



Standard 5.2 – Case Study

Honest about what coaching offers

Background

As an ICF Professional, I make verbal and written statements that are true and accurate about what I offer as an ICF professional, what is offered by ICF, the coaching profession, and the potential value of coaching. An ICF professional should always be making statements that are true. All coaches have worked hard to be where they are today and want to stand out among the rest, but over promising can lead clients down a road of disappointment.

Case Study

Wyatt was a relatively new coach, and he was excited to be attending a social media marketing course to learn new ways of creating content that would boost his business. After the course was completed, he eagerly began working on content that would tell the story of his coaching career. Once he started, he realized he was on a roll.

But first he had to do a little research. After a quick ICF search, he believed that he was the youngest ICF credentialed coach to date, and he created a post around that fact. One of his clients said he was the best coach in the Midwest, so he created a post around that fact. He made guarantees about positive results because he was motivated, and he just knew that he could ensure a positive result.

By the end of the weekend, he had secured two new clients due to his new marketing!

A few months later, he was surprised to hear from one of his new clients that he was no longer interested in coaching. This client was young and energetic but lacked focus and told Wyatt that he wanted a coach who had more experience in life. Wyatt felt that was a slap in the face but allowed for the coaching relationship to end. Maybe some of his social media posts were a little extreme and far-fetched.

Implications for Coaching

- Wyatt will want to revisit his coaching agreement and perhaps his social media posts to ensure that he is realistic about what he can offer as a coach and what coaching can offer a potential client. (ICF Code of Ethics, Standards 1.1, 1.2, 4.1, 4.2, 5.1 and 5.2)
- The key to Wyatt's posts were that he treated the posts as facts. In a world that is constantly changing, he may not be the youngest credentialed coach for long. And because coaching is a partnership, there are no guarantees that there can be positive results. (ICF Code of Ethics, Standards 5.2 and 5.3)

Possible Outcomes or Next Steps

- **Revisit his coaching agreement.** Now that Wyatt has had a couple of months to adjust to being a new coach, it may be a good time to revisit his agreements to see if there's anything that needs to be updated or that was inflated and not completely true.
- **Hire a coach supervisor.** There's always room for growth. And perhaps there is more room for growth in the early years of coaching. A coach supervisor could help Wyatt in many areas around ethical standards, self-care, support, etc.

Discussion Points

- If you were Wyatt's coach supervisor, how would you support him?
- What are the ethics around social media marketing?
- Have you ever advertised in a way that wasn't completely accurate?

Reference

ICF Code of Ethics (2025)