

Speakers, Trainers, Consultants and Coaches Make 21 Mistakes That Sabotage Their Careers, #1

Are you Dabbling in the Four Disciplines? Our industry offers four different professional roles to choose from -- and making the right choice is crucial to your success. In this article, we'll describe four types of private practices -- Speaking, Training, Consulting and Coaching and explore the pros and cons -- and earnings potential -- for each. We'll discuss the dangers of dabbling and take a personal inventory of its impact on your future. "Dabblers are rarely DO-ers and DO-ers are rarely dabblers." One of the things that people in our industry have in common is that many of our business cards say that we are a "Speaker, Trainer, Consultant, Coach". Some may choose just two or three of those identifiers, but more and more are putting ALL 4 or even MORE. In addition to Speaker, Trainer, Consultant, and Coach we also have Author, Facilitator, Counselor, Lecturer, Professor and a growing litany of others. Its amazing the kind of creative labels that some people have put on their cards, but the four basic disciplines in our industry are Speaker, Trainer, Consultant and Coach. Over the more than two decades we've been working with human development professionals, we've discovered that the people who achieve success in our industry are the people who entered the profession with a very clear picture of who they are and what they were trying to do. We believe it is such a critical factor to their success that it has become central to the work we do with our instructors and instructor candidates. As someone progresses through the pre-work for becoming certified in the MasterStream Method, we help them explore the differences between the four disciplines in vivid detail, and before their certification is over, each newly-certified professional has to make a personal choice as to which one of them he or she favors. Likewise, the success you will achieve and the speed at which you will achieve it depends on you understanding the choices -- and making the one that is best for you. So your first step -- whether you are embarking on a new career or trying to take your existing business to a new level -- is to distinguish between the various roles you can serve. Keep in mind your background, skills, experience, and goals when making your evaluation. Your choice will establish a basis on which you will focus your business strategy and marketing plan. Let's take a closer look at each of the professional roles and explore some of their pro's and con's:

Speaker -- A Speaker is someone who travels frequently on a national or even international basis, stands in front of a large audience for a relatively short period of time, delivers an upbeat message, and gets paid a substantial amount of money for doing so. On the downside, as the audience gets bigger, the chance for meaningful audience contact suffers -- and regardless of the quality of work they do, when they step off stage they are generally unemployed. That's the nature of the beast for being a professional speaker. In order for a speaker to fill 100 days of billable services over the course of a year, he or she is going to need to have the better part of 100 different clients. They may have the occasional client who will bring them back again, but in all likely hood the intervals between those engagements is going to be measured in months or years before someone will be brought back. To make matters worse, the Speaking profession is the one most susceptible to changes in the economy and, as the events of 9/11 clearly demonstrated, changes in the marketplace's willingness to travel to or sit in a large public venue. While speakers command a seemingly large fee for their services, their total income divided by a 40-hour workweek normalizes their actual earnings. For example, a speaker with two \$5,000 engagements per week is actually making about the same as a consultant billing themselves out at \$300 per hour. Finally, to develop a successful career as a speaker requires a very specific marketing plan, very specific marketing tools, a very marketable "main stage" image and a lot of time "paying your dues" before your reputation earns you access to the bureaus and meeting planners who in large part control the pool of potential bookings.

Trainer -- A Trainer spends considerably less time in airplanes and rental cars, and can build a very tidy practice while staying relatively close to home. They spend more time with a smaller group of people and have an opportunity to get to know their students more intimately as they share practical information with their audiences. The goal of a trainer is to impart a body of knowledge, and to make sure that knowledge has been absorbed to whatever degree the client has asked them to attain. If the trainer does a good job, then the likelihood of being asked to come back and do more training is very high. Also, since trainers focus on longer programs than speakers -- routinely conducting programs ranging from a full day to an entire week -- trainers tend to be more content-rich. If they choose to focus on mission-critical topics like sales, leadership and customer service, trainers have an even greater opportunity for repeat business with their clients. When a corporate client finds a trainer they love and a training program they love, then they are going to continue to use that program and that trainer in whatever frequency they need it done. In addition, training engagements generally feature far more billable hours in the customization process prior to and the reinforcement program following the main training program. A trainer markets their programs as much as they market themselves and building a successful training practice requires a very different approach than the route taken by speakers.

Consultant -- A Consultant is an individual with very specific knowledge and skills, who is brought in to serve as an adjunct to a client's management team. They are contracted to work on a particular project, deal with a challenging issue, serve in an advisory capacity, or complete a specific task, but one way or another, consultants are brought in to DO something. Once that something is done, the contract ends. While consultants may travel to a destination anywhere on the planet, once they arrive, they are there for the duration of the contract, so in their daily routine, they stay pretty local to where they landed. The challenge with consulting (and coaching for that matter) is that you are trading time for dollars. As a trainer or speaker you develop one program and you can keep doing it over and over, but the work you do as a consultant is unique to each specific client more often than not. But the biggest problem with building a stable and successful consulting practice is that during the time the consultant is working with a particular client, they don't have or take the time to continue marketing themselves. The longer the contract, the longer the period of unemployment that follows. Feast or famine is the reality for most consultants.

Coach -- Coaches work primarily with individuals on a one-on-one basis to pinpoint areas in which they might be in need of attention and focus their energy on helping their clients take care of whatever their issues happen to be. Within the realm of coaches, you will find a broad range of levels of intensity and involvement from "life coach" to "performance coach." Whether the individual is trying to better understand themselves, to set meaningful goals, to be held accountable or to develop greater skills, a coach could be the perfect tool for the right client. In general terms, a coach is a professional who is working with an individual to deal with specific areas of need. It is certainly possible for a coach to do more of a group kind of

thing, maybe a small cluster of 3 or 4 people, but by and large what they are doing is just for those specific people. As a result, the likelihood that these clients will become large contracts is low because they are dealing with individuals. Coaches have very little need to travel and can work very effectively with their clients over the telephone. But, while a coach's goal is to build a rather small pool of lifetime clients, the truth is that most people who seek out the guidance of a coach do so for a much shorter period, generally a few weeks to a few months. Creating a stable and consistent income stream proves to be the coach's greatest challenge since the hourly rate tends to be lower than that of any of the other three professional roles and the coach must collect their fees from an individual rather than an organization. Perhaps the biggest problem that people in our industry face is dabbling in these four roles and not focusing on just one of them. If someone were to focus their energy on one of these roles, they have a much greater chance of becoming successful in that discipline. But if you start to spread your energy across multiple and very different roles then you are also spreading out your marketing resources too thin to have any real impact, and you are also confusing the market place as to what it is that you do and what it is that they can call on you for. By putting your time and energy into just ONE of these four areas, you will find that success is a much easier summit to reach.

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