



HOW TO CHOOSE **THE RIGHT COACHING** CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

Why This Decision Matters More Than You Think

I remember when I first started my coaching journey. Like many coaches, I assumed that getting more certifications would mean I'd be a better coach, have more credibility, and attract more clients.

So, I took one certification.
Then another.
And another.

Fast forward, and I have **completed over 15 different coaching and assessment certifications** -spending tens of thousands of dollars and countless hours learning new frameworks, techniques, and methodologies. Each program helped me grow, but to my frustration, **none of them thoroughly prepared me for the reality of professional coaching.**

Here's what I discovered the hard way:

1. Most certifications taught me how to coach but **didn't give me the tools and resources** to start coaching clients immediately.
2. **ICF accreditation** has become **critical for credibility**, yet some programs were not recognized by ICF and did not contribute to my ICF accreditation.
3. No one taught me **how to get clients**, price my services, or build a sustainable coaching business.



Written by Will Linssen,
#1 Leadership Coach by Global Gurus

After completing most certifications, I found myself spending countless hours developing coaching resources, structuring sessions, and mastering sales and business development—essential skills that should have been included in the certification itself.

A coaching certification should do more than just teach you coaching techniques—it should:



Prepare you for real-world coaching with structured, ready-to-use resources, tools and coaching engagement outlines.



Help you create measurable impact that clients recognize and value.



Give you a roadmap and resources to attract and retain clients so that you can build a thriving career.

So, how do you find a certification that actually delivers all you really need?

Let's break it down.

The Three Non-Negotiables of a Strong Coaching Certification

Every coaching certification should meet these three essential criteria. If a program lacks even one, think twice before enrolling.

1. It Must Be ICF-Accredited

Coaching isn't regulated, which means anyone can create a program and call it a "certification." But serious clients—especially corporate and executive clients—trust ICF credentials as the gold standard.

Why ICF Accreditation Matters:



Recognized worldwide—ICF is by far the industry's largest international coaching accreditation body.



Required by many organizations—HR professionals and corporate clients often demand it as part of pre-qualification criteria and compliance requirements.



Ensures quality training—ICF-accredited programs have been rigorously reviewed to meet well-defined coaching competencies and ethical standards.

Key Question to Ask:

Will this certification qualify me for ICF accreditation right away, or will I need extra steps? Use the 'Coaching Certification Checklist' in this guide to compare ICF-accredited programs.



2. It Must Provide Ready-to-Use Coaching Resources

Programs often teach coaching theory but don't provide the tools and resources you need to actually coach clients. This means after certification, you're left scrambling to create your own frameworks, templates, and assessments before you can use them with your clients.

The Reality: Many coaches spend more time preparing for sessions than actually coaching.

What a Strong Certification Should Provide:



Step-by-step coaching guides so you know exactly how to structure sessions.



Client-facing materials such as guides, exercises, worksheets, tools, leadership assessments.

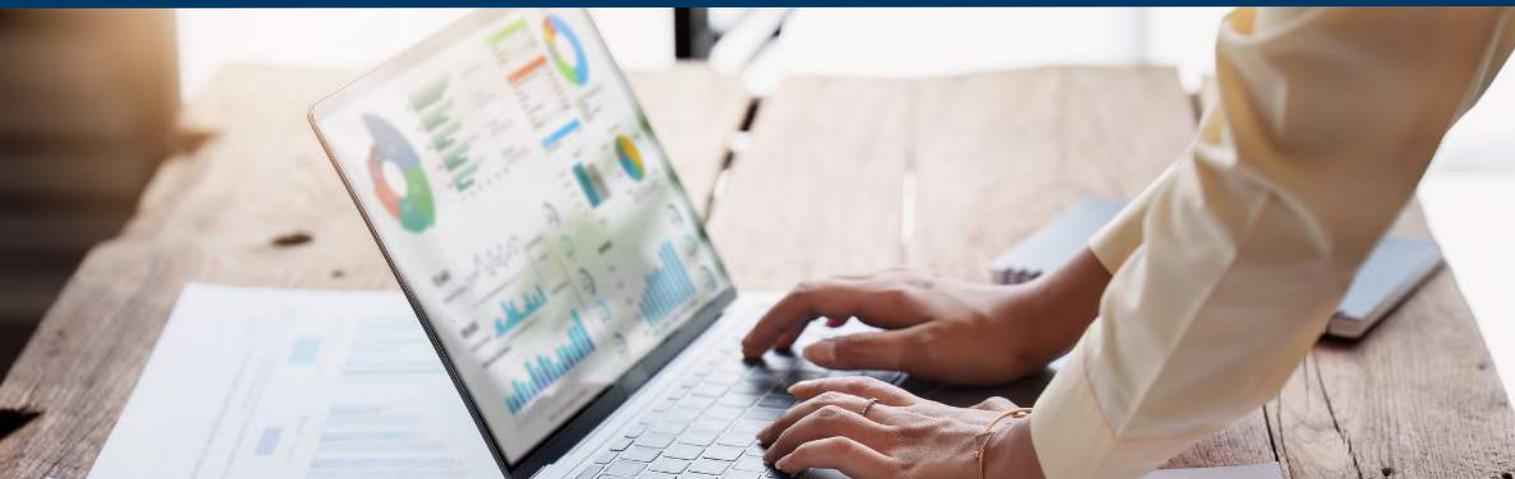


Technology tools to track client progress, measure impact and save you valuable time.

A coaching program that only teaches concepts but doesn't equip you with practical resources is like a driving school that teaches you the traffic rules but never lets you practice behind the wheel—you'll struggle when it's time to actually drive.

Key Question to Ask:

What resources will I receive to start coaching clients immediately after certification without having to create my own materials? Use the 'Questions List' at the end of this guide to ask certification providers if they offer ready-made tools.



3. It Must Support Your Business Growth

Most programs focus on coaching skills **but ignore the business side of coaching**. This is one of the biggest reasons talented coaches struggle—they know how to coach but don't know how to attract paying clients.

What a Strong Certification Should Provide:



Positioning & branding guidance to establish yourself as a highly credible coach.



Sales & marketing training so you know how to attract clients.



Corporate coaching strategies to secure high-value contracts.

Without this, you'll have a great skill set but no roadmap or resources to turn it into a career.

Key Question to Ask:

How does your program equip me with the business development, marketing, and sales strategies needed to attract and retain clients? Can you share specific examples of how past participants have successfully built their coaching businesses using your approach?

Use the 'Coaching Certification Checklist' in this guide to review what resources they offer to develop your coaching business.



The Pitfalls to Avoid When Choosing a Certification

With so many options available, it's easy to fall into a few traps. Here are common mistakes coaches make:



Mistake #1: Assuming All Certifications Are ICF-Accredited

Many programs claim to offer "world-class coaching training," but if they **aren't ICF Level 1 or 2**, you may not qualify for ICF credentials, which limits future opportunities.



Mistake #2: Overlooking the Fine Print on Mentor Coaching

While ICF requires both mentor coaching hours and recorded coaching sessions that meet ICF standards, most mentor coaching programs **do not provide clients for these recordings or integrate the recording process into their curriculum**. As a result, coaches must independently find clients, organize and conduct recorded sessions, and submit them to their mentor coach for evaluation-making the process disjointed, stressful, and time-consuming.

If a recording does not meet the required criteria, it must be redone, adding significant time, stress, and effort to an already challenging process. Additionally, many programs allocate only three hours of individual mentor coaching for reviewing recordings, and once that time is used up, coaches must **pay extra-typically \$100 to \$300 per hour** to submit additional recordings. This limited support can quickly turn mentor coaching into an expensive and frustrating experience.

Key Question to Ask: *How does the program provide opportunities to record coaching sessions with clients that meet ICF standards?*



Mistake #3: Not Choosing a Level 1 or 2 Accredited Program

Level 1 or 2 programs provide a fast-track approval system, allowing you to complete ICF accreditation within 4 weeks. In contrast, **other programs undergo a more detailed review process** to verify that all requirements are met, which can **take up to 18 weeks**, and ICF application fees are double. Additionally, the likelihood of your recordings not being approved is higher in these cases. **Choosing a Level 1 or 2 program ensures a smoother, faster, and stress-free certification journey at no additional cost.**



Mistake #4: Choosing a Program That Only Focuses on Theory

If a certification doesn't include real-world coaching practice, you may find yourself struggling when working with actual clients. Look for programs that offer live coaching labs, role-playing exercises, and supervised practice including feedback.



Mistake #5: Thinking Certification Alone Will Get You Clients

A coaching certification isn't a magic ticket to success—you still need a business and marketing strategy. If a program doesn't teach this, you'll have to figure it out on your own later, which is costly and time-consuming.



Mistake #6: Not Asking the Right Questions Before Enrolling

Some programs look impressive on the surface, but when you dig deeper, they may lack key components. That's why it's essential to ask direct and open questions before committing.



*Use the **'Coaching Certification Checklist'** and **'Questions List'** in this guide to avoid these mistakes.*



Final Thoughts & Next Steps

Choosing the right coaching certification is more than just an educational decision-it's a career decision.

A great program should:



Make you a
confident and
skilled coach



Give you real-world
tools to deliver
measurable impact



Help you develop a
sustainable
coaching business

Now that you know what to look for, it's time to put this knowledge into action.

What To Do Next:

- **Use the 'Coaching Certification Checklist'** in this guide to compare different programs side by side.
- **Use the 'Questions List'** when speaking to program providers to ensure you're making an informed choice.

The **right** coaching certification won't just train you-it will set you up for long-term success. Choose wisely, and make your investment count!



Coaching Certification Checklist

How to Use This Checklist

- Fill in the "**Other Program**" column while researching different certifications.
- Compare each program **side by side** to see which one best meets your needs.
- Look for gaps—if a program **doesn't check most of the boxes**, it may not be the best investment.

Key Questions / Criteria	Global Coach Group	Other Program
ICF Accreditation		
Is the program ICF-approved and listed on the ICF website?	<p>✔ Yes, fully ICF-accredited at Level 1 (ACC) and Level 2 (PCC).</p>	
What ICF level does it meet? (Level 1 = ACC, Level 2 = PCC)	<p>✔ Both Level 1 (ACC) and Level 2 (PCC) accreditation included.</p>	
How many CCEUs does it provide?	<p>✔ 85 CCEUs for ACC (or advancing from ACC to PCC); 184 CCEUs for PCC</p>	
How does the mentor coaching ensure that I get recorded coaching sessions with clients that meet ICF standards?	<p>✔ We guarantee that you will complete recorded coaching sessions that meet ICF standards by providing unlimited access to mentor coaching —at no extra cost. This ensures a stress-free experience, allowing you to focus on learning, coaching, and refining your skills with expert guidance.</p>	
If my recordings are rejected by ICF, how will you provide me with extra mentoring and at what cost?	<p>✔ GCG provides unlimited mentor coaching until your recordings meet ICF standards, and no extra cost.</p>	

Key Questions / Criteria	Global Coach Group	Other Program
Curriculum & Training Quality		
<p>Does the program align with ICF Core Competencies & Ethical Training Requirements?</p>	<p>✔ Yes, GCG programs cover all ICF Core Competencies, ethical training requirements, and coaching best practices.</p>	
<p>How does the training combine theory-based learning with practical and hands-on practice in actual coaching scenarios?</p>	<p>✔ GCG’s online learning provides all the essential theory and knowledge you need. Then, the live workshops focus on hands-on practice, where coaches engage in live coaching labs, peer coaching, case studies, and real-world application to ensure practical skill development.</p>	
<p>Are there real-world case studies and role-playing exercises?</p>	<p>✔ Yes, 18+ coaching labs covering all stages of real-world coaching engagements from start to finish.</p>	
<p>Does it offer specialized coaching tracks (executive, leadership, team coaching, group coaching, assessments)?</p>	<p>✔ Yes, includes Global Leadership Coaching, Global Team Coaching, and GLA360 Leadership Assessment Certifications. These can be used for group coaching as well.</p>	

Key Questions / Criteria	Global Coach Group	Other Program
Trainers' Credentials & Coaching Experience		
<p>What ICF Accreditation level do the trainers have?</p>	<p>✔ Will Linssen is Master Certified Coach (MCC), ranked #1 Leadership Coach by Global Gurus, ranked #1 coach trainer by Thinkers50.</p>	
<p>How much real-world leadership and coaching experience do trainers have (not just academic)?</p>	<p>✔ All trainers are experienced executive coaches who have coached Fortune 500 leaders for at least 15 years and have at least 15 years of organizational leadership experience.</p>	
<p>Will I receive direct feedback and mentoring from trainers?</p>	<p>✔ Yes, direct coaching feedback and mentoring from MCC-level coaches throughout the program.</p>	
Coaching Tools & Ready-to-Use Resources		
<p>What step-by-step coaching guides will I receive to design and structure my engagements?</p>	<p>✔ GCG provides a 250+ page and coaching guide covering complete engagement structures and design options.</p>	
<p>What client-facing materials will I receive (e.g., exercises, worksheets, coaching models)?</p>	<p>✔ GCG provides leader-facing guides, templates, and a host of structured exercises.</p>	
<p>Which assessment tools (e.g., 360-degree feedback, leadership surveys) are included?</p>	<p>✔ GLA360 leadership assessment is included.</p>	
<p>What online tools are included to track client progress and measure impact?</p>	<p>✔ GCG Coaching Tools include online action planning, progress tracking and impact measurement.</p>	
<p>How long will I get access to these materials after certification?</p>	<p>✔ Lifetime access to all coaching materials, resources, and templates.</p>	

Key Questions / Criteria	Global Coach Group	Other Program
Mentoring, Supervision & Support		
<p>How does the program meet ICF's mentor coaching requirements?</p>	<p>✔ GCG mentor coaching includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 hours of group mentoring. • 3 hours of individual mentoring. • Performance evaluation of your recorded sessions. • Unlimited access to mentor coaching, where you can record your coaching sessions with GCG clients until you have successfully completed recordings that meet ICF standards.. 	
<p>How does your program help me record coaching sessions with clients that meet ICF standards?</p>	<p>✔ GCG provides you with clients to record your coaching sessions until you have successfully completed recordings that meet ICF standards. This ensures a stress-free, enjoyable, and supportive experience for coaches to succeed.</p>	
<p>Are there opportunities for supervised coaching practice?</p>	<p>✔ Yes, supervised coaching during coaching sessions with live feedback.</p>	
<p>How do you provide support beyond certification?</p>	<p>✔ There is ample ongoing support through mentor coaching, learning resources, knowledge bank, help desk, and community access.</p>	

Key Questions / Criteria	Global Coach Group	Other Program
Business & Career Growth Support		
How does the program teach to attract and retain clients?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Sales Labs and Coach Business Accelerator Toolkit for client acquisition and retention are included. 	
What business development tools will I receive (e.g., pricing, contracts, proposals)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Ready-made and editable sales presentations, engagement design, proposals, fee structures, and contracts are included. 	
What training on sales and marketing for coaches is included?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Specialized sales and marketing training for coaches is included in the Coach Business Accelerator Toolkit. 	
How does it include strategies for securing corporate coaching engagements?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ The training and sales labs provide a detailed roadmap on securing corporate clients and high-value coaching contracts. 	
Community, Networking & Alumni Support		
What is the size of the alumni network for continued learning and referrals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Our global community of GCG-certified coaches consists of over 4000 on six continents. 	
What networking opportunities are available with other coaches?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Global networking events, workshops, and online forums. 	
Can I participate in ongoing workshops, coaching circles, or mastermind groups?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Yes, access to continuing education workshops and advanced coaching labs. 	
Does the program offer referral opportunities for coaching engagements?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Yes, elite coaching opportunities available for experienced coaches—GCG coaches work with leaders in 1 out of 3 Fortune 500 companies. 	

Key Questions / Criteria	Global Coach Group	Other Program
Logistics, Flexibility & Accessibility		
Is the program offered online, onsite, or in hybrid formats?	<p>✔ Fully online, with live workshops and coaching practice labs.</p>	
How does your program accommodate my schedule, availability, and learning style preferences?	<p>✔ Self-paced online learning, paperback guides, and flexible workshop scheduling.</p>	
Are sessions recorded for later viewing if I miss a class?	<p>✔ Yes, all live sessions are recorded and available for replay, including downloadable transcripts and summaries.</p>	
What are the fees if I want to postpone my participation to a later date?	<p>✔ You are free to postpone your participation to a later date as often as you like at no extra cost.</p>	
Are the learning materials mobile-friendly?	<p>✔ Yes, fully accessible on mobile devices and tablets.</p>	
Is there a certification exam or other completion requirements?	<p>✔ No, there is no exam. You receive consistent feedback during your coaching labs and recorded sessions. Completing all your coaching labs fulfills the requirements to become GCG certified.</p>	

Key Questions / Criteria	Global Coach Group	Other Program
Cost, Investment & Hidden Fees		
What are the total cost and available monthly payment plans?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Starting at USD 2,990 (or 12x USD 299/month), with pricing for advanced certifications up to USD 9,990 (or 12x USD 999/month). 	
Are there extra or hidden fees?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ No extra or hidden fees. The fees include everything you need to meet ICF accreditation requirements. 	
Does the program offer a money-back guarantee?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Yes, 90-days "Love It or Leave It" guarantee—full refund if not satisfied. 	
Reputation & Reviews		
What do alumni say about their experience with the program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ 97% of certified coaches recommend GCG programs. 	
Can I hear from past participants about their experience?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Yes, testimonials available on the website. 	
What is the program's success rate in ICF accreditation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ 100% first-pass success rate for ACC and PCC accreditations. 	
What companies or organizations do GCG certified coaches work with?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ GCG-certified coaches work with leaders in Fortune 500 companies down to smaller organizations across six continents. 	

Questions to Ask Certification Training Providers

How to Use This List



Use these questions when speaking to program representatives.



Compare responses with other programs to see which one provides the best value.



If a program does not offer clear answers to these questions, that's a red flag!

1 ICF Accreditation & Credibility



Is your program officially accredited by the ICF? If so, at what level (Level 1 or Level 2)?

Example (GCG): Yes, GCG is fully accredited at ICF Level 1 (for ACC) and Level 2 (for PCC).

Does your program cover all ICF accreditation requirements, including mentor coaching and recorded sessions?

Example (GCG): Yes, all required ICF elements (mentor coaching, recordings, and competency training) are included.

How do you help me complete my recorded sessions?

Example (GCG): GCG ensures you can complete recordings that meet ICF standards by providing GCG clients for you to coach during the mentor coaching program while you record your sessions.

Do you provide support if ICF rejects my recorded coaching sessions?

Example (GCG): Yes, unlimited mentor coaching support at no extra cost until sessions meet ICF standards and your recordings are ICF approved.

2 Curriculum & Program Content



How does your curriculum align with the ICF Core Competencies and Ethical Guidelines?

Example (GCG): Fully aligned with ICF Core Competencies, including structured training on coaching ethics, methodologies, and client engagement best practices.

How does your program include role-playing, or real-world coaching scenarios?

Example (GCG): Yes, 18+ coaching practice labs cover real-world scenarios, coaching challenges, and role-playing exercises.

Does the program offer specialized coaching tracks (e.g., executive coaching, leadership coaching, team coaching, and group coaching)?

Example (GCG): Yes, includes Global Leadership Coaching (GLC), Global Team Coaching (GTC), and GLA360 Leadership Assessment Certifications. These can be used for group coaching as well.

3 Trainer Qualifications & Expertise



Who are the lead instructors, and what are their credentials?

Example (GCG): Led by Will Linssen, a Master Certified Coach (MCC), ranked #1 Leadership Coach by Global Gurus and #1 Coach Trainer by Thinkers50. All trainers are ICF-certified at PCC or MCC level.

Do trainers have real-world executive coaching and leadership experience?

Example (GCG): Yes, GCG trainers have coached Fortune 500 executives and senior corporate leaders globally, they have more than 15 years of professional leadership experience in organizations and more than 15 years of leadership coaching experience.

Can I receive personalized feedback from my trainers?

Example (GCG): Yes, direct 1-on-1 feedback from MCC-level coaches is provided throughout the program and they are available to answer your questions during and right after workshops.

4 Program Format & Delivery



Is your program fully online, onsite, or hybrid?

Example (GCG): Fully online self-paced elearning and live online workshops including coaching practice labs with participants from all around the world.

Is the program mobile-friendly and accessible on different devices?

Example (GCG): Yes, all learning materials are accessible on mobile, tablet, and desktop.

Are all sessions recorded for later access?

Example (GCG): Yes, all live sessions are recorded and available for replay and download for later reference, including transcripts and summaries.

5 Mentoring, Supervision & Feedback



How many mentor coaching hours are included in the program?

Example (GCG): 15+ hours of mentor coaching, 12 hours in groups and 3 hours individually. You can extend your mentor coaching indefinitely at no extra cost.

Are there supervised coaching practice opportunities?

Example (GCG): Yes, all coaching practice labs are supervised by MCC-level coaches.

What kind of feedback do participants receive on their coaching skills?

Example (GCG): Coaches receive detailed feedback during live sessions, on their recorded coaching sessions, and AI-based assessments.

6 Assessment & Certification Process



How is participant progress assessed?

Example (GCG): Through live coaching evaluations, recorded session reviews, peer feedback, and structured assessments.

What is the ICF approval process for my recorded coaching sessions?

Example (GCG): GCG evaluates your recordings on behalf of ICF. Other programs might require you to submit the recordings to ICF for approval, which takes up to 18 weeks to get the results.

What happens if I fail an assessment or recording submission?

Example (GCG): Coaches receive unlimited support until their recordings meet ICF standards.

7 Community, Networking & Post-Certification Support



Does your program provide access to an alumni network, and what is the size of your alumni network?

Example (GCG): Example (GCG): Yes, coaches join a thriving community of 4,000+ certified coaches worldwide.

Do you offer continued learning or advanced coaching programs?

Example (GCG): Yes, advanced certifications in Global Team Coaching (GTC) and GLA360 Leadership Assessment are available. In addition, we periodically provide updated resources to all GCG coaches along with new webinars.

Are there networking opportunities with other coaches and corporate clients?

Example (GCG): Yes, networking is available through community events, live workshops, and referral opportunities.

8 Schedule & Flexibility



How long does the program take to complete?

Example (GCG): Between 5 to 9 months, depending on the certification level.

Can I start anytime, or are there set enrollment dates?

Example (GCG): Start anytime, no fixed enrollment dates.

Are there different scheduling options for live workshops and coaching labs?

Example (GCG): Yes, flexible workshop dates allow participants to join at their convenience. You can also choose to reschedule to later workshops as desired. No limits, no fees.

9 Financial Information & Cost Transparency



What is the total cost of the program?

Example (GCG): Starting at USD 2,990 (or 12x USD 299/month), with pricing for advanced certifications up to USD 9,990 (or 12x USD 999/month).

Are there any hidden fees for materials, mentoring, or certification exams?

Example (GCG): No hidden fees-everything is included.

Are payment plans or financing options available?

Example (GCG): Yes, monthly payment plans are available.

Do you offer a money-back guarantee?

Example (GCG): Yes, 90-day "Love It or Leave It" guarantee-full refund if not satisfied, no questions asked.

For clients, we deliver a Triple Win: Better Leaders, Better Teams, and Better Results, boasting a 95% satisfaction rate among coworkers. Global Coach Group simply delivers the best results-based coaching using our global network of over 4,000 world-class certified coaches and our proven Triple Win Leadership Coaching approach integrated with our proprietary online coaching tools.

Author: Will Linssen has been recognized as LinkedIn Top Executive Coaching Voice, serves as advisor to Harvard Business Review, ranked as World's #1 Leadership Coach by Global Gurus (USA), World's #1 Coach Trainer by Thinkers50 (UK), and received the highest accreditation from the International Coaching Federation (ICF): Master Certified Coach.

