Nailing Your "Breakthrough Sessions"

I call my initial prospective client sessions where we explore working together a "Breakthrough Session" (also commonly known as a Sales Conversation, Discovery Session, Enrollment Conversation or Introductory Session). Whatever you call them, these create an opportunity to make a ***mutual decision*** of whether a client and you should work together. Many of us were taught in coaching school or our various training schools to give away a free session/consultation (or highly discounted) to entice someone to work with us. OR we were taught to do a "Sales Pitch" (Here's why I'm great; here's why my process/program are great; here is why my company/firm is great; here's what you'll get from working with me/us). All in all, these approaches are FAR LESS powerful and enrolling than what I call a "Breakthrough Session" (You can read my blog post on *Why Free Sessions Don't Work* if you are curious about my philosophy on why I don't think free sessions work. Click here if you want to read that article). So, if you don't give a free session/consultation and don't do a "sales pitch", how do you entice people to work with you?

The answer is multi-fold, but one of the best ways is to offer a complimentary Discovery Session or Introductory Session that I like to call a "Breakthrough Session" - either in person or by phone - where you can bring your potential clients through a series of specific questions to help identify whether you can make a significant impact by working together. This is a mutual exploration, and the key is that they will walk away with huge value and clarity about whether they work with you or not (yes - similar to what they might get in a free session) AND it will determine clearly whether you are a mutually good fit to work together. Yes, you want them to walk away with value no matter what and it's really important that they are clear *that it is a session where you will explore working together.*

Now, clearly "Discovery Session" or "Introductory Session" just isn't sexy or inciting, nor does it really tell people what they will be getting from meeting with you. So the first thing you'll want to do is develop a name for your session that is congruent with the transformation you provide with that session. As an example, I offer complimentary Business Breakthrough Sessions. In these sessions people gain a crystal clear understanding of where they are in their business, where they want to be, the gap between those two, and some strategies on how to fill those gaps AND if I am the right person to help them fill those gaps; it provides a platform for that discussion. Here are some examples of what my clients call their Introductory or Discovery Sessions: "5 Step Marketing Assessment", "Purpose Discovery Session", "Business Boost Session", "Wellness Breakthrough Session", and "Business Expansion Session". Hopefully, that will give you an idea on how to get creative in naming these sessions so that they intrigue and attract your Divine Ideal Client. The key is that the name is clear as well as powerful.

How to develop the questions for your Sessions

I've developed the BIICR method for these "Breakthrough Sessions" to help lead to a powerful "yes" or a powerful "no" for you and the client. This will help you be more discerning with whom you work and also will help you easily enroll clients when it is a powerful "yes" for both of you.

Note that these are all categories of questions to ask. Your job in this Breakthrough Session is to set the context for your conversation and then spend 80% listening, 10% asking questions, and 10% giving feedback on what you are hearing. Your prospective client should walk away having felt deeply listened

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to and heard. Your job is to be curious and to help them see the gap between where they are and where they want to be. If they are a good fit, you will also outline some possible ways to resolve or close these gaps by working together.

Here is the Formula:

- **Background questions** – questions that help you get clear about what has happened in their lives that has brought them here to have this conversation with you. These are the basic questions you may want to ask to build a solid foundation for your conversation.
- **Issue/Desire questions** – questions that help you understand the issues, challenges and pains that they are experiencing that you may be able to help them with. Also questions that get to the heart of their deepest desire for themselves.
- **Implication questions** – questions that help you ascertain the impact of these challenges on their lives, their stress, their bank account, their relationships, their happiness, their health/wellness – both in their present condition and if this were to change (how would *that* effect their lives, stress, happiness, etc).
- **Commitment questions** - this is a question or questions that help you discover how committed they are to solving these issues/challenges/pain in their life.
- **Resolution questions** – putting options in front of them, in the form of a question, that could potentially resolve their challenges and move them forward. These will help you be clear on whether there is a clear opportunity to work together or not.

The last question I always ask is, "What do you need to know for this to be a powerful "yes" or a powerful "no"?" At this time, they usually ask about how you work with people and what the investment is. Ahhh...how nice for them to bring it up and not you!

After you have brought them through this sequence, it could be as easy as that! And sometimes you will face some resistance around money, time, etc. Know that desire has to be 10x that of resistance (at least) for people to say powerfully "yes" to something, and that either means getting them very connected to their desire (so their resistance melts away) or to lessen perceived obstacles to lower their resistance.

I've also laid out some additional questions if they are on the fence or have any resistance, particularly about the financial investment, in the template below.

In the template there are sample questions you can use to walk through the formula and get to a powerful "yes" or powerful "no" for that potential client. Regardless of outcome, the potential client will walk away with clarity, and that has a tremendous value for them!

If they are not yet sure about working with you (not a powerful "yes" yet) by the end of the call), I would set up a time to talk the next day or within 48 hours if at all possible. Sometimes people need longer to talk to a spouse who's out of town or until they have a quiet date night when they can bring it up thoughtfully to discuss. If they want more time, encourage them to make a decision more quickly. After a few days, often our saboteurs start to speak and say things like, "Maybe I don't need to invest in this.

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Maybe I should hold off." Although you don't want your clients to make a rash decision and experience buyer's remorse, after a day, most people's enthusiasm will start to wane if they haven't made the commitment. It is just human nature. Share this with them if they want to delay past a few days.

If they decide to hold off for various reasons but there is still interest, set a mutually agreed upon time for you to follow up with them in the future. I sometimes have had clients say that they wanted to wait until summer was over or after the holidays or after a big event they are in/putting on. In those cases, I ask their permission to follow up with them. When I reach out to them, I encourage us to talk again by phone. It may be a shorter conversation, but I want to re-connect them to the gap between where they are and where they want to be. Most of the time, you'll find the gap is still there, and sometimes even wider. In those cases I always ask the question, "What has it cost you not to move forward?"

Remember that if you are interested in working with this client, you can continue to "drip" on them to stay in meaningful connection with them, such as sending them an article you think they would benefit from, inviting them to an event where you are speaking, or making a personal invitation for them to attend a webinar or group call you are hosting. Staying in meaningful connection with them can help pave the road to working together.

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"Breakthrough" Session Template

"I am really looking forward to doing this breakthrough session with you. We will spend about 30 minutes talking about where you are, where you want to be and looking at ways to bridge that gap. If it feels resonant to continue to talk about possibly working together, we will take a little more time to discuss options to work together. Otherwise, I will bless you on your journey. Will that work for you? Is it ok if I go ahead and dive in?"

Background Questions:

"*Have you ever had a (coach, marketing consultant, etc) before? If yes, what did you learn (about yourself) and how was it helpful?"*

"What brought you here today? What are your goals in meeting with me today?"

"What inspired you to sign up for a Breakthrough Session?"

Issue Questions:

"What challenges are you experiencing with (insert the area you help them with: building your business, reaching your health and fitness goals, etc)."

"What is stopping you from moving forward?"

"If you had an easy button, how would you want [your business, your life, your health, insert your area of expertise] to look like?"

Implication Questions:

"How are these challenges affecting your life; your health; your family; your stress levels; your relationships; your business?" (Note: keep diving into these. What are the implications of those challenges?)

"How do you want it to be instead? If I could wave a magic wand, what would it look like?"

"What would it be like if three years from now things hadn't changed (goals haven't been met)? Are you willing to wait to address this?"

"What is the cost to you to not move forward?"

Commitment Questions:

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"How committed are you on a scale of one to ten to making this shift?" (If they are less than a 7 it is a flag that they aren't ready, don't want it badly enough, or won't be willing to pay for it. Ask them, "What would it take for it to be a 9 or 10?")

"How are you hoping that I may be able to help you with that?" (Note: I rarely ask this question because I am really clear on what I do with clients. If you are still forming your offer and program, this is a very helpful question.)

Resolution Questions:

" If I were to help you with xyz[lay out what they've just shared], would that be something you'd be interested in?"

If they say "yes", ask them

"What do you need to know to make this a powerful "yes" or a powerful "no"?"

If they are a good fit, I would acknowledge them and tell them that you would love to work with them. Invite them to be a client. *"What other questions do you have?"* or, "Is there anything else you need to know to make a powerful decision?" (Note: it is always better for them to ask about the money piece, so keep asking this question until the financial query comes up. If it doesn't, make sure you address the investment at the end of the call/meeting… if they don't ask, ask them, *"Would you like to hear about the investment?"* See note below if they have money concerns.)

If they want to move forward: Make sure to set up your first appointment and promise to get them any pre-work in the next 24 hours and either take their credit card or send a paypal invoice with the paperwork.

If they need to think about it: Ask them to marinate on the inquiry, "What would the cost be to do the program vs. not do it?" and ask them to call you the next day with their answer. Let them know if they need more of your time to make it a powerful "yes" or "no" that you would be happy to spend more time with them (If they need to meet more than 2-3 times, then it probably won't be a good fit). Set up a call with them within 48 hours to talk about whether it is a powerful "yes", a powerful "no", or if they need more time with you to gain some clarity. Make sure you set up a specific time for them to call you to have this conversation.

Always end the call saying how much you enjoyed your time together. If it is a powerful "Yes" or you plan on having a follow up call, also add that you really look forward to working with them.

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If someone is reluctant to set a follow up call, let them know that if they decide it is a powerful "No" before the call, that they can simply let you know and cancel the call. This way it is super clear and there isn't any guessing on whether they are interested still or not (which is what can happen when people don't set up a follow up appointment).

If fear comes up or money resistance:

Money is an excuse often used when they are scared, aren't truly committed, have doubts in their own ability to succeed, or have doubts in your ability to help them. It is critical to get to the heart of what lies underneath their resistance.

Start by reminding them of their vision and what they laid out to you, using their own words and tell them you believe it is possible for them (but only if you really do! Maintain your integrity!). This will help lower their resistance and heighten their desire to work with you. If it is just fear that has come up, I would ask them again about how committed they are to their dream. Remind them how much quicker and easier they will get there with your support.

Other questions you can ask to move through the money challenge:

"If you had the money, would you move forward?" or *"If it weren't for the money, would you want to move forward?"*

(If they answer "no" then you know it isn't about the money. Usually this means they are just not a good fit. But it is a good opportunity to ask "Why?" and get some good feedback to help you refine your process or even get clearer about your Divine Ideal Client!)

(If the answer is yes then make a statement about the value and ROI of working with you. Put forward tangible results your clients get that this potential client longs for, such as…) *"So here's the thing: Most of my clients bring in enough revenue to pay for my program in the first three months and then some. More importantly, they start to see major momentum towards building the business they've dreamed about. Usually, the real reason why people don't invest in this type of program is that 1) they don't believe that this program works or 2) they don't believe it will work for them. Which one is it for you?"*

If they don't believe in your program, it is usually time to end the call and point them towards other resources. If they do believe in the program but don't believe they can do it, take a powerful stand for them. Ask them, *"Is that really true?"* Make sure this isn't coming from a saboteur place. If it isn't really true, ask them, *"What is really true?"* Usually it is their fear that is controlling their decision. Tell them that you believe in them and that you know, with support, that they *can* get what they want.

Another great question to ask is, "What is the cost of working with me – time/money/energy vs. the cost of NOT doing anything in time/money/energy?" Essentially, this is an implication question and you want

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to move from this to a resolution question. Many people will realize the cost NOT to act is too great and so it is good to go back to laying out an option or two to get started. You can also bring them back to the questions of "*What would it be like if three years from now things haven't changed (goals haven't been met)? If you don't move forward with coaching, how will you get the support you need to make sure you meet your goals?*" It is also great to underline the results your clients get and that your clients feel it is an excellent investment in themselves.

If they need to talk to a spouse/partner:

Sometimes people use their spouses/partners as an excuse if they are not sure they want to move forward. I would ask them, "If it were up to you, would this be a powerful "yes" for you"?" If they say "no" or "I'm not sure", you need to spend more time digging into what's holding them back.

If they definitely want to move forward but need to talk to a spouse/partner, I would ask them if they would like to brainstorm on how to talk to them about this to get their support. This can be very individual, but essential if you want to help them find "what's in it for my spouse/partner if we make this investment?" Sometimes there is a direct connection, such as an ability to bring in more money, and sometimes you need to look for the other benefits. I've even had clients that have offered to do special things for the spouse/partner if they were really to support them in this decision. I would also ask them what their fears are in terms of what their spouse will say when they bring this up to them. That can help you brainstorm ideas to combat the potential objections or challenges that may arise.

You also should ask the prospective client if they want help on how to bring this up with their spouse. One of the biggest mistakes people make is simply launching into "I want to do this program…" when the spouse isn't prepared for the conversation. Often times spousal support is sabotaged simply through bad timing and context setting. I recommend to share this language with them:

"I have something to talk to you about that I would love to get your support on. I need probably 15-30 minutes to talk to you and get your input and insight. When would be a good time for us to talk today?" Sometimes the spouse will say "right now will work" and just by prepping them with this, it helps open them up to fully listening. If it's not a good time, the spouse has full permission to tell your prospective client when a good time would be for them.

Creating Your Own Template

Each of our businesses is slightly different. Now it is time to take this template and make it your own. Add in Background, Issue, Implication, Commitment and Resolution Questions that are more specific to the transformation/program/offering that you provide. These are great basic questions and you may want to layer in some of your own to deepen the discussion. Many of my clients have much more in-depth background questions and issue questions that dive into the specific type of issues their clients experience. As an example, if people come to you to help them lose weight, you may ask background

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questions like, “How long has weight been a challenge for you?” “What other strategies have you tried to lose weight in the past?” “What worked and didn’t work for you?”

Continue to tweak and refine your template as you hone it to have the greatest impact.

If you need help customizing your template, make sure to reach out to me for help and support by emailing me at tara@broadviewcoaching.com. I would love to help!

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