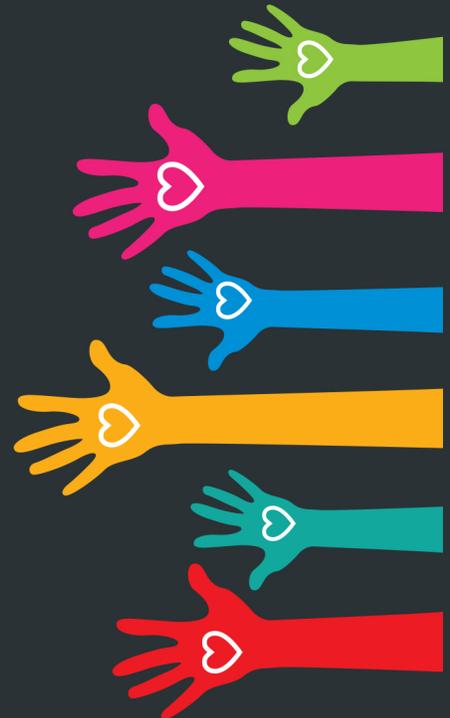


# Run Your Own Coaching Workshop, Class or Retreat!



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# 1. Getting Started

I love running classes and workshops. I teach my workshops all over the world, in places like Paris, London, Rome and Prague and at conference centers like Esalen, Kripalu, and Omega. I also run classes online: a favorite of mine is the one I teach to writers about the importance of place and setting in writing. Typically, I run my workshops as five-day workshops, though I also run them as weekend workshops, one-day workshops, and half-day workshops. I quite love it!

If you're a coach, you're likely to need to supplement your income, since few coaches can make a living just by coaching clients. One excellent way to supplement your income is by running a workshop, class or retreat. However, the following objection may arise in you. As a busy coach who perhaps has little patience for other pursuits, why would you want to entertain the idea of running classes, workshops or retreats? Won't they cost you time and energy that you'd rather devote to securing clients and working with clients? Isn't teaching both a distraction and a little beneath your dignity?

No. It can prove enormously worthwhile to run classes, workshop and retreats. You may run them to make money but their central value is not that they may make you money. Their central value is that they provide a rich human experience that you can't get working with individual clients. If you approach running classes, workshops and retreats as a helping, healing, and enriching sort of thing and not as a bossy, officious teacher sort of thing, you may end up numbering them among your most important life experiences.

It may prove important for you to run classes, workshops and retreats because the money they bring in helps you survive and permits you to continue living the coach's life. That would amount to reason enough to consider doing them. But their value goes far beyond that. They can prove *the* place of connection for you, your best way of being with other human beings, and a place of real excitement and satisfaction. Once you embrace the idea that running classes, workshops and

retreats might be something you actually love and not just a revenue stream and a way to help you cobble a life, you may feel your enthusiasm grow. And a place of actual love they can be!

Running workshops, classes and retreats also builds certain muscles and makes you more of an adult and a leader. This last can prove very valuable to you. When you run a successful class, workshop, or retreat you are doing more than just presenting information or sharing techniques. You are leading. Leadership is not a quality we usually associate with teachers or with workshop leaders and yet that's exactly the quality that keeps participants returning. A student who attends your "great goal-setting" class or workshop wants to be led from his or her initial place of limited skill and understanding to a place of increased proficiency. Students want the experience of *getting somewhere*.

You do this leading by creating a sensible game plan that doesn't have as its goals to impart the most information, to make participants feel comfy, cozy, and cheerful, or to impress or to intimidate. Its goal, like the goal of a team leader or a project manager, is to provide participants with sufficient instruction, guidance and direction that they arrive at real results. You might, for example, spend a fruitless hour talking abstractly about goals: but until participants engage in a personally meaningful exercise of some sort they have only been formally instructed and not led anywhere.

Leadership means all of the following. It means starting on time. It means communicating when breaks will occur. It means ending on time. It means encouraging everyone and "shutting down" an overly loud or overly needy participant. It means not getting derailed by one student's demands or agenda. It means covering what you intend to cover or at worst covering what you deem most important to cover. If time is slipping away and you have two modules left, one that is "fun and easy" and one that will help participants grow and stretch, you choose the latter, even if you are a little tired or a little disgruntled. Your mantra is,

“What will help them get where I am hoping they will get?” That’s leadership.

You may not currently see leadership as one of your strengths or, initially at least, find it so easy to do. Maybe you see yourself as a “spontaneous, intuitive person” and “not good at organization or at details.” Maybe you see yourself as too shy and accommodating to be able to “shut down” needy or loud participants. Maybe you’ve pictured your job as “demonstrating technique” or “providing information.” You may have many reasons for doubting that you will be good at leadership; you may even have a formed teaching style that doesn’t include leadership. Leadership, however, is what your participants want and need. Quiet your doubts and worries, stretch in the direction of leadership, and you will give your students the experience they deserve!

I believe that you will find it enjoyable, meaningful, and even life altering to teach workshops, classes or retreats. Try your hand at answering the following questions:

1. Do you think that you would like to run workshops, classes or retreats? If so, what attracts you to that idea?
2. Do you harbor some negative thoughts or feelings about running workshops, classes or retreats? If you do, what might help you “change your mind”?
3. Do you see yourself as a leader or as a potential leader? If not, what would you need to change in order to become more of a leader?



## 2. Picking Your Idea

So, what exactly will you teach?

It's not unusual for you to have several different ideas for the classes, workshops or retreats you might want to run. As a person with a fertile imagination, it's easy for you to dream up lots of alternatives. But then you are faced with multiple choices. Since having to choose can provoke a lot of anxiety, many coaches fail to run any classes, workshops or retreats because the anxiety gets to them and, instead of choosing, they drop the idea entirely.

In order to run a class, workshop or retreat you will need to make a choice. Let's create a hypothetical example. Say that you like to teach your clients about goal-setting and that you have a particular way of presenting your ideas. Let's say that you also have a spiritual bent and would like to do some teaching around that, maybe connecting that to goal-setting or maybe not. Likewise, you believe in empowering women and have the feeling that you might like to run a "great goal-setting" workshop for teenage girls. But you also like to work with elders and wonder about offering them a workshop.

It's easy to see that you are confronted by many diverse choices. How will you choose? Well, you might ask yourself, "Which workshop would be the easiest to fill?" You might ask yourself, "Which workshop interests me the most?" You might ask yourself, "Which workshop helps me sell my coaching practice?" You might ask yourself, "Which workshop would be the easiest to prepare?" You might ask yourself, "Which workshop would be the most profitable?" You might ask yourself, "Which workshop would physically tax me the least?" You might ask yourself, "Which workshop helps me build my brand and platform?" In short, there is no single "objectively highest" criterion to use to help you make your decision. It all depends on where you want to focus.

Rather than waiting for the "perfect" choice to come to you, recognize that you will need to choose your criteria (easiest to fill, interests you

the most, easiest to prepare, least taxing, etc.), pick a workshop, class, or retreat idea that best matches that criteria, and then run it—remembering that you can run some other one after you have run this one. Remember: there isn't a "perfect" choice to make. Rather, there is simply SOME choice to make. Using whatever criteria you decide to employ, pick your idea and get it clear in your own mind.

Then you must figure out where exactly to begin. Ever had the experience of not being able to find the edge on a roll of packing tape, getting frustrated, and just giving up, at least for the moment? It turns out that something similar can happen as we dream about running our class, workshop or retreat. We may be completely ready to run one but just can't seem to find the place to start. And so, out of frustration, we never begin.

It can seem like such a confusing chicken-and-egg problem. Should we find the venue first? Or pick the very best date? Or get our mailing list longer first? Or get the description done first? Or first find a web designer for the webpage we know we are going to need? Or ... each choice seems to have some other choice as a prerequisite.

Of course, the short answer is: you must start somewhere. One sequence might be the following: first, pick your idea. Then decide whether you are running a class, workshop or retreat—make that decision. Then write up a description of the class, workshop or retreat. This may take many drafts. Then research venues—that is, places to run the workshop, class or retreat (unless it is online). Then decide on the dates. Then decide on the price. Then decide on how you will market it and promote it.

The main decision to make is the following one: to start! Really demanding of yourself that you will do this and that you will start somewhere are the first steps. Each step will require choosing, which is difficult and anxiety-producing: choosing whether to run this class or that class, choosing whether to run it live or online, deciding on whether to charge a little, so as to perhaps attract more folks, or a lot, so as to make more money, and so on. You will need to make a zillion

choices along the way and, knowing that, you may not want to start at all. Don't get deterred by the prospect of all that choosing!

One logical place to start is by choosing your idea. What will your workshop, class or retreat be about? Try your hand at that now. Before you do, you might want to try your hand at answering the following questions. They may help you arrive at your workshop, class or retreat idea.

1. Have you harbored the desire to run a particular workshop, class or retreat? Is that desire still strong in you or has it faded in importance?
2. What criteria do you think you want to use in choosing your idea. I mentioned several above. Reread the above passage on criteria and see if some one criterion or some several criteria jump out at you.
3. Have you ever taken a workshop, class or retreat that you particularly loved? Is there something to take away from that experience to help you decide on your idea?
4. Have you ever taken a workshop, class or retreat that you particularly disliked? Is there something to take away from that experience to help you decide on your idea?

Having answered these four questions, please tackle the central task of this lesson: what sort of class, workshop or retreat do you think you would like to run?



### 3. Choosing Your Venue

So far, I've presumed that you are intending to run your class, workshop or retreat completely by yourself: that is, not under the auspices of some school or community center and not at a traditional workshop center. But let's run down your options before continuing in this vein, since doing everything yourself is just one option.

There are many places to teach a class or workshop (retreats are a bit of a different story, which we'll discuss shortly). You could:

+ Apply to a traditional workshop center like Esalen, Omega, or Kripalu and ask to be a workshop leader and be added to their many offerings. These workshop centers typically provide participants with all meals, many extras (like free yoga classes, free meditation classes, beautiful grounds, etc.) and advertise widely, both by their online presence and because they still (as of this writing) send out print catalogues, in some cases to half a million people.

There are many "upsides" to teaching at one of these workshop centers. They are likely to fill the workshop from their advertising, which is a great help if you don't have a "large list" (an email mailing list of many thousands of names), they take care of all the details (like payment, lodging, food, etc.), they provide you with meals and lodging at a beautiful location, they pay you reasonably (on the order of \$100 to \$200 per participant, meaning that if 20 participants sign up for your week-long workshop, you will make between \$2000 and \$4000 for the week), and it is a relatively prestigious thing to be able to say that you teach at a place like Esalen.

The major downside is that they are likely not to "want you" if you do not have a rather large "reach" already and if you haven't already been running your own successful classes, workshops and retreats. So in all likelihood you will have to run your own a number of times before they will be interested in you. Another minor downside is that you must keep to their daily workshop schedule, which may not exactly match your

vision for your workshop. (A typical daily schedule is 9 a.m. to noon and 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.)

It of course does not hurt to ask and there are probably not many good reasons not to ask. Reach out to a workshop center that interests you—there are many of them around the United States and around the world—pitch your workshop, and see what happens. I have taught at many of these—Esalen, Kripalu, Omega, Rowe, Hollyhock, etc.—and I have found it a great experience.

+ Apply to teach at a school. There are many small and large schools where you may be able to become one of their faculty members. Many of these are online; some exist in physical locations. I taught for some years at a small school in a quirky house in a quirky San Francisco neighborhood run by a woman named Jane who shepherded the entire operation. The rooms were so small that you could only run a class of 12 or smaller—and 12 was really tight. Jane’s “thing” was shoes and the rooms were decorated with high-heeled shoes and other excellent oddities. You might find such a place at which to teach <smile>.

The upside to teaching at a writing school is that they tend to advertise and promote well enough that you will have (some) participants for your class, though it’s rather likely that you will also have to market and promote in order to “fill” your class. The downside is that they typically pay rather little and often “demand” that you have a lot of interactions with students (in old-fashioned language, “a lot of papers to grade”), more than either you would like to do or that you feel are really necessary. On balance, teaching at a school, whether physical or online, like teaching at a junior college or a university, may serve you and you may well want to look into the possibility; but I would ask you to strongly consider teaching under your auspices first a few times, to see how that feels and to see how that goes.

+ You might also teach at hybrid venues like bookstores, New Age gift-shops, libraries, community centers, and other venues where classes and workshops are offered as part of “what they do.” Typically they do only a little advertising and promoting (usually by including your

offering in the long list of offerings that goes out to their newsletter subscribers), pay very little, and tend not to fill their offerings up.

If the venue is good at what they do, this can be a decent opportunity. I taught fairly regularly at a bookstore in Marin, California that was good at advertising and promoting and so my class with them did tend to fill up (that is, a dozen or more folks tended to show up for each new class). But offering your workshop, class or retreat “on your own” is likely a better bet than going with a venue that does not specialize in classes and workshops and that does not do much advertising or promoting.

+ You can sometimes teach your class at a junior college, community college or university as part of their roster of extended education programs or, of course, you can try to become a part-time or full-time faculty member. Needless to say, chatting about trying to become a faculty member is beyond our scope. But you might look into extended education possibilities if you live near a college. I taught a specialized class for about a dozen years at St. Mary’s College (in Moraga, California) as adjunct faculty, teaching returning adults (most typically firefighters and police officers) how to write “life experience essays” that would garner them college credit. Opportunities of this sort may exist in your locale and you might want to check them out, though they typically do not pay well and involve you in the institution’s bureaucracy.

+ You can run your workshop, class, or retreat yourself. There are fundamentally four ways that you might go about doing this:

1. You might run it in your own home: literally or metaphorically, in your living room.
2. You might run it in your locale, renting space at a nearby college, yoga center, church, library, event center, office complex, etc.
3. You might run it far away, in some locale that you and participants want to visit, like Paris, London, Rome, Hawaii, Costa Rica, Taos, etc.
4. You might run it online.

The main upside to running it yourself are the following: you keep all proceeds (minus expenses) and you get to run it exactly the way you want to run it, for as many days as you want to run it and for as many hours each day as you want to run it. The main downside to running it are the following: you must make all the arrangements yourself, handle all of the details yourself, and market and promote well enough that you have customers. I am arguing that the upside eclipses the downside and that it is a good idea to try to run your class, workshop or retreat yourself a few times before looking into other options. I think you would enjoy that and I think you would profit from that!

Thinking about this discussion of venues—workshop centers, schools, hybrid venues, college extended education programs, and your own efforts—which do you think interests you the most or might work best for you? You might want to write out the pros and cons of each and see where you land!



## 4. Understanding the Basics

There are many ways to deliver your classes, workshops, and retreats. Online is an excellent possibility: we look at that closely in a future lesson. Teaching at a workshop center, if that opportunity affords itself, might prove lovely (and profitable). Making an effort to teach in one of the world's great cities may appeal to you. In this lesson, I want to paint a picture of what we might call "the basic set-up": participants arriving somewhere (your living room, a downtown space you've rented, the local junior college, a workshop center, etc.) and you teaching them. What does that look like?

The main differences among classes, workshops and retreats are that a class typically runs once a week for several weeks, a workshop runs for a few hours, a half day, a full day, a weekend, or as long as a week, and a retreat may last as long as a week and has embedded in it the idea of rejuvenation and relaxation. These differences aside, classes, workshops, and retreats are more similar than different, in that in each case you facilitate an experience for a group of people. Your job is to present useful material, monitor the needs of the group, retain needed flexibility while keeping the experience on course, and serve as everything from master of ceremonies to hall monitor.

Whether for classes, workshops, or retreats, your preparation consists of all of the following:

+ You need to create an overall plan. Your class, workshop, or retreat will have some theme or rationale. You then typically need to organize your material in a logical way into parts, modules or segments. This organization is usually accomplished by using a standard rhetorical device: seven points, nine principles, five steps, six secrets, eight goals, four key ideas, etc.

It is hard to deliver a useful class, workshop, or retreat, even if it is a highly experiential one organized around writing prompts or free writing, if your material is not logically organized into bite-sized chunks of this sort. Once you have organized your material in this way, you can

lengthen or shorten each chunk to fit your time requirements. For example, you might take five minutes to explain each of your eight principles in the context of a two-hour workshop, but you might devote a half-day to each principle in the context of a weeklong retreat.

+ You need to prepare a schedule. Whether your event runs two hours or seven days, you need to make a schedule and try to keep to it. Because you want your event to feel well planned, and because presumably the last parts are as important as the first parts, you want to make sure to get all of the parts in and to do every part justice. If you've scheduled a segment for an hour and it runs to ninety minutes, at the break you would revise your schedule and shorten the upcoming segments so that you still get everything in. If you find that you have no inclination to keep to your schedule, that may mean that you have not planned a complete, useful experience for participants.

The following is one typical schedule for a one-day workshop:

#### The Four Keys to Coaching Success

10:00 - 11:00. Introduction and Opening Exercise

11:00 - 12:00. First Key and Related Exercise

12:00 - 1:00. Second Key and Related Exercise

1:00 - 2:00. Lunch

2:00 - 3:00. Third Key and Related Exercise

3:00 - 4:00. Fourth Key and Related Exercise

4:00 - 5:00. Discussion, Integration, and Closure

You would also typically include a mid-morning break and a mid-afternoon break. If you intend to provide a feedback, evaluation or endorsement form, let participants fill it out right after you close, rather than having them do it on "their time."

+ Typically your event is made up of two integrated parts: the ideas you present and the exercises that illustrate and deepen participants' understanding of your ideas. A common sequence for a one-day

workshop might be six hour-long chunks, each of which is made up of ten minutes of exposition, where you present the principle or point you intend to make, a twenty-minute exercise, and twenty minutes of process, which allows for participants to share their experience of the exercise and to elaborate on the main point you've presented.

+ You want to allow for and foster interaction. A lecture does not require interaction (although even with a lecture you would typically entertain questions throughout or at the end and interact with the class or the audience). On the other hand, the classes, workshops, and retreats of the sort we're discussing absolutely require interaction. Participants need to speak and be heard, their questions need to be addressed, and their expressed needs (like ending on time, taking a little longer with a particular point, etc.) considered. It is your job to invite participation, to make participants feel that participation is safe (by not belittling them or ridiculing their questions), and to listen to what they have to say.

+ You need to attend to the practical details that we've already discussed and that we will continue to discuss. You need to find a venue to deliver your class, workshop, or retreat, you need to advertise the event, monitor details (like requests for information, registrations, etc.), handle last-minute emergencies, and so on.

Take a moment to address the following:

1. What fears or doubts might prevent you from offering a class, workshop, or retreat? How might you dispute those fears or doubts?
2. Make a list of possible class, workshop, or retreat subjects or themes. Narrow that list down to a few offerings that really interest you. Then choose one as your first class, workshop, or retreat offering. Begin to think about it, make notes about it, and let it begin to grow.
3. Start a notebook in which you list possible class, workshop, and retreat venues and partners. These lists might look like: cities in which I want to run workshops (like Paris, London, Rome, etc.); beautiful places in which I want to run retreats (like the Greek isles, Mexico, Hawaii,

Peru, etc.); small workshop centers that don't need me to be famous before they invite me; etc.

Give these exercises a try!



## 5. Following Through

Once you pick a specific class, workshop or retreat to run, what follows next is: everything. You will need to:

- + Settle on a venue (home studio, rental space, online class, etc.)
- + Research venues (if you need a rental space)
- + Pick a price (if you are running the event yourself)
- + Pick dates
- + Create an effective description of the event
- + Create a website presence for the event (a page on your site where you announce the event, with or without the addition of a store and “shopping cart technology” so that folks can pay right at your site; or perhaps even a whole website devoted to the event)
- + Create a marketing and promoting plan (who you’ll contact, where you’ll announce, what free advertising you’ll try for, what paid advertising you’ll splurge on, etc.)
- + Execute that plan (actually contact all those people, actually make all those announcements, actually go after that free publicity, actually plunk down money for that paid advertising, and so on)

Of course, this will feel daunting. It is daunting in exactly the same way that building and maintaining your coaching career is daunting. It makes you a busy entrepreneur, a detail person, a salesperson, a person of many hats. It is unlikely that there will be anyone to hand all this over to: only you can perform many (or most) of these tasks, even if you’ve hired an assistant or a virtual assistant.

Accept this reality. There are many moving parts to this adventure and you are in charge of all of them. Breathe, smile, and tackle them! Of course, you will need to be organized—maybe even super-organized, maybe even organized in ways that you have never been organized before. Accept that reality, too, that whatever your feelings are about organization and whatever challenges you have had with organization in

the past, that “this time” you will get organized, for the sake of the great meaning opportunity—and perhaps financial opportunity—that your class, workshop or retreat may afford.

Once you decide what your class, workshop or retreat is “about,” sit down and patiently create a plan for pulling it off. Then work the steps of your plan!

Some aspects of your plan may strike you as easy—and some may strike you as hard. When you come up against one of those hard places you are likely to stall, avoid doing the work, and have your class, workshop or retreat fall through. It would be lovely if everything about the process felt easy but you can bet that not everything will. Get ready for that!

You’ll know that something is feeling hard by virtue of the fact that you aren’t getting it done. You’ll find yourself procrastinating, feeling a lot of anxiety, and maybe feeling disappointed with yourself or upset with someone else, like a representative of a venue who hasn’t gotten back to you or a friend with whom you thought you might co-lead the class. Procrastination is the bright red flag that something is feeling difficult and making you anxious. Don’t procrastinate this chance away!

Maybe you’ve gotten stuck not being able to choose among three different ideas you have for workshops. Then powerful choosing is the place where you need to stretch. Maybe you’ve gotten stuck not being able to pick a price for your class and you feel hampered by your embarrassment around choosing a “high” price, even though you know that a low price doesn’t make financial sense. Then feeling unembarrassed about charging a high price is the place where you need to stretch. Coaches who are new to teaching classes, workshops and retreats regularly get stuck in places like these—and getting stuck right there jeopardizes the whole process. If you are stuck somewhere in the process, fight your way through!

Stretching often means nothing more than managing your anxiety level. Try to remember to say something like the following to yourself. “Wow,

having to choose among these three workshop ideas is really making me anxious. I have to breathe, calm my nerves, settle down, and make a choice. Okay, it's just a case of nerves! Let me face this right now." This stretching may indeed involve you leaving your comfort zone—that's what stretching means!

Be prepared for the possibility that you may have to do something that feels scary or risky. If getting to run the class, workshop or retreat that you would really love to run requires that you do a little stretching, embrace that reality—and do that stretching.

Following through means all of the following:

- + Making to-do lists and getting items checked off your to-do lists.
- + Repeating things: announcing your workshop to your Twitter followers many times, sending a repeat email to a venue coordinator who hasn't gotten back to you, again asking someone with a large list to announce your workshop, even though he or she hasn't responded to your first email, etc. We would prefer to do things only once: but life isn't like that.
- + Changing your plans "effortlessly" if they must be changed. If you learn that there are hidden costs to the venue you had hoped to use and that therefore you had better find a different venue, then rather than getting annoyed, upset, disappointed, frazzled, belligerent, or anything of the sort, find a different venue.
- + Check in with prospective participants who have indicated that they "might" like to come. Just as you will want to create a system for communicating with paid participants, create a system for checking back with the "maybes" on your list.

The dream is to run your class, workshop or retreat, have it prove a memorable (and profitable) experience, and do it again and again. The reality is that you have work to do to make that happen. Please follow through on your plans: otherwise they will remain unrealized—and ultimately disappointing—fantasies.

Try answering the following questions:

1. What in my personality might keep me from following through? What can I do to “upgrade” my personality so that I don’t sabotage my own efforts?

2. What practical circumstances (like day job pressures, family responsibilities, etc.) might get in the way of me following through? What can I do to make sure that those circumstances don’t derail my efforts?



## 6. Marketing and Running Your Workshop

Leading up to your class, workshop or retreat, you will likely need to market and promote it. If you are teaching at one of the workshop centers like Esalen, Omega or Kripalu that does its own large-scale marketing and promoting, their efforts may well fill up your workshop (although they will expect you to supplement their efforts with your own efforts). But in most other scenarios you will need to do the bulk of the marketing and promoting yourself.

Here are a few of the marketing and promoting efforts you might want to try:

1. Build your own email mailing list and announce to your list. You build your list over time and if you are lucky, savvy, and persistent you may build your list into the thousands or tens of thousands. You might send your list a regular newsletter (I send out one weekly) or you might only send out one when you have something to announce and promote.

As to how you might deliver your newsletter, the most common way is to use one of the well-known newsletter delivery services, the two best known of which are Mail Chimp and Constant Contact. I use Mail Chimp and, for a list my size, the service costs me \$75/month. So this is a real expense—but as this is one of the most important things you can do, this expense is justified.

2. Use social media. You may want to build your presence on Facebook, Twitter, and the other social media outlets that currently exist and that will continue to emerge. You might pick one to focus your efforts on or you might try your hand at several of them to see which is the most congenial and produces the best results. You can also try a paid campaign, for example a Facebook campaign, and get your class, workshop, or retreat ad in front of likely participants; or hire a virtual assistant or social media expert to do your social media promoting for you.

3. Ask people to announce you. You may only have a small reach but you may know someone—or many people—who have a much larger

reach than you, folks with a well-trafficked blog, a large mailing list, a huge social media presence, etc. Reach out to these folks—and to strangers, too—and ask them to announce your class, workshop or retreat. Just say “please” and “thank you” and don’t worry that you don’t have anything to offer them in return. People are often very generous and will announce your offering just because it is in their heart to do so. This may prove your most effective way to market and promote: if someone with a really large list announces your offering, that single announcement may fill your workshop or class.

4. Seek out free advertising. You might garner a free listing in an online workshop directory, seek out interview possibilities, blog for a online site, get yourself mentioned by other coaches or other teachers, write articles that subtly promote your offerings, run a free teleseminar that promotes your paid class, and in other free ways get your message out, build your brand and your platform, and announce your offerings. In the old days, you might have put up flyers all over town, stapling them to every lamppost and taping them up in every Laundromat: today the Internet is the place to search for an almost limitless array of “bulletin boards” on which to “tape your flyer.”

5. Pay for advertising. Workshop directories often have a free “minimal” listing and an “upgrade” option where you can pay for a more prominent ad. Certain entrenched newsletters that may go out to tens of thousands of prospective participants accept advertising. You might try social media advertising; you might hire a virtual assistant and pay him or her to find you promotional opportunities. Some advertising, like paying for a print ad in a slick magazine or hiring a publicist, is extremely—even obscenely—expensive; but some carefully chosen “small ticket” items may prove useful and make great sense.

All right: you’ve created your class, workshop or retreat, dealt with all the details, marketed and promoted it well enough that you have sufficient participants, and now—it’s time to run it!

Here are some things to keep in mind:

- + Keep in touch with participants beforehand. Have a way of reaching them so that you can tell them about a room change or any last minute details.
- + Be prepared for last-minute questions and concerns. Someone will forget when the workshop starts; someone else will get lost driving there; someone else will wonder if it's all right to arrive an hour late. Don't stress out about any of this: just be helpful and upbeat.
- + Get there early. There may be a problem getting into the venue: that sometimes happens. Will you have coffee, tea, and/or water? Other refreshments? Do you need to set up the room? Do you need to put out any materials or items like sign-up sheets? Come early and get this all done.
- + Try to start on time. There's a balance to be struck between starting exactly on time and allowing for folks who show up a little late, as that always happens. You may want to wait a few minutes; but do begin pretty promptly. Then, when a "late" person arrives, just say, "Welcome!" and continue with what you're doing. Try not to be distracted by latecomers: acknowledge them but do not interact with them or get "hooked" into their anxious "late energy."
- + Explain the schedule. Folks need to know when the breaks will come, where the bathrooms are, when lunch will happen, and so on.
- + Keep track of time. If you intend to present a certain number of ideas or techniques, you need to "divide" up your total time so that you actually cover all your ideas or techniques. For example, for a six-hour workshop (a typical number of "contact hours" for a one-day workshop) in which you intend to cover six ideas, devoting two hours to one idea shortchanges the other ideas and runs the risk of causing the workshop to end up incomplete. Be mindful of the time and be mindful of the relationship between the time you have available and the things you intend to get done.

+ End on time. If you end your workshop early, folks will likely feel a bit shortchanged; if you cavalierly go over—and even if you have a lot more to say and do—people are likely to get itchy and rather short-tempered. A time will come when you will have to deal with your anxiety, screw up your courage, lay your fears and doubts to rest, and show up for your class, workshop, or retreat. Come early, come prepared, smile, and enjoy your role as leader, facilitator, and learner. Try to maintain the structure and integrity of your event while allowing for process and change. Your overall goal is to provide participants with a useful experience, which may mean sticking to your plan or improvising (while still covering the material), lecturing or listening, holding tight to the reins or allowing for spontaneous interaction. Running your workshop, class or retreat is both real work and great fun. Treat it like the work it is—but remember to relax and to smile!



## 7. Teaching Online

There are many ways to run a class or workshop online. Let me just scratch the surface of possibilities. Let's say that you're a coach wanting to teach a class about goal-setting. You could deliver your material online in any of the following ways:

+ You could present a single teleclass on the subject. Participants would receive a "bridge" phone number, call in at a certain time, listen to your presentation, and ask questions. This might run for an hour, ninety minutes, or two hours and you might charge some small fee for this, say \$39, banking on many people signing up for your teleclass and/or banking on participants purchasing something else from you, perhaps your longer class, workshop or retreat on the same subject or on a different subject. Many services (like [freeconferencecall.com](http://freeconferencecall.com)) will provide you with a free conference call phone number and a way to record the teleseminar (and then it can become a product that you sell on your website). Of course, you must have a way to reach prospective participants, so that they know about the teleclass, and a "store" of some sort so that they can pay. This is perhaps the simplest way to deliver a class.

+ You could do the same thing only make it video rather than audio. There are many variations on delivering a video class: simple ones where you employ a camera affixed to your computer or the camera built into your computer, more complicated ones that involve you delivering your material while also monitoring chat questions that come in to you live from viewers on the webinar, even more complicated ones where you deliver material and participants "break out" into small groups where they can see each other and chat with each other, etc. If you think you'd like to be "seen" in this way and deliver material in this way, spend some time learning about how to deliver video webinars. You will likely need to pay for a monthly service: there are a great many of them and they vary widely in what they cost and what they provide. This will prove a (perhaps steep) learning curve for you but if you master it you will have added a great tool to your sales tool kit.

+ You might offer a monthly subscription service. With this model, participants sign up in an open-ended way (that is, their credit card is charged every month) to “join” the world you’ve created—say, your “academy”—and by joining it, they receive certain things from you every month: perhaps an audio lesson, a video lesson, a micro-class, a ten-tips list, a group phone chat, a group video chat, etc. Typically, subscription prices range from \$5 per month up to \$30 or \$40 per month. If you can make this model work for you, it can prove very profitable; but of course, it produces a certain pressure on you to give participants “enough” each and every month. This model also often comes with a discounted price for signing up for the year (rather than paying month-by-month). If you intend to make teaching a main focus on your life, this model might work nicely for you.

+ You might offer a “package” of some sort. A package might look like the following: an ebook lesson reader containing the class’s “written information”; a monthly group audio chat for all participants; a monthly one-on-one teaching, coaching or cheerleading chat with each individual participant; and a one-time perusal of their “product” (say, their list of goals), which you read and personally comment on. As you might guess, there’s an almost endless array of ways to create a package, some of which make more work for you (like reading and commenting on lists of goals) and some of which make less work for you. What might your package contain?

+ You might create a “passive program.” There are many services available (like Teachable.com) that can provide you with a way to deliver text lessons, audio lessons and/or video lessons and bundle them into a single downloadable program that participants purchase and then view and use at their own speed. That is, you might take your “great goal-setting” idea and turn it into a program that includes several “modules” and that includes within each module some text lessons and some short (typically two-to-three minute) audio or video lessons that you record on your computer and then upload to the service hosting your program. This program then exists “for all time” in cyberspace (on

your site, if you have built it that way, for example using a Wordpress plug-in, or on the site of your host, for example, Teachable.com) and can produce excellent “passive income” over time.

+ You might gather participants in a group and work with them over time. For example, you might create an eight-week “great goal-setting” class and work with the participants who sign up. One way to run such a class is the following. You might start the week with an audio or video chat or lesson, participants might then work on the subject of that lesson and “do their homework,” they might turn that homework in to you via email or at some group site, and you might comment on their homework, either individually, via a phone chat or in a written response, or you might respond to the whole group about their homework, either in a written response to the group or in a group audio or video chat.

I’ve run many online classes and typically I take the following approach. It is my personal favorite. The class is conducted completely via email. Typically, the class is an eight-week class and enrollment is usually in the range of eight to twenty participants. (For my creativity coaching trainings I may have as many as 50 coaches-to-be sign up for trainings when each new round is offered.) A typical price for my online class is somewhere between \$225 and \$475, depending primarily on how many weeks the class runs.

At the beginning of each week I send out a text lesson and a homework assignment. Participants post their response to the lesson for the whole group to see and read; at the end of the week I “pull” something out of each participant’s response to comment on and send the group a single long email with my comments on their responses. During the week, I answer emailed questions from participants, if any questions arise. To repeat, this is all accomplished via email and has worked very nicely for me. This may be too “dry” or too “text-based” a method for you but I like it a lot!

I hope that the above gives you a beginning sense of how you might run your class or workshop online. Take a moment and answer the following questions for yourself:

1. What do you see as the pros and cons of offering classes or workshops online?
2. Does the tech part daunt you? If so, can you think through what you might do to handle that daunting tech side, different from or in addition to learning the tech details yourself?
3. Which delivery method seems most congenial to you? Why does that method seem most congenial?
4. Can you take a stab at designing your first online class or workshop right now? Give it a try <smile>!



## **8. Turning Your Workshop, Class or Retreat into a Book**

As you go about creating your class or your workshop you might consider having your efforts do double-duty as the beginnings of a book you write on the subject of your class or workshop.

A twelve-week class, for example, or a weekend workshop with 12 hours of instruction, is a thing that is already divided into 12 parts—and 12 chapters is nice number of chapters for a nonfiction book.

Some points to consider:

- + You might construct your class assignments in such a way that participant responses become examples that you use in the book (naturally, with their permission).
- + You might make sure that every class or every workshop hour is named in a similar way, so that you end up with a useful table of contents.
- + You might start with a table of contents for your book and then design the workshop around the table of contents, rather than the other way around. That way you will be aiming your efforts in the direction of the bigger prize, the nonfiction book, right from the outset.
- + You might think through what each book chapter might need or contain and then design your class or workshop with those requirements in mind. For example, if you decided that each chapter might be served by some excellent quotations, you could find those quotations and then use them in the workshop as a jumping-off point for an exercise.
- + In short, you might think strategically about the relationship between the classes and workshops you offer and the books you might write.

Some food for thought:

1. Describe how you might go about designing a class or workshop so that you are also creating a book at the same time.

2. Do you have an intuition as to whether it would work better to “start with the book” or “start with the workshop”?
3. Do you have a workshop or a class coming up? How might you reorganize it so that it “paved the way for a book”?
4. What seem to be the pros and cons of pursuing this idea, that is, the idea of thinking of a workshop or class and a book “at the same time”?

One of my coaches-in-training responded to this idea in the following way:

*I hadn't thought of using my workshops or classes as fodder for my book and I do like that idea. I have already been doing something similar to that in my coaching. After every call, or every other call, depending on what's going on with my client, I send them what I call “a lesson” for want of a better term. Each lesson is designed to enhance what we discussed on the phone but also offers a step-by-step way to increase self-awareness. So many people never stop to think about the why and the how of life, so these lessons serve that function.*

*When I started this, I fully intended to turn the lessons into a book. One thing I have learned is that the more I coach, the more spot-on my lessons become, since obviously there is nothing like experience and real-life situations to hone in on your message. I also teach two creativity workshops that are a series of discovery exercises. Almost all of them can be a part of the book as well. So yes, I feel well on my way to publication.*

Another coach-in-training provided the following:

*A couple of years ago I offered a class for writers. The focus was to help them break through blocks and generate new material through creative writing exercises. I created many handouts to send home with the participants and, later, thought about using them as seeds for a book. When I tried to plan out the chapters, I realized that I didn't have enough material. I think starting with a table of contents and then designing a class around the table of contents is a great idea.*

*So, this week I developed the table of contents for a book. The initial class that I did coincides with one chapter of this book. My plan is to use the table of contents as a guide for a new class, and to develop the class with the book in mind. Planning a class is much less intimidating and overwhelming for me than writing a book, so I think this would be an effective approach for me. I also like the idea of using participant responses in a book, with permission of course! It also makes sense to test out exercises and ideas on participants before committing them to writing. I think this would help with marketing the book, too.*

When I create a new class, whether it's a teleseminar, a lesson-based online class, an in-person workshop, or whatever length or form it takes, I almost always use that as an opportunity to think about—and usually actually produce—a new book.

If the book that arises this way turns out to be very short, you can easily self-publish it, use it as a free giveaway to entice visitors to your site to sign up for your newsletter, use it as blog posts to build your brand, create your own audio book, or employ it in innumerable other ways, either as a physical book, an electronic book, as lessons for a downloadable class (and passive income) or repurposed in some other way.

If it turns out to actually be “book length,” you might create a simple, powerful query email and query a score of literary agents to see if representing it might interest them. This is hardly an hour or two's worth of work! What if one wants to represent it and subsequently sells it to a publisher? Not a bad outcome from doing one “natural” thing after another: creating a class or workshop; using that as an opportunity to write a book that rather “writes itself” as you prepare

the class or workshop lessons; and ending up with a published book. See if this idea interests you. If it does, sit right down and discuss with yourself how you will build the idea of “book” right from the beginning into your plans for your class or workshop.



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## 9. Concluding Details

Here are some last things to consider:

+ Will you ask participants to evaluate the experience? You need not consider this a requirement or an obligation: ask for feedback and/or an evaluation only if you feel like doing so. However, you should definitely ask for an endorsement. You can ask for it in the following way, at the end of your time together: “I’d love to have you write me an endorsement of this workshop, if you enjoyed it, that I can use on my website and in my marketing materials. Can you take a minute and write me one?” You can also invite them to provide the endorsement after they get home—but you’re relatively unlikely to receive many once participants return to their regular life. Getting the endorsement “on the spot” is a good idea.

+ Whether or not you invite participants to assess their experience of the event, you should spend some time assessing the experience. Did you present too little material? Did you present too much? Did you manage to go deep or did the event feel superficial? Did participants get involved or remain at arms' length? What might you do differently next time? Was the living room of your home a viable location? Did you really need to pay for a whiteboard? Was the venue too cold (either temperature-wise or atmospherically)? In as little as five or ten minutes, if you are willing to take the time, you can provide yourself with important feedback about the event and many concrete suggestions for improving it.

+ Make sure to pass around a piece of paper so that participants can give you their email addresses to add to your mailing list. This is especially important if you are teaching at a workshop center where participants were not in touch with you beforehand. Even if you organized the event yourself, and even though you probably have their email addresses already, pass such a list around, as some folks may have come aboard at the last minute, may have a new or preferred email address, etc.

+ Make any last payments. Sometimes a portion of the rental price was to be paid at the end; make sure to wrap up those last details. Those last details include everything from straightening up to shutting off the heat to turning off the lights to returning keys. You may have a lot of “getting home” energy at the end of your event (including a plane to catch!) but you’ll still need to muster some presence of mind and attend to last details.

+ Thank participants and let them know about your future events, if you have any scheduled. You might also “float ideas” with them by wondering aloud how many might want to come to Paris, say, or to Rome. Over time, repeat attendees may make up a significant percentage of each new class, workshop or retreat—that percentage might amount to twenty, thirty, even fifty percent. Participants who enjoyed the experience are quite likely to want to participate in anything new you offer and you may want to make a special effort to keep attendees notified and up-to-date, perhaps by putting them on a special mailing list, a closed Facebook group, etc.

+ If you are teaching at one of the well-known workshop centers, try to arrange a little sit-down with your scheduler and see if you can get scheduled “on the spot” for next year. If your “numbers” were good—if you had a nice number of participants in your workshop—and if your evaluations were likewise good (and of course your scheduler may not have had a chance to see them yet), it’s likely that he or she would be willing to schedule you for next year right then and there.

+ If you are teaching in one of the world’s great cities—Paris, Rome, London, etc.—you may want to visit some other prospective venues to see if they might also suit your needs or if they might suit your needs even better than the venue you used. Even if you liked the venue you used, it’s always possible that it won’t be available the next time you want to run your class or workshop there. Asking around and looking around are good ideas.

+ If this is your first class, workshop or retreat you may have a lot of things to consider when the event ends. You may have learned that this

is exactly the right material to be teaching, you may have learned that the material or the presentation needs major reworking, or you may have learned that you didn't enjoy teaching this material at all and prefer to try your hand at something new the next time. You may have complaints to process; you may feel exhausted and wonder if teaching is simply too tiring to be worth the effort; you may have some serious doubts about your readiness to do this sort of work or your taste or your talent for it. It is natural to have a less than perfect experience the first time out. Try not to dismiss teaching if this teaching experience didn't go beautifully. It really will go better as you gain more experience.



I hope this has given you a good beginning understanding of how to run your first workshop, class or retreat. If you have any questions, please drop me a line to [ericmaisel@hotmail.com](mailto:ericmaisel@hotmail.com). If you'd like to learn more about my books, services, classes, workshops and trainings, please visit <http://www.ericmaisel.com>. Good luck to you as you begin your teaching adventure! I know that running classes and workshops has proven a wonderful experience for me and a nice revenue source, too. I hope that you have the same experience!