



## **Standard 21 – Case Study**

**Title:** Reflect what is true and accurate about the coaching profession

### **Background**

When ICF Professionals represent themselves as an ICF Professional or a member of the coaching profession, their representation must be portrayed truly and accurately. ICF Professionals should always be aware that they are seen as an example of professional coaching and should behave accordingly. What does it look like when a client/sponsor keeps forgetting to sign the agreement/contract? Should the client be punished if the sponsor is forgetful?

### **Case study**

Anna had been coaching Maria for several years. Maria was highly motivated, but sometimes lacked direction and the confidence to make high level decisions on her own. When she first hired Anna as her coach, she had been contemplating a new career move and wanted someone to partner with her and help her think through all the possibilities.

After Anna and Maria had met for several meetings, Maria had decided to pursue the new career path at the marketing firm in London. She had been so determined and excited, that she had no problems taking the chance and after several interview rounds, had received the position.

Now Maria had told Anna that a higher leveled position was about to open at the same marketing firm she was with in London. Maria wanted to discuss this at their next coaching session and Anna was eager to hear more about it.

At their next session, Maria eagerly told Anna about the new position. It had just been posted, but she only had a week to decide if she wanted to apply. Her boss had even encouraged her to apply, and Isabelle thought that maybe that was a sign she should apply. Anna and Maria partnered together and looked at the pros and cons and thought through all the changes. At the end of their session, Maria decided that she would apply, but was extremely nervous. Anna ended the call by letting her know that she had nothing to worry about because she was going to get this new position. She was such a skilled employee and her boss had encouraged her so surely that meant she had an easy foot in the door.

Two weeks later, Maria reached out to Anna and asked for a call. They found a time to connect and when Anna saw Maria's face, she knew that she had not received the position. Anna was shocked and Maria was hurt. She told Anna that she was even more disappointed because Anna had convinced her that she would get the position. What if Anna hadn't convinced her of that? Would she have tried

harder in the interviews? These were questions that neither of them could answer. Anna was devastated. She had just wanted to encourage Maria, but instead she had just caused a bigger issue. Had Anna given Maria unreasonable expectations?

### Implications for Coaching

- Make verbal and written statements that are true and accurate around coaching—the coach should not make any promises or potentially untrue statements about the coaching profession. Coaches should only offer what they know can be delivered in a coaching session. **ICF Code of Ethics (2020) Section 3, Standard 21 (Coachingfederation.org)**
- Create an agreement with your client—the coach should hold the responsibility of creating an agreement that sets expectations and responsibilities of the client and the coach. This allows both parties to clearly establish roles, right, responsibilities, etc. **ICF Code of Ethics (2020) Section 1, Standard 2 (Coachingfederation.org)**
- Be aware of your impact to society—the coach should be mindful that they may be in a position where outsiders are looking at them for how they handle themselves. Coaches should avoid making promises that they have no control over. This could affect not just their client, but others in their path as well. **ICF Code of Ethics (2020) Section 4, Standard 28 (Coachingfederation.org)**

### Possible outcomes or next steps

- **Seek outside support.** A coach should never make promises that they have no control over the outcome. Consistently meeting with your own ICF mentor or taking Continuing Coach Education programs can help you to remain aware of the power of your words.
- **Revisit your coaching agreement with your client present.** A coach may choose to review the coaching agreement with their client when they have had a long-standing coaching relationship. This will allow both parties to make any updates to the agreement or revisit the intentions of their coaching relationship.

### Discussion Points

- If you were this coach's coach, mentor, or supervisor, how would you support the coach?
- Should a coaching relationship be long term? Why or why not?

### Reference

ICF Code of Ethics (2020), <https://coachingfederation.org/ethics/code-of-ethics>