO doing what she's supposed to do and over time learning how to set goals that feel great to everybody.

But the problem is never the goal itself. It's that the two parts didn't actually talk about it and make a plan or that things just didn't go as planned and now the two parts are just being mean to each other instead of creating a new plan and keeping going.

I have been sitting with this for a while and really trying to figure out how to put words to it because I have realized that over the 10 years of running my business, this is something I've actually learned to be pretty great at. I rarely beat myself up when things don't go my way. When I fail. When I have a launch and it flops or I don't make as much money as I thought I was going to, or I don't deliver a workshop as great as I thought I should or whatever.

I used to be so hard on myself. And I do think that literally separating these two roles inside of myself, in my brain, has done so much in shifting this relationship. Because it kind of puts it, it kind of makes it impossible to shame yourself or to really beat yourself up when you think about it like it's just the two roles having a conversation.

I have realized recently that the backbone of pretty much all of the work that I do is that I protect coaches from building businesses that they hate running. And it's so funny even to say that. I'm like, have I even had such a concise way to say what I do? So just so you know, 10 years in, I may have

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just recently found my, I don't know, whatever you call that. I don't know, one of the words I'm sure I probably resist or don't say, like what, elevator pitch or something.

But that feels so true at my core. Because I think coaching is so incredible and I think running a business can also be so incredible. And I don't think anyone that has decided to be a coach and that is building a business should hate running their business. It doesn't make any sense.

And I'm sure you've heard me talk about Reimagine on this podcast before, which is my eight-month mastermind that I run for coaches. And I've realized that this is exactly part of the work that we do in there. Looking at how you're relating to your business and who you're being inside of it, and how it's actually running under the surface. Of course, we have goals and I help people you know create things that they want.

I honestly had considered recently changing the name Reimagine because what I realized is that so many of you had questions about it and thought like if I joined, does that mean I have to be making a bunch of changes about my business? Right? Like maybe offers or pricing or going from one-on-one and building a membership or whatever it is, right? Just all the changes.

And that does happen. If you listen to last week's episode with Melisa, she literally changed everything about her business and it was so fun. But the bigger overall work that we do all together is that we reimagine the way we relate to our businesses. And to ourselves while running our business.

And speaking of reimaging the way we relate to our businesses, one of the decisions that I have made recently, I think even since I recorded the very last episode of this podcast, is that I'm only selling Reimagine by personal invite or to open invite for those of you on the waitlist. So as of right now, at least while I'm recording this, I will not be doing a huge public launch. The only way that you can join Reimagine, which begins in August

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of 2026, and I cannot wait. Is to join the waitlist. We will put the waitlist link in the show notes.

And I will keep that email that you get in return when you sign up. I will keep that updated. That way you'll know if it's full, if we're currently enrolling, or what. But if you at any point think that's something you might want to do, go get on the list. Just click the link, it takes like 30 seconds. And you'll be on the waitlist. And that way you will know when is it open, when is it not, and I can't wait to see you there if this is the work that you know you need to do in your business.

Right now as I'm recording this, I already know that a handful of my clients from this current round are re-enrolling for the next round of Reimagine. So get on the waitlist if you know it's something you want because I don't know for sure how many spots I will have once I email the waitlist with all of the information. So you just want to be sure that you're there and you're ready. And they are the most incredible humans and you will be in the best room ever in my humble opinion if you join us. All right? Thank you so much for being here today. I will talk to you again next week. Goodbye.

Thanks for listening to this episode of *Mastering Coaching Skills*. If you want to learn more about my work, come visit me at [lindsaydotzlafoaching.com](http://lindsaydotzlafoaching.com). That's Lindsay with an A, D-O-T-Z-L-A-F.com. See you next week.