

Virtual R&D Team

WELCOME

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In a rapidly evolving industry with so many choices before you, how do you decide where to focus your time to maximize your results, evolve your business and reputation, and create an environment that continues to inspire you?

Creating a Virtual R&D Team can mean the difference between investing your resources in an idea that never flies and investing your resources in an idea that catapults you to the top of your game.

This 3 Step Training is for anyone who wants to learn how to create and manage a Virtual R&D Team. After completing this module, you will know how to create a R&D Team, what projects you could use them for, and how to manage your R&D Team so that the team itself benefits and is continually evolving itself, your business, and you.

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Virtual R&D Team

QUICK QUIZ

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Instructions	Circle NT if not true, T if sometimes true, VT if very true. Total your 'score.' Go for a perfect 30.
NT T VT	Statement
1 2 3	1. I enjoy brainstorming.
1 2 3	2. It is fun to help other people develop and tweak their ideas.
1 2 3	3. I like sharing input without having to be the decision-maker or involved in the final product.
1 2 3	4. I'm pretty good at articulating my ideas in a concise manner.
1 2 3	5. People often seek my input.
1 2 3	6. I don't get upset of my ideas are not acted upon.
1 2 3	7. Contributing to the success of others is important to me and feels good.
1 2 3	8. I thrive when I am part of a creative, fast, sometimes intense group of thinkers and doers.
1 2 3	9. I am a great team player.
1 2 3	10. The thought of being on a R&D Team is very cool to me.

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Introduction

Virtual R&D Teams are exciting. Not only are they great for the host - they can be great for you, the Team member!

What is a Virtual R&D Team?

A Virtual R&D Team is a team of people who "meet" and discuss ideas via electronic means - email, phone conferencing, webconferencing, etc. R&D stands for Research and Development. This means that you are part of the team that helps come up with ideas and approaches, as well as developing and tweaking them. It does not mean you have to do a lot of work. Your value to the host is YOU - who you are, how you think, your experiences, wisdom and knowledge. While there are always opportunities to volunteer more of your services, that's not a requirement for being on a Virtual R&D Team.

How is a Virtual R&D Team different from a traditional R&D Team?

While a traditional R&D Team meets in person for hands-on work and brainstorming, a Virtual R&D Team meets only via email, telephone, and/or webconferencing. It is likely that you will never meet the other team members, except through shared ideas and summary of feedback.

What are the benefits of being on a Virtual R&D Team?

- Keeps you energized and on the leading edge of creativity, thus enhancing your own creativity.
- Get to see things first - get the inside scoop by being close to the source.
- Enhances your self-image as a creative thinker and professional.
- Making a meaningful contribution to someone else's success and their profession.
- Learn more about yourself, your ideas, and your own profession - and you get seriously engaged in your own learning process.
- Learn how to create your own intellectual property.
- Tap into the power and energy of a virtual mastermind of creative thinkers.
- Teaches you to think on your feet and let go of perfectionism.
- Understand the new paradigm of the creation cycle - fast, fast, fast!
- Expand your awareness of cultural diversity by hearing feedback from an international team.
- Be continuously stimulated by new thought.
- Experience a sense of community unlike any other.
- Increase your self-esteem by supporting others in reaching their goals.

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What are the distinct advantages of being on a Virtual R&D Team?

No added expenses

Obviously you are working from your computer or phone, so you don't incur travel or away-from-office expenses.

You get to play with an international team

An opportunity not available to everyone.

Fast-paced

By virtue of the team being virtual, you can respond immediately to ideas - within seconds sometimes - and see the rapid evolution of ideas that ordinarily would have taken weeks or months. Way cool.

Time commitment flexible

Depending on your schedule you can fully participate or back off. No performance burden should other projects come up or your time is limited.

How can you get the most out of being on a Virtual R&D Team?

Think about how YOU benefit from participation. See the list above and add your own benefits. If you know why you're doing it, it will be more fun, more stimulating, and your contributions will be better.

Set up your email software to assist you in noticing R&D Team emails. Most email programs allow you to set different parameters to highlight emails when they come from specific people or with certain words in the subject line (such as "R&D Team") - colors, bolded, automatically going to a specific folder, etc. Your R&D Team host will let you know how they will identify R&D Team emails.

Know your own style. Do you like to respond instantly, off the cuff, or do you prefer to take time to think about your answers? Know your style and use it.

Respond when you have something to say, and time to say it. Don't feel pressure to respond every time - the host doesn't expect this. And don't waste your time - or the host's - by responding with things that don't add value. You'll feel silly and won't feel inspired to respond next time. The host knows you are there, values your time, and knows you will respond when you are stimulated to do so. Non-response can, in some ways, be a response.

Be clear and concise - as much as possible anyway. You want your idea to be heard. Make it easy - consider using bullet points or phrases. Don't worry about perfection.

Read the follow-up/summary emails. This is a great way to see how your ideas are being used, and to tap into the power of a major think tank.

Interested in your creating your own Virtual R&D Team for your business?

Talk to your coach about setting one up! S/he'd love to help.

Read the accompanying Coaches guide to this module.

Join someone else's R&D Team and learn from how they setup/run their team.

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Virtual R&D Team

WORKSHEET

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Get clear about why you want to start a Virtual R&D Team.

■ Project or ideas...

What are 5 projects or ideas you have or have been working on or would like to be working on?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Virtual R&D Team

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Inviting people to your team.

■ Who do you want on your team?

What would your ideal team member look like? Think like? Act like?
What are the essential qualities and characteristics of your team?
Some examples: direct thinkers who tell it like it is; smart people who give feedback in a mature, kind way; people who articulate well; people who express through free-association, etc.
It's OK to have contradictory qualities and styles on your team - in fact it's preferably. You'll get a broader range of input that way.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

■ What would be unacceptable to you in a team member?

Not to focus on what you DON'T want too much, but if there are absolute NOTs for you, it's good to know them - and to be upfront about them with your team. You will use these responses in describing how your R&D Team works, what the ground rules are, and how you like to operate. This way there won't be any surprises or hurt feelings - or at least fewer of them.

Some examples: smart alecks; unethical behavior; cruel responses, etc.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

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Who is this MicroModule most useful for?

The Creating a Virtual R&D Team MicroModule is useful for anyone who is excited about the process of creation and would like to compress time while expanding their innovation and reach. And, it is particularly useful with individuals who:

1. Have a lot of ideas and not enough time or personal RAM to follow through on all of them.
2. Thrive on change and creation.
3. Value input and opinions from a wide range of perspectives and backgrounds.
4. Are not so attached to their ideas or way of implementing them that they cannot hear constructive feedback.
5. Have an idea and want validation.
6. Want to test-drive a product or idea to determine market viability.
7. Enjoy brainstorming and like hosting an e-community.
8. Need or want focus, accountability, or structure on a project.
9. Are creative and need some support and encouragement to keep going.
10. Have a project (book, course, teleclass, etc.) and need case studies and examples to flesh out the idea.

What are the benefits of creating a Virtual R&D Team?

- You'll never feel alone.
- You'll increase your creativity by 25-500%.
- You'll improve the quality of your work.
- You'll receive a lifetime of ideas.
- You'll complete your product/service 2-10 times faster.
- You'll expand your professional network.
- You'll become known.
- Your R&D Team members may become your best paying customers.
- You'll waste far less time "testing for value."
- You'll get the bugs out of your product/service at every stage.
- You'll learn e-collaboration skills.
- You'll become a much more open person.
- You'll learn to handle criticism/negative input better.
- You'll always find SOMEONE who "gets you."
- You'll expand your thinking in general.
- You'll become an expert a LOT faster.
- You'll evolve given the stimulating e-environment you've created.

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How could I use a Virtual R&D Team?

- You want to create a new product or program but you need to test our your concepts first.
- You have an idea and want to get some validation that it's a good one before you invest your time, money, and energy in it.
- You enjoy the focus, accountability and structure the R&D Team provides.
- You enjoy brainstorming and you want to host an e-community of similar people.
- You want to learn how to coach so you offer to host a support group where individuals are helping each other.
- You want to create a Best Practices (or other) database and want ideas from lots of different people.
- You have a business idea and aren't sure how much commercial interest there would be in it.
- You own a company and want to host a forum of 1% or 5% of your customers willing to be on an ongoing R&D Team so you can create new products or improve current ones.
- Your company is having problems so you create a turnaround team of employees, vendors, and customers who want to be change/agents.
- You are an expert in X and want to create a Q & A database, so you invite people to submit situations and questions that might occur with X.
- You enjoy working with people who have a particular trait (highly creative, supersensitive, lack self-confidence, are cancer survivors) and you use R&D Team to create a network of these people, creating solutions, tools, classes for them - some being free, some being fee.
- You want to create an online learning community or professional group like CoachVille.

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The 3 Steps

How do I get started on your R&D team? There are 3 steps...

Step 1. Get clear about why you want to start a Virtual R&D Team.

I want a Virtual R&D Team because [fill in the blank here].

Sounds obvious, but until you have an idea why you want a team and what you would use it for, it doesn't make much sense to create it. You could go ahead, but if you don't have something to send to the team fairly quickly, they'll wonder what happened. The way in which you use your R&D Team will evolve over time - a natural process as you and the Team learn more about each other - but you want to have an initial idea in place to start.

Not sure how you would use it? Answer these questions for some ideas.

Project or ideas...

What are 5 projects or ideas you have or have been working on or would like to be working on?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Examples of how a team can help...

If you had a team of expert thinkers and doers working with you, what would you want them to tell you about the project? How could they help?

Some examples are:

- Not very hot idea because of X, Y, & Z.
- Great idea, have you thought about these angles...
- Here's a story to illustrate what you're talking about.
- I'd pay \$X for this product.
- I wouldn't buy it, but my grandmother probably would.
- This has already been done by X - how is your different from theirs?

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■ Questions to ask....

Brainstorm questions you could ask your R&D Team about each of the 5 projects/ideas identified above.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

■ Purpose or Mission of your Team?

What is the purpose of your Team - what do you want from them? Sort of like a mission statement. It is important that your team understand what you are working towards. (Getting CoachVille off the ground, or launching a new product by the end of the year). You will use this in Step 3.

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Step 2. Inviting people to your team.

Now that you've identified the project or idea your Virtual R&D Team will be used for and how you'll use it, you want to invite people to join your team. There are a couple of points to think about here - who you want on your team, who you don't want on your team, and how you want to invite them to join. The people are the juice that makes the Team really thrive.

Who do you want on your team?

What would your ideal team member look like? Think like? Act like? What are the essential qualities and characteristics of your team? Some examples: direct thinkers who tell it like it is; smart people who give feedback in a mature, kind way; people who articulate well; people who express through free-association, etc. It's OK to have contradictory qualities and styles on your team - in fact it's preferably. You'll get a broader range of input that way.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

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■ What would be unacceptable to you in a team member?

Not to focus on what you DON'T want too much, but if there are absolute NOTs for you, it's good to know them - and to be upfront about them with your team. You will use these responses in describing how your R&D Team works, what the ground rules are, and how you like to operate. This way there won't be any surprises or hurt feelings - or at least fewer of them.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

■ How do you want to invite people to join?

Since it's a virtual team, it makes sense to invite them to join virtually, though you may find yourself making personal, face-to-face invitations as well. Use virtual means as your primary method - it trains them, and you, early on.

What key elements do you want to include in your invitation letter?

1. Why you are writing to them - how they were selected.
2. What an R&D Team is.
3. Benefits to them of joining.
4. Benefits to you of them joining.
5. What they can expect - time commitment, frequency of requests, summaries, etc.
6. What you expect - (i.e. responses every time, responses only when they are moved, etc.)
7. How to sign up - this is a biggie!
8. Thanks.

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Sample RD Team Invitations...

▶ RD Team Invite

This was the original invite to the CoachVille R&D Team. Went out to our first 2,000 CV Members back in Summer 2001; 500 folks joined within a week.



CoachVille

Invitation to join the R&D Team

This email is about joining the CoachVille R&D Team. If you already know about it and wish to join, just address an email to subscribecrd@coachville.com. If you were on the 'old' R&D team, you will need to resubscribe now.

Thursday evening

Dear CoachVille Member:

Every member of CoachVille is, in effect, part of our R&D Team, given you are usually the first to test and use our programs, concepts, products and e-services. CoachVille members are quite generous with their time by responding with suggestions, ideas, corrections/typos and solutions.

And, that said, some of the CoachVille members want get a bit more involved in the alpha and beta side of the new stuff we come up with. These members join the CoachVille R&D Team.

If you elect to join the CoachVille R&D Team, here's what you can expect:

--You will receive between 1 and 5 emails a week asking for input, advice, suggestions, reactions, corrections, strategies, content, quotes and other stuff like that related to ideas and project we are working on

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for the general membership of both CoachVille and other upcoming Villes.

--You have the option of responding to these extra emails -- or not. But please don't join the CoachVille R&D Team unless you intend to be an active respondent and contribute your brain and creative power to CoachVille.

--We generally don't respond on a 1-1 basis to emails/suggestions received by R&D Team Members in response to a request for input. (Sometimes, 100s of emails are received, and while we look at every one, we don't respond.) So, you'll need to have the contribution of your ideas/comments be enough for you. You won't get many strokes from us, even if we end up incorporating your idea or suggestion.

I'm not trying to talk you out of becoming a CoachVille R&D Team member! But I want you to understand how the flow/exchange works.

Before you decide, here are a couple of important notes...

1. When you share an idea or strategy, you're letting us use, adapt, incorporate it into stuff we come up with, without attribution.
2. You may join the R&D Team now, or later if there is room. (We will cut off registration in the R&D Team when it reaches 1000 members, given the logistics.)
3. You must have an email account other than AOL. This, because ALL of the emails that go to the R&D Team are HTML and sometimes larger than the 30K file size limit imposed by the AOL gateway. Even if you have AOL 6.0, you cannot join the CoachVille R&D Team. However, you can always set up an email account at hotmail.com and join the R&D Team from that email account.
4. The ideas and strategies we present, asking for feedback, are confidential to the R&D Team, until we formally release the product or project.
5. We SOMETIMES have special TeleDiscussions for members of the R&D Team related to projects we are working on.
6. You may unsubscribe at any time.
7. The CoachVille R&D Team is for members only. Please do not give out the following subscribing email address.
8. PC and Mac users are both welcome and able to fully participate.
9. It's very likely that I'll be crafting intellectual property by weaving in some of the suggestions, feedback and content shared by team members. I generally share the resources created via input from the R&D Team for free to R&D Team members, at least for a period of time. And, many of these projects/programs/ebooks, etc., will be available commercially (meaning for a fee to the public). Legally, I will be the copyright holder/owner of this material. If you are not comfortable with this approach, please do not join the R&D Team at this time.

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Interested in being a part of the R&D Team?

If so, please address an email to:
subscribe@coachville.com

That's it! Nothing is needed in the subject line or in the body of your email message. You'll receive back a confirmation within 5 minutes. Please cut and paste that email address you see above into your email window. If you mistype it, you won't be subscribed to the CoachVille R&D announcement list.

Best,

Thomas

▶ About my rd team

You could post something like this at your website so folks can read about your R&D team while visiting your site.



The CoachVille R&D Team

Overview, How to Join, Guidelines, R&D Team Types

Overview

The CoachVille R&D Team is an intellectual factory and provides significant levels of feedback and strategic input in the design, crafting, testing and perfecting of the intellectual property -- and operations -- of CoachVille.

Any CoachVille member may join the CV R&D Team. As a member, you receive an email 2-5 times a week with ideas, questions, examples and you are asked to comment on the topics you wish to.

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How To Join

To join, first read and agree to the guidelines which are described below. (Note: If you have an AOL email address, you'll need to get an alternate one in order to join the CoachVille R&D Team, given our memos are always in html and are larger than the 30K file size limit imposed by AOL.)

Guidelines

The R&D Team takes on some controversial topics, some of which are virtually guaranteed to push your buttons. Which is fine, but the only rule as a member of the R&D Team is to be, at all times...

CIVIL & POLITE

We have had a problem with R&D member being so upset by something we are planning to do, or a project that we have taken on, or a thought-provoking question, that they have emotionally reacted and lashed out at me/us.

Not okay.

For example, when I asked for feedback on the "Everyone's a Coach" tagline, I got lots of negative response (no problem -- we like critical thinkers) and several personal attacks i.e., "You are ruining the coaching profession," "CoachVille is cheapening the industry," "You are evil" etc., etc. It's fine to disagree, but when it becomes personal, it hurts.

Part of what I and CoachVille do (does?) IS to be a disruptive influence in our industry. Disruption is good. Currently the industry is moribund. We're shaking it up so that it can evolve at the pace it was meant to evolve at. This ruffles feathers.

So, some tips...

1. Before you share an opinion, FIRST challenge yourself to see what the bigger place is that I'm coming from. If you think from where you usually think from, you won't be much help on the R&D Team (or to yourself).
2. When you receive an R&D email from us that you react negatively to, just hang out with the idea/topic for a day or two before firing off an email to me.
3. Use the process of being on the R&D Team to evolve and expand yourself. Every single time you receive an email from us, use it as a catalyst (or a cattle prod) to think bigger and be bigger. Don't be the same person you were before you read it.
4. In your comments/feedback, be honest, fully communicate, and point out what you like about the project/idea and where you see the flaws. Write from YOUR experience/preferences, not what you think "coaches" will like/dislike. You are the only one who matters here.

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5. And, make sure you phrase your comments -- especially the criticisms -- in a positive, helpful tone.

Good form for criticism:

--I can't imagine that I would buy the new product as you are describing it because the price point is too high for me.

--I like the general idea but here's the flaw as I see it...

--I don't have a solution, but something isn't right about this idea.

--Here's what I suggest that you consider...

Bad form for criticism:

--That idea sucks. [thank you for sharing]

--That's not going to work. [instead, tell us how to fix it]

--You don't know what you're doing. [needlessly insulting]

--You shouldn't.... [not helpful]

--That idea needs work. [this is assumed, yes?]

Which Type of R&D Member Will You Be?

Here's a summary of the 'types' of coaches who are on the R&D team. I am asking you to move yourself to Type 1 as soon as possible. While we can benefit from all types, our best work is done by Type 1's.

Type 1. The Creatives

They can hear my idea and quickly come up to speed with it, integrating it into what they already knew/felt about the topic, see the potential AND flaws in it and come back to me with why it's good (far beyond what I had seen) and what's flawed about it (flaws I hadn't been able to see myself). In other words, whatever idea I share with them is a catalyst for their thinking/creative process and/or evolution. They 'work it' and grow from it. It's more than them doing an analysis. And, sometimes, The Creatives totally TRASH my idea but they are nice about it and they ask me questions or point out missing links in my thinking process so that I can learn vs just being told it's a dumb idea. They help my understand a bigger place to look/listen from, so it works both ways quite nicely.

Usefulness: I read these emails first, both for the validation and for how they will evolve/expand my thinking quickly.

Type 2. The Cautionaries

They can hear my idea, and while they sense/inkle that it's an interesting one, it takes them some time to come around see exactly how it's a good one. So, they wait for a couple of days and then when they do see how the idea could/would work, they can become quite enthusiastic. But there is this buffering/arms-around-it time, that takes time.

Usefulness: This is the bulk of the coaching community, so I enjoy hearing from them and hearing what it takes to 'come around' to see the potential/value of an idea I shared. I am most curious how they make this shift because this is where most folks in the world are -- processing information, especially disruptive or paradigmical/paradoxical information, and integrating it into their now-broader way of seeing life.

Probable Source: The buffer thing. Why is it there? Why is there delay? Where's the bottleneck?

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Type 3. The "You-Should-ers "

These are mostly R&D members who have very strong opinions and who generally think I'm pretty stoopid. (Which, granted, I definitely am, from time to time.) They are quick to give advice from a rather limited place. They see the world through a single eye. Theirs. Their theme/mantra is "THIS IS THE WAY IT IS." No peripheral vision, much less 20/20. Yawn. Reaction city.

Usefulness: They are tiresome but sometimes I find useful nuggets because they ARE pretty smart in their narrow area.

Probable Source: I'm not sure what the source of this one is. They definitely have a strong desire to help and protect me from failure. But the motivation doesn't seem very clean.

Type 4. The Repeaters

They respond to my idea with comments/ideas based on ideas/situations that they already have had in their past and repeat what they FELT in the past about their original idea. In other words, when they heard my idea, they go into their heads and "find" a similar situation they had faced professionally and then share comments/advice from THAT place, instead of using my idea/question to look freshly and upgrade their past experience to be directly fitting to the idea I emailed them.

Usefulness: These contributors are usually VERY smart and experienced. Perhaps too experienced. And, they miss out on the pleasure of experimenting with the ideas I present. They jump into 'expert or solution mode' too quickly and miss out on the richness or potential of the idea and instead insert themselves/their experience too soon. Not a lot of room for fresh thinking, but the feedback is VERY valuable because I learn so much of the expert/technical side or potential ramifications of my ideas.

Probable Source: Inability to recognize subtleties. Most of my ideas are laced with subtleties. If one jumps too quickly into repeat/analytical mode, they miss the underlying subtleties. Subtleties are quite rich.

Type 5. The Fear Barometers

Whatever idea I have, they first process the idea through their fear-barometers and THEN they give me their feedback (usually fear-based). They look at the negative/consequence side. They look to see where they or other likes them could 'lose' if I moved forward with my idea? They have self-appointed themselves as the watchdog of what was.

Usefulness: There is definitely some value in this type of input because probably 25% of coaches think/process information/ideas in this way. They don't have the freedom/ability to think conceptually; the value of something is measured mostly by its potential risk to their status quo. Or to 'coaching in general,' whatever that means.

Probable Source: An inability to think/experience ideas -- even disruptive ideas -- on a conceptual basis. They route the idea through themselves first and thus it brings up reactions.

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Type 6. The Contrarian Indicators

There are some coaches who email me (from the R&D Team and in general) that are incredibly consistent on being on the other side of the flow. In other words, when they say an idea is lame or fatally flawed or that I "definitely should not do that!" then I KNOW the project is going to be a success. And when they love an idea quickly, I know to get real cautious real quickly with that idea cuz it's probably going to fail in its current form.

Usefulness. Of course, I never tell the person they are a contrarian indicator!

Probable Source: Behind the times, big time. But they don't know it. They are living in a carefully constructed world with few fresh influences.

Still want to join the R&D Team?

[Click here to join.](#)

(You will need the generic CoachVille Member Area username and password.)

■ Thanking Your New R&D Team Members!

Of course, once people join your team, you want them to receive a thank you email reminding them of the benefits, what they can expect, and any ground rules.

▶ Ezine Welcome letter

When someone subscribes to my R&D Team announcement list/ezine, here's the email they receive within seconds, automatically.



R&D Team Memo

Wednesday, July 18, 2001

To unsubscribe, email unsubscribecrd@coachville.com

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Welcome to the R&D Team

Dear ~field:fromName:1~,

Welcome to the ~field:listTitle~ newsletter from ~field:listOwner~. Please save a copy of this message for future reference. Your address has been subscribed as:

~field:fromName~ <~field:fromAddress~>

This ezine is EXCLUSIVELY for CoachVille members. If you are not a CoachVille member, please unsubscribe immediately by addressing an email to unsubscribecd@coachville.com.

If you are a CoachVille member, then welcome to the CoachVille R&D Team! We'll be emailing you periodically (sometimes twice a day, sometimes only twice a month depending on our R&D cycle) with ideas and requests for input. Please respond as you can, but note that we won't be able to respond individually or personally to your comment or idea, given the volume of emails that come in. Please understand. But you will see the projects we work on take shape thanks to your support and input!

VERY IMPORTANT!

We have one ground rule that you'll need to honor in order to be in this group. That ground rule is civility.

We have had two significant problems on the R&D Team; thus is ground rule.

Problem #1. Invective & Personal Attacks.

I periodically receive emails from R&D Team Members who don't just disagree with a project, idea or approach we're taking with some aspect of CoachVille but become so incensed that they email me cutting, personal, mean, and even cruel comments. (I can't explain this either but it happens enough that I have to make it clear that this is not okay.) It's quite likely that you will completely disagree with something I'm working on or an approach I've taken. (Example: The "Everyone's a Coach" tagline at CoachVille has been quite controversial.) I'm very open to hearing WHY you don't like something but no name-calling, assuming that I'm the devil and ruining the profession, etc. Be big enough to see -- and even enjoy -- both sides of something you feel strongly about.

Problem #2. Adamant, Reactive Opinions.

When you disagree with a direction we've taken you're going to have to agree to disagree and then move forward. Remember, I'm managing the input/flow from an R&D team of at least 500 coaches with a wide variety of preferences, needs, opinions and values. We all have views on things, but if you find yourself getting ticked off and wanting to shoot me a "ruff-ruff-here's-the-way-life-is-dude" email, please don't. If you get hot under the collar, the first step is to ask yourself WHY? And, when you figure it out, THEN please email me with your concern, criticism or view. --All of which are most welcome, but you gotta be civil to play on this team.

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NOTE: It's very important that you have two pieces of software in order to view and make the most of your experience as a CoachVille.com R&D Team Member. Both software's are free but you MUST have the most current versions of each in order to access the files you'll be receiving.

Adobe Acrobat Reader version 4.0 or 5.0.
Version 1 or 2 or 3 won't work correctly. Download free reader at <http://www.adobe.com>. The win98 version does works with winME. There is also a mac version.

RealAudio Player version 7 or 8 or higher.
Earlier versions simply won't play the RealAudio files we have created. Download free player at <http://www.real.com>. They'll push you to buy the \$29 version, but look carefully part-way down on the page and you'll see the link for the free version.

You also need to download the most current version of your browser.

To cancel this subscription at any time, you may send an e-mail from your above address to:

unsubscribecd@coachville.com

Again, welcome!

Thomas

■ Step 3. Managing your Virtual R&D Team.

OK, now you have a team, you know how you're going to use them, and you're ready to get started. Learning to managing and use your Team will be a process of trial and error. Here are some trials and errors others have already gone through for you - it will help you compress your learning curve even more.

■ Send them something.

Even something little. Involving your R&D Team early on after you initially format it engages them. They feel valued, and it gives you the chance to test out your systems.

■ Teach them how to respond to you.

In order to help you organize your responses - the flood of emails - let them know how to respond, and whether or not they can expect an individual response from you.

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Examples are:

- "just reply to this email by hitting the reply button";
- "send a message with "X" in the subject line
- reply to "[X@yourwebsite.com](#)" (put the link IN the email - or better yet, send it from that address)

■ Create systems to help you manage the flow.

If you are not used to getting hundreds of emails on a subject in a short period of time, this will be a shocker! Designing your systems to manage the flow for you will help keep you from experiencing overwhelm. You may still get overwhelmed by emotions - it is remarkably how much people are willing to share.

Some examples are:

1. Set up folders in your email program. You can create rules to send emails to certain folders automatically based on different variables.
2. Set up a special email address only for R&D Team correspondence. (Just note that sometimes people will think of things and send them to whatever email address they think of first.)
3. Have someone else, like a Virtual Assistant, weed through the emails and pull out key points, then summarize and send to you.
4. Weed through them yourself, quickly pulling out key points then delete.
5. Use a "digest" service to condense everything into one email and send to you at certain intervals.

■ Follow-up with your Team.

This is critical! When your Team responds, you want to let them know the results. Use your own style in determining how much detail you give them. You can give statistical reports or summaries of responses, or just the general gist. Always tell them what your next steps will be.

The key is that you want them to know you get their input, that you are thankful, and how you will be using it. This 360-degree approach - closing the loop - is essential for conditioning them to want to continue responding.

■ What mistakes do coaches make with Virtual R&D Teams?

■ Focusing on Selling to the Virtual R&D Team

While many people on your team will be customers, or become them, remember the real reason you set up the team and use it for that purpose. It's OK to offer special deals as thank you's or early-bird options, just be clear about this and don't overdo it. If team members sense that your main purpose in having the Team is to sell to them, they leave - at best - and bad-mouth you at worst. Be genuine, act with integrity, and express your appreciation often.

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■ Not closing the loop

If your Team doesn't know how their input is being used, they don't know whether it is valuable or if they are doing it "right". You want to reinforce their desire to respond by letting them know where they and the projects stand. And, of course, always let them know when you launch the new project or product - they'll be excited for you and take pride that they played a role. They may even sign up or share it with their network.

■ Not demonstrating appreciation

People like to help for a number of reasons (see Benefits in Client Guide above). The primary reason for continuing to contribute is that they feel valued. This doesn't always mean warm fuzzies - though those work, too. A clearly articulated email, identifying how the Team's feedback has contributed to your business and your evolution as a coach or creative thinker, can be the greatest reward. Free gifts are nice, but not necessary. Sincere gratitude is the name of the game.

■ Fear of negative feedback

If this is you, chances are an R&D Team isn't right for you - at least not right now. You will get negative feedback - after all, not ALL of your ideas are great ones (yet). The feedback you get will help you decide whether and how to go forward. If an idea stinks, wouldn't you rather know BEFORE you put weeks and months into developing it?

■ Perfectionism

This one will tend to keep you from sharing the idea until you've got it close to finalized, hence defeating the primary benefit of having an R&D Team. If you wait until it's perfect, you've eliminated the chance for full co-creation and input from your team. You've probably also become overly attached to the idea and you run the risk of looking like you are selling them something versus seeking R&D input. Remember, the "D" in R&D stands for "Development". This means they need to be involved in that phase.

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Other Resources/Classes to Consider

Passive Revenue eCourse \$99 | [here](#)

Learn how to turn your coaching expertise into multiple sources of automatic, passive recurring, permanent, value-added and scalable revenue streams.

Transcript of Training Session

Class #003 - Creating a Virtual R&D Team

January 23, 2002 - 5:00 p.m. EST

Thomas J. Leonard, Session Leader

[real audio](#) (from which transcript was crafted)*

*Please note that Thomas J. Leonard gets sick part way through this class. We've chosen to keep the entire realaudio file intact.

[MP3 File of call](#) | [here](#) (to download put mouse over file and RIGHT click)

**Please note, you will want to stop the call after about 15-20 minutes, when you are playing this for your study group, to break into small groups and have them work on the design of their Virtual R&D TEAM.

Virtual R&D Team

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TJL: Hello, fellow coaches! My name is Thomas Leonard and with me is....

DB: Dave Buck!

TJL: Dave buck is here! We have about 10 other folks who are study group hosts on this call. Dave and I and the group will talk for about 10-15 minutes about what a virtual R&D team and how you can benefit from it, and what you can work on with them. After we're done setting up the stage for this, your study group hosts will tease out the topic with you and help identify a project you might want to work on - e-zine, a teleclass, an e-book, or one of many other projects. The study group host will work with you later on, to actually buddy up and come up with some ideas.

We know how valuable an R&D team is - Coachville wouldn't be here without one, or wouldn't be very productive without one. A lot of people have emailed me that they love the idea, but don't know what they'd work with one on. Today we're going to be talking about that. There's no real trick to run one - you're the host of a group with a common interest; it's very simple. I'd like to start with Dave - you've launched your own recently and we'd like to hear about your experience.

DB: The reason it's worked well for me is because whenever I'm creating a new program or new teleclass - I used to try to come up with all the ideas in my own head. I thought I had good ideas, but many times, they didn't work. Then, I started using an R&D team of people interested in me and my subject. When I used the team, the quality of my ideas got significantly better, and gave me the opportunity to cast off all the ideas that weren't so good. I could much more quickly get to the right idea.

TJL: If you're a creative person, you're going to have a lot of ideas but not know which ones are good ideas, and the R&D team can help you figure that out.

DB: That's exactly right.

TJL: Because you're going to want to create something someone else is going to want to buy, or should buy....

DB: Or something you think is really neat!

TJL: It's important to use your R&D team to weed out those ideas that just aren't that interesting. The team can also really polish your product.

DB: Yeah! There's another little piece I found is that - in most businesses, 50 years ago people made stuff, but now we don't make stuff, we make choices. We're now making hundreds of choices every day, and the R&D team is here to help you make the right choices.

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TJL: Well said, and rather than waiting for the quality team to come in after the engineers have done their work, you want to bring them in right up front. You can not only share what you've created, but share the creating with them. For me that was a real ego brush! It's great for all the folks to share with you, for example, all the books they've read. That's been great for me, especially, because I don't have time to read all the self-help books out there.

DB: I think the biggest thing out there is the perfectionism trap - people don't want to share things until they think they've got them perfect. In this situation, you want to share it before it's almost an idea. For a lot of people, that's the hardest thing.

TJL: And the most important thing - rather than hoarding the ideas you have, you can use the R&D team to realize not only those, but a ton more. There are also other ways in which you can use an R&D team. Somebody can just make an offhand comment in an email, and Boom!

DB: That's another key thing about this - we talk about needs and environments. If you have an R&D team, you're always surrounding yourself with new ideas. Like you said, an offhand remark can really trigger something. Having an R&D team is like having a group of collaborators that are interested in your and your topic, and that creates this whole ecology of ideas and makes you more productive. Not only do you have more ideas to choose from, but the quality and value added will be increased because you'll be in touch with the marketplace.

TJL: Yeah, and often creators are in touch with the mountain top! You also mentioned earlier about evolution and environments; they really do become an evolving environment. Those evolving environments are going to evolve you individually as well, as long as you're open. Dave, how did you make the leap?

DB: It's a very interesting thing. Part of being a good R&D receiver is - I think it's being welcome and open to all kinds of input. I've found recently that when they tell me an idea stinks, it's actually kind of welcome. It's like, "I'm glad I found out now, rather than spending so much time on this idea!"

TJL: Yes, it doesn't mean you're not going to do it, but you just have to find a way to make it work.

DB: Another thing is that the team doesn't say it stinks too often, but they do say, "I haven't a clue what you're talking about!" (laugh)

TJL: And that forces you to be what? (laugh)

DB: Much more clear! That brings me back down to earth.

TJL: Yes, they're a lot like translators that way. The creative process is messy, but you can get better with the R&D team.

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TJL: I agree. You also need to manage yourself in terms of how you respond to things. Some people are good at being organizing and being affected by a lot of input, while others really tend to get to 'overwhelm'. For some people, you have to grow a new capability of handling lots of input - sifting through lots of emails, organizing, and collating. We're not really used to getting 200 emails on the same subject within 24 hours!

DB: Yes; it's not a normal thing!

TJL: And you can hire someone to go through and organize it, or what I do is, go through the first 50, look for the one key thing in each email - which takes about 15 seconds- and then just delete, delete, delete! You're really looking for the gold among the ore. Also, for some other personal benefits - besides more and better products - that I've experienced. There's a certain virtual comfort in people sending emails on things I'm interested in. I'm never short on ideas, and I'm never short on things to toss out to them because of it. And you know what? 9 times out of 10, there are at least 5-10 percent of the people in my group online at any given time, so often, I'll get at least 5-7 responses back within just a few minutes! If you don't get any email, you know it's a REALLY bad idea! Any personal benefits of your experience?

DB: On the personal side, the biggest thing for me was being able to share ideas before I thought they were perfect. It's about not being so much of a solo operator - it's just a big thing.

TJL: And a lot of creative people are solo operators - they're not really collaborators, and you can really develop it through the R&D team. Another professional benefit is that you can become known better; I've become known better and I know Coachville has too. If you're creating intellectual property, you're going to be developing and enhancing your own reputation. You want people to know what you're up to - you're going to get business from it, and people are going to be forming positive opinions about you and looking to you for leadership in a particular topic.

Why not start with an R&D team and have them educate you about what you don't know? You'll become an expert in a hurry. You don't have to be an expert in a topic to start an R&D team.

DB: That is true - when I first started working on branding, I didn't know much about it, so I led free teleclasses for 50 weeks. I didn't call it an R&D team, but that's really what it was for me - I learned so much about the subject.

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TJL: That's great! We're going to have the study group hosts to lead their group at this point lead the folks in their group through a few exercises that are in their manual. We'd also like to suggest if you're listening to this on Real Audio, we'd like to think about having your group work on this one question - What would I like to work on that would merit having an R&D team? Most folks will really be attracted to your topic, not just you. What would be so exciting for you to learn about or create that you'd want to start an R&D team?

Dave, thanks for being with us. We'll have the study group host turn off the Real Audio player, and we'll wait for just a moment while that's done. (Thomas asks Dave to take over the group for a few minutes at this point)

DB: Well, how is everyone doing? Okay, why don't we work on that exercise for a bit? What would be something that would compel you to start an R&D team?

Donna: I'm actually in the process of creating both a workshop and an e-book on making yourself over from the inside out. I think an R&D team would be really valuable for the workshop and workbook portion of that. Yes, very good! That's a great example.

Joyce: I'm just starting to do teleclasses on feng shui and I want to switch that into an e-book. I think starting an R&D team would really help me with the e-book.

XXX: I'd join that R&D team

DB: I think a lot of people would - it's an interesting idea! For example, if you were doing a teleclass, they could help you with the title of the class. That's the key to get people signing up for the class.

Joyce: I got that from taking your class. Someone in the group came up with the name for me! I'm doing my first 5-day next week. Basically, your class served as the R&D team.

DB: I appreciate you saying that. One thing I hope to accomplish in that class is to have people set up an R&D team for all aspects of a program - the title, the slogan, the description, and the content. All that, you can come up with it yourself, but it's great to have an R&D team. That's a wonderful thing to use an R&D team for. And, the next level of this is that if you get into the practice of using an R&D team in your first teleclass, then you can just make that process the way you do things. Part of your process of inventing things is the R&D team.

TJL: Dave, I'm back.

DB: We were just talking about what we'd use an R&D team for.

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TJL: Great! if anyone else wants to come up with an idea, and you want us to walk you through the process, we can do that with you. We can also do a Q&A for managing the process.

DB: We went through with Joyce on how to use the R&D tea, so that would be great.

XXX: How would you respond to someone who's interested in the concept but has the fear around somebody taking their idea and running with it?

TJL: And you've got a client that you'd like to suggest an R&D team idea to?

XXX: Well, as a study group host, I'm thinking there might be some participants - I'm on one of your R&D teams myself so I see how it really works, but it's an interesting question on how you're able to share so much and still really own it.

TJL: Well, ideas really aren't copyright-able. Often, I've had people working on the same idea I was and neither of us knew it. The 2nd thing is that if someone is going to take the execution ideas and re-format it, that's a legal issue. Are you talking about how someone doesn't want to release something because it's going to be the cornerstone of their business?

XXX: Yes, and sometimes people will seek out your advice, but won't give you any details to help them. They want to just horde the information.

TJL: If they're coming from that place, I wouldn't bother. They'd have so far to go to really embrace the R&D team concept. If you're open to the idea, you understand that you have lots of ideas so you won't worry so much about just one. It's just human nature, so I wouldn't push it. An R&D team is really for someone who wants to create something in a hurry and have it be good. My focus is really never on the idea or the product; it's really on the end-user. If you can get them to switch their focus, that may take them off the control issue. Who else has any question about the process?

XXX: My big question is that I have a big list of people I email regularly, but it's not in the hundreds. How would I add people for my R&D team?

TJL: I would start with people you know and give them an incentive for joining. Find a topic that they would be excited about, and let them know you're going to be working on it for about 6 months. You'll give about 5-10 percent of your list to come in with you, but make sure they have a real reason to join. Make sure they see the benefits to them. Also, one of the resources we'll have for this module is a document on understanding the benefits of an R&D team that you can include in your letter. I think you can be passionate about the idea, but always be coming from their perspective.

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XXX: Great; thank you.

TJL: Who's next?

Allison: How do you make sure that your R&D team is representative enough of your target market so the feedback is truly valuable?

TJL: It's almost always truly valuable. You can certainly pre-qualify people who come into your team, but I generally don't try to do that too much. I think if you get a wide range of folks on your team - those with lots of knowledge and those who don't have a clue - you never know who's going to give you the best advice.

Allison: Do you ever find yourself second-guessing the feedback from your team?

TJL: What does that mean?

Allison: Maybe you really have a sense of where you want something to go and the feedback is challenging that, do you have a sense that you still know better?

TJL: Yes. You can tell in how they're phrasing their comments where they are on the continuum of evolution. I've got people on the team that when they really hate something, I know it's going to be a huge success - and it always works! Some people just don't get it, and they never will, but they're great to have on the team. On one topic, I got 35% negative, which is unusual for most of the team. I knew I was going to move forward with the project, but I am also mindful that it's going to turn off a lot of people.

Allison: So you don't just accept all the feedback you get?

TJL: Yes, it may be useful, but it's not gospel.

Susan: If you start your R&D team around a product, and it has a shelf-life and you want to move on to something else, do you invite them to a new team or find new people?

TJL: I generally just have one team that's an ad-hoc group. What you can do is invite them to join the new team, and offer them the opportunity to either stay on or opt-out.

XXX: Thank you.

Katie: Could you talk a bit about converting an existing group to an R&D team? I have a focused group that I've been using for a couple of years as an informal R&D team, but I'd like to use them much more in that way. Can I move into R&D with them, or should I just continue using them informally like that?

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TJL: Okay, they've been acting as an R&D team, but you haven't labeled them as such?

Katie: Not really, because the kinds of things I share have been few and far between.

TJL: I would make a big deal out of the fact that you're starting an R&D team and invite them. Let them know if they'd rather not, that's okay, but that you'd love to have them. Maybe you could educate them in their new role, too.

Katie: I think the quality of responses would be better too.

TJL: Yes, and they're really competing with each other to get your attention - that is part of what's happening. They want to be recognized, make their point, and change your mind. Talk about evolution!

Katie: Thanks!

TJL: We have just a couple minutes left; I'd love to get feedback from you about the notion of R&D teams.

Donna: I think it was very helpful to think about the benefits to them, as opposed to just yourself.

TJL: Great; who's next?

XXX: I have more clarity in how to communicate to others about an R&D team.

TJL: Thank you. Who else?

Joyce: I like the feedback I got on my idea.

Katie: I like the idea of being more formal with the R&D team - that helps me understand and focus my thinking even more.

TJL: Yes, and they'll be able to talk about it better too! It gives them a more formal role.

DB: I just wanted to highlight the same point about helping them understand the benefits of being on an R&D team.

TJL: Yes. We need to educate them on why they'd want to bother at all. Thank you for joining us - bye now!

end.

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Use these microbanner ads on your website or email signature.
coming soon

Testimonials

One of the best things I've ever done is to create an R&D Team. They are my source of energy and wisdom. Can't beat that!
-- Thomas J. Leonard

[got one of your own?](#)

Sample R&D Team Management Memos

Wondering what to say or ask for in the memos you broadcast to your R&D Team members?

Below are a few samples of actual memo's that have been broadcast to the CoachVille R&D Team over the past 12 months, so you'll see quite a range of topics and formats, depending on the need.

The Assignment memo

Sometimes, you can package your request for input as an 'assignment.' Makes it sound more official.

R&D Team Memo

Saturday, June 2, 2001

competencies assignment

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coaching competencies of a certified coach...

Introduction

I'm ramping up the project to identify 100 really powerful/telling coaching competencies. The final collection will be the basis of the certified coach program/designation from CoachVille.com.

Willing to help craft these competencies? All it takes is a strong point of view. And a willingness to share it. Your name won't be used in and way (for confidentiality reasons, plus the same submission will likely come from multiple folks).

Cool prizes/gifts if we use your idea in our final list. It's easy to play... Just fill out the following form (or make it longer!) and email to thomas@thomasleonard.com by Wednesday, June 6, 2001. Note: Please don't cut and paste from the ICF Competencies list. Write yours from your heart, your mind and your experience. Make it edgy, specific and yours. Ask yourself: "What makes me a great/powerful coach?" Your answer will likely be a competency.

Bonus: If you send in 50 competencies, I'll ship you your choice of an autographed Portable Coach book or 4 'coach' key chains (to share).

Super Bonus: If you send in 100 competencies, I'll waive the tuition/fee (\$99) for the CoachVille Coach Training Program (details coming out this afternoon on this project).

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coaching competencies assignment

Please fill out and email to thomas@thomasleonard.com by Wednesday, June 6, 2001.

A Certified Coach should be able to...

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Examples:

- Dynamically interact without disrupting the flow of the client's creative process.
- Significantly expand a client's way of thinking within 10 minutes.
- Easily manage their own reactions during the coaching process.

A Certified Coach should be able to distinguish between...

1. _____ and _____
2. _____ and _____
3. _____ and _____
4. _____ and _____
5. _____ and _____

Examples:

- What's motivating the client and what's compelling the client.
- A client's personal development needs and their personal evolution process.
- A client's cultural tethers and their personal operating system.

A Certified Coach should know...

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Examples:

- When to push, when to wait and when to plant a seed.
- Which assessment to use at any given time during the coaching process.
- How to get the client started in the coaching process even before the first call.

A Certified Coach should have...

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Examples:

- A website that successfully converts visitors to clients.
- A network of at least 100 other coaches for cross-referrals and cross-training.
- Enough self-confidence to be forthright and upfront with the client at all times.

Please fill out and email to thomas@thomasleonard.com by Wednesday, June 6, 2001.

Thank you!!

Thomas

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■ The What Should I Do? memo

I am often not sure what I should do or what approach I should take with a project or service, so I ask for input from my R&D Team about what I should do.



coach lapel pins

Just received the production sample (i've been messing around design-wise with these lapel pins for 5 months) and I think it came out looking pretty cool. I ordered 1,000 for the first run (above is actual photograph/color taken with my nikon coolpix, a white shirt for background and a maglite flashlight for lighting effect <g>). Lapel pins should arrive in about two weeks from the factory. The pin is just under an inch wide. But I'm not sure what to do with these....

- Give them away?
- Sell them?
- Include them with as bonuses with TeleClasses?
- R&D gifts?

The pin is the shade of blue that is the 'CoachVille logo blue' color, so there is a subtle branding opportunity here, especially as we build up the CoachVille coach training program and the notion of a CoachVille Coach or a CoachVille Certified Coach (based on those competencies).

Any ideas? Love to hear them.... thomas@thomasleonard.com

Have a great weekend...

Thomas

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The Just an FYI memo

There are times when you don't want or need feedback but just want to share something with your team. Nice to have these 'buffers' in between request for feedback memos.



FLICKVILLE
.COM

don't misread the name...

FlickVille is what I've renamed a 1,000,000-subscriber ezine that I bought last month and finally take control of this week. (Like my latest logo? It needs a little more tweaking but it's almost there.) The reviews are written by a funny/edgy/real guy; 2-3 reviews a week.

huh?

You may be what the heck do 1,000,000 movie-going subscribers have to do with coaching? Well, they are all potential customers for the full range of success tools that will start coming out of LifeVille...



a lifetime of personal development for only \$49

...which I am thinking of positioning as the public-personal growth membership portal version of CoachVille.com. A place to put all of the client programs I've created and package them for access by the public and then link them to the coaches listed in CoachVille's referral service. (Not the coach training stuff, just the e-versions of the personal development programs...)

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And then somehow connect that with



which will be both a reminder service as well as a daily e-coaching service that broadcasts guides, steps, encouragement for whatever the person wants to work on, with ads/links to coaches who the subscriber can hire for help with implementing and integrating the tips and steps and reminders they receive.

I know, it's a little complicated at this stage, but it DOES all connect. (Really! I tell myself...) I'm just trying to tighten and cross link the connections.

Anyway, just an FYI...

But if you see any connections or synergy that I haven't mentioned, I'd love to know.... --- thomas@thomasleonard.com

Best,

Thomas

■ The Photo memo

A photo of you, a staffer, or your dog, etc. can be entertaining for your team. And it can personalize/humanize you.

■ The Trying to Figure Something Out (graph) memo

Rather than try to figure stuff out by yourself, why not include your R&D Team in the process? Helps you figure it out faster, and they enjoy seeing the inside track and thinking process.

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■ **The How Should I Price Something memo?**

Ask and they WILL tell you! Duh!

■ **The Should I Do This? memo**

Their feedback is a great barometer of whether or proceed in a particular direction or product.

■ **The Project Announcement memo**

Basic announcement memo for when you are announcing something new and want to give folks background/context of the project. I try to give as much context as I can't so that I get the best feedback possible. Plus, providing context in this memo forces me to make it clear to them, which helps the project crystallize for me.

■ **The How Are You Benefiting? memo**

From time to time, it's important to ask your team members if/how they are benefiting personally and professionally as an R& Team member. This prompts them to look, and they are usually impressed with what they discover. Further bonds them to you and the process. Broadcast selected comments *(with permission) to educate/remind everyone what the benefit to them are.

■ **The Tease memo**

Sometimes, you just can't help yourself and you send out a 'coming soon' or 'tease' memo. Definitely gets their attention!

■ **The Help Me Build a Q&A memo**

Q&A's are an effective format to convey a lot of information in usable chunks and provide situationalized answers to customer questions. And, I find it much easier to create intellectual property when I am responding to specific questions. By asking your team to send in a lot of questions they have on your topic and/or having them read the Q&A list that you've started, they'll ask you questions that never would have occurred to you prompt you to explain your course or product in a more complete manner.

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Q&A about Virtual R&D Teams



I've been invited to join quite a few R&D teams in the last 3 months. hm. coincidence? Is there a chance that the market for R&D teams is over saturated? Or maybe, only if we all pull from the same pond? The trick would be to find another pond. no?

It really shouldn't matter to you how many invitations you receive. Focus instead on how many people join your R&D Team.

▶ **How do R&D members feel about Thomas not returning emails? (I should say I have received replies to about half my emails)**

Make sure folks are clear that you do NOT respond to individual emails but that you'll share the collection or summary of responses with everyone from time to time. And, I find that I respond to about 10% of the emails I get from R&D Team members to thank them for an insight or significant contribution. Some folks take 30 or 60 minutes to share their written input. That deserves a thank you.

▶ **How many did R&D team members did you start with and when?**

I've run R&D Teams since the early 90's but didn't enlarge them to the 500 or 1000 person variety until 1999.

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▶ **Have you had problems with people using your information without permission? If so how do you handle it?**

Sometimes, but rarely. I've had people cut and paste an recourse HTML design, and in some cases, content, but when this happens, I write a little email that starts with " Dear , I'm not sure that you and I have ever met, but it appears that you and my ecourse on X are intimately acquainted." That gets their attention.

▶ **How do you find the balance between being true to yourself and mostly your style and taking input from others or is that even a concern?**

A very excellent question. Having an R&D Team has both opened up my thinking to very different ways of thinking about a topic. And, after digesting the full spectrum of views, it seems to make it easier for me to both be more inclusive in my thinking about the topic, but also crystal clear on how I'm going to approach or lean into the topic. Confidence comes from seeing so many sides, angles, views, tangents because when you do select an approach or direction, you're doing so with better/more complete information.

▶ **Should there be a limit or optimal number of people on your team?**

Teams can be effective from 10 to 1,000. Anything more than 1,000 is a ton of work. Even 500 to 1,000 is a lot of work, specially if they respond a lot to requests for input like the CoachVille R&D Team members do. And, you can automated some/all of this processing/emails. One thing to remember is that your R&D Team members will probably be your best buying customers, so I don't know if I would set an arbitrary cap.

▶ **What's the hardest thing about r&d teams? How have you handled that?**

The occasional attack. People can get plugged in by ideas you share, or approaches you're going to take to something. Some people are big enough to handle an approach or opinion other than theirs; others don't have that level of grace and they can pounce on you. Here's once case where I had to address it with all members. And, I tend to work at the bleeding edge of coaching innovation and marketing. Those folks who are traditional thinkers or have some turf to protect, reaction out of fear, anger and survival. Often, the apologize on their own. Sometimes I ignore attacks; other times I request or demand an apology. If the person can't handle it, I unsubscribe them from the team. The last thinking I want to be afraid of is opening and reading email from my R&D Team.

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▶ **What do you do about snide comments, digs and 'off' comments?**

I respond using one of several questions, comments or requests like these...

...Please be constructive.

...Not nice. Why would you write that?

...I ask that you apologize for this crack.

...Unprofessional. I wouldn't dig you like this; why would you dig me like that?

...Sorry, I don't accept input that's not crispy clean. If you'd like to make a contribution as a Team Member, please clean it up

...You're writing to a human being, not a faceless machine. Please tweak and resend.

Or, you can keep focused on content creation and simply ignore the off comments. Or, have someone else cull the responses so you only see the useful ones.

▶ **But isn't there value in negative comments, even if unprofessionally written?**

Absolutely. But then there's value in pain, too. But that's not how I live my life.

How to have greater, and greater ideas?

▶ **How do you keep the team motivated?**

I suggest you use the word inspired instead. It's about keeping them thinking bigger and challenging them. When people are inspired you don't have to motivate them.

However, to answer your question directly, folks feel motivated because they know they'll receive emails from me on topics that will stimulate their own creativity and/or help them create cool intellectual property of their own. And, don't discount the fact that your R&D Team is a virtual environment that, all by itself, will evolve that person. they may not know this consciously, yet they are attracted to join. [Read a list of reasons why folks](#) on my team say they continue to be a member and I think you'll see what I mean.

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Study Group Invitation

Mark your calendar!

[insert date here]

700pm to 900pm

Location: [insert address or area of town here]

Hosted by: [your name here]

RSVP (required) to [insert your email address here]

Focus

The focus of our next study group is on **Creating a Virtual R&D Team**. There are a number of invaluable reasons to start a virtual R&D Team. This should be lots of fun and very thought provoking! Join a group of your peers as we help each other design and formulate their own personal R&D Team and with that knowledge we'll be able to go out and help our clients do the same.

We'll be playing an intro tape from Thomas Leonard and Dave Buck from CoachVille, and learning how to work this exercise both for ourselves and for use with clients. You can download the full set of materials for this MicroModule to read before the study group:

<http://www.coachville.com/3steptraining/003virtualrdteam.html>

Why this focus is valuable

In a rapidly evolving industry with so many creative choices before you, how do you decide where to focus your time to maximize your results, evolve your business and reputation, and create an environment that continues to inspire you?

For coaches, creating a Virtual R&D Team is a key part of the answer. It can mean the difference between investing your resources in an idea that never flies and investing your resources in an idea that catapults you to the top of your game.

This 3 Step Training is for anyone who wants to learn how to create and manage a Virtual R&D Team. After completing this module, you will know how to create an R&D Team, what projects you could use them for, and how to manage your R&D Team so that the team itself benefits and is continually evolving itself, your business, and you.

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About the CoachVille Study Groups

This is a totally new format for coaches to learn together in local study groups, just like in college! Each group has a host and from between 3 and 12 coaches who attend monthly get-togethers, usually at someone's home or office. These Study Groups are informal, friendly and focused. Each meeting has a specific learning focus where we all learn from each other and from the guest experts who connect with us via conference call or audio tape.

I am a CoachVille Study Group Host and I would for you to join me and several other coaches as we get to know each a bit, and also focus on the great coach training material that CoachVille is providing for our use, completely free of charge.

Everyone is welcome to attend a CoachVille Study Group; they do not have to be a CoachVille member.

Our Agenda for [insert date here/change as necessary]

700-730pm | Welcoming, getting to know each other, self intros
730-745pm | Host introduces the topic of the evening
745-845pm | Group discussion, does exercises
845-900pm | Winding down, announcements
900pm | End

Please bring

A pad of paper and a pen.
A beverage to share.
Business cards to share, if you wish.
And please dress casually/comfortably. We're not formal at all.

Preparation

Note to Host

This section is optional. IF you want them to come up to speed with this topic, you can email them the MicroModule PDFs or point them to the website to download them and ask them to read them before your study group. Remember, this is a study group, not a classroom, so the more folks are prepared/educated about the process before they show up, the easier it is for you and the more they'll get out of the Study Group.

RSVP is required

Please let me know that you are coming and if you are bringing any friends or colleagues. We're hosting this at [insert type of location] so we have to know how many are coming.
[insert your name]: [insert your area code and phone number] or [insert email address].

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Location

We are meeting at [insert address and suite/apt number here]

Area of town: [insert area of town here]

Cross Streets: [insert cross streets here]

Directions

[insert ultra clear directions here]

Note to Host:

Alternatively, for your personal safety/protection and/or to tightly manage the event size, do not include the specific address in the invitation, but rather the area of town. Say that you will reply with the specific address when you confirm their RSVP.

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