

The Relational Coaching Network

Building a Spiritual Foundation for the Christian Coaching Movement

How to Form and Run a Coaching Cell

Forming authentic, accountable communities of coaches in our vocation is at the center of RCN's vision. For us to fulfill out individual destinies as well as our calling as a movement, walking together at an intimate level is vital.

We've captured here much of what we've learned about running a successful cell. Since every cell is unique, our intent is that these principles be treated as *norms* instead of *rules*. In other words, you are welcome to experiment with about any kind of process or procedure, as long as it fits with the RCN values and mission (included at the end of this document). If you find something that really works, tell us about it, and maybe we'll put it in the next version of this guide!

RCN Cells—A Short list of Guidelines

Converting a mission and a set of values into everyday life is always a challenge. With no definition, no one knows what to do. Too much definition creates a set of rules that squeeze the life out of everything. Below are some minimal rules for cell life that translate the RCN values and mission into a working cell structure.

- Because we seek to create a real, **authentic community**,
We will meet together as a group at least monthly.
- Because our mission is **building a spiritual foundation** within Christian coaching,
Our agenda will go beyond our coaching practice to engage Christ in all of life.
- Because we value **living a life of personal transformation**,
We will go to the heart level with each other.
- Because we value **accountability to our calling**,
We will be accountable to each other in areas that God is dealing with us.
- Because our mission is to the **Christian coaching movement**,
RCN cells can may reach out to include members who aren't currently in RCN, as long as the way the cell operates fits these guidelines.
- Because we are part of a larger **Relational Coaching Network**,
We will make it a priority to participate in the larger RCN community.
- Because we are a **values-based network**,
We will be able to demonstrate how our cell practices fit RCN values.
- Because we are a **values-based network**,
This are all the rules we have for cells.

The Relational Coaching Network

Building a Spiritual Foundation for the Christian Coaching Movement

Guiding Principles

Below are six guiding principles for cells—the kind that would normally appear in a cell covenant. Agreeing together on what your basic purpose and responsibilities are creates a good foundations for cell life. We suggest that you talk through these guidelines together so you all understand and acknowledge them. As long as they stay in line with the RCN values, you can feel free and modify these to suit your unique cell. (Here's a helpful [video](#) of a cell that walks out these guidelines).

1. **Purpose**

The purpose of our meeting is to build an authentic, accountable community in our vocation, in order to further our mission of building a spiritual foundation within the Christian coaching movement. Our purpose should guide our group agenda.

2. **Responsibility**

As coaches, we understand personal responsibility. All of us are responsible to mutually engage one another—we won't just leave it to the leader. We'll take responsibility to be on time, to contribute, to invest energy instead of coming unprepared or expecting others to carry the load.

3. **Life-Giving**

Let's do what brings life, and quickly stop doing things that are unproductive. We are about bringing the reality of Christ into our vocation, not following rules or just checking off a list of expectations. If something isn't working or it feels like it isn't worth the time, let's be honest and talk about it.

4. **Transparency**

We expect to be honest and open with each other about what is going on in our lives and vocations. We'll be intentional about revealing where we need help, honest in our feedback, an open in our posture toward each other. If something is bugging us, we'll talk about it.

5. **Discretion**

We'll handle what is shared in the group with honor, care and discretion.

6. **Greatness**

We will seek to bring out the greatness in each other, to help each other fully fulfill our destinies. We seek greatness in our group relationship as well—to connect in our working or serving together, in friendship, in recreation, in sharing our joys and sorrows; to build something that goes beyond a monthly call. We also seek greatness in character: to help each other truly become men and women of God

The Relational Coaching Network

Building a Spiritual Foundation for the Christian Coaching Movement

Forming a Cell

This section contains tips and guidelines for forming a cell. You may adapt these if you wish. One caveat: when you are just launching your cell, we recommend sticking more closely with these guidelines. Once you've built a strong group and things are working well, experimentation is much easier. But right off the bat, you'll probably find that following a procedure with clear expectations is easier.

1. It Starts with a Leader

There is always some level of awkwardness about forming peer communities. Asking someone to be a part is a bit like saying, "Will you be my friend?" Because formalizing the relationship doesn't tend to happen naturally, somebody is going to have to step up and say, "Let's do this!"

2. Find Something In Common

Some groups will form around a common interest or calling, some around existing friendship, others around what you want your relational interaction to look like, and some just because you met at an RCN event and felt a connection. Community works best where there are natural connections in your life—the more other places you can work together or bump into each other, the better. You can even go out and recruit the people you want in your cell into RCN. Even if some of those people never become part of the larger RCN network, as long as your cell follows our minimal guidelines and values, and some of the people are in RCN, it can be an RCN cell.

3. Making the Ask

At some point you have to say, "Do you (or we) want to do this?" If you are at a retreat where everyone is present, one option is to get three to five people together and say, "How about if we form a group?" The key to making this work is creating a climate of honesty—the only people you want in your cell are the ones who genuinely want to be there for the purpose you are meeting. Talk about what you want and need from a group, and encourage people to seriously evaluate if they have time, or if they can make it a top priority to be at your meetings. The Guidelines for cells are a good place to start in discussing what you want from your community and what it will look like.

I would suggest making the ask, then letting everyone go home and pray about before they say, "Yes." Then if they have any reservations (for instance, about the commitment or the other members of the group) they can express them to you alone instead of in front of everyone.

Another approach is to target individuals you want in your cell. When I (Tony) started my group, I looked for people that had similar values for community and

The Relational Coaching Network

Building a Spiritual Foundation for the Christian Coaching Movement

engaging the heart, and just called them up one by one. One of the advantages of being a group leader is that you can choose who you want to invite! However, I was very careful not to make this “my” group, but ours. Invite people into a community that all of you will own and shape.

4. **What to Ask for**

Every group needs a **trial period**. We strongly suggest asking potential group members to commit for six meetings only, so you can get to know each other and see how you like being in a cell together. At this point, don’t ask for any commitment beyond that—just that you’ll do six meetings in accordance with the RCN guidelines and then evaluate at the end where you want to go from there. You won’t really know what you are committing to until you’ve experienced being together for a while, and for the group to work long-term, people have to make a well-informed commitment to something they truly know the value of.

So you are asking for a commitment to make it a high priority to be there for six meetings, to participate fully for that time, with no expectations for continuing beyond that unless that’s what you really want.

5. **Reevaluate**

In your sixth meeting, take time to have an honest talk about your experience. Here are some questions to look at:

- What do you value in what you’ve experienced here? What have you gotten from this group?
- What do you long for more of?
- Is there anything that you feel needs to change for this to be a great group?
- Is this valuable enough for you that you wholeheartedly want to go forward?

You may wish to re-up for a second trial period—my group did. If people feel like they need more time together before they are ready to make a commitment, do it. You don’t want anyone to say yes to being in a cell unless they are fully on board.

The Relational Coaching Network

Building a Spiritual Foundation for the Christian Coaching Movement

Typical Cell Meetings

Your cell may meet in phone or in person, and can be for whatever length of time works best for you. RCN only stipulates that RCN cells meet at least monthly and demonstrate the RCN values in the way they conduct themselves.

We recommend that your cell have a **designated chairperson** for each meeting. One person can take on that role, or you can rotate it. The chairperson's function is to:

- Convene your meetings
- Moderate the discussion/manage the conversation
- Ensure that agreed-upon ground rules are followed

In most of your sessions, you'll want to catch up a bit with each person. You may wish to choose one or two individuals each week to share more deeply—it is hard to engage four different people at a significant level in one session.

Cell Videos

To help you out, we've posted some video on line of part of a typical cell meeting, plus a cell talking about their experience and what they've gained from it.

[Typical RCN Cell Meeting Video](#)

What Do We Talk About?

Since the goal of cells is to build authentic, accountable communities in your vocation, what you talk about should move you toward that objective. There are a myriad of ways to get into each others lives:

- Talk about what is new or significant in your life
- Ask for coaching or counsel on something you are dealing with
- Share dreams and aspirations
- Discuss a coaching principle or practice, or try it out on each other
- Choose a life area to share about: marriage, child-rearing, business, finances, relationship with God, etc.
- Share affirmations or feedback on what you have seen in each other
- Debrief at the end of your session on what happened

Coaching as a Team

Having three or four other coaches engaging you at once can be an exhilarating experience. It can also be a traffic jam until you learn how to work together. A four-person conversation is much more complicated than you

What agenda?

Which mode?

How will we work together?

The Relational Coaching Network

Building a Spiritual Foundation for the Christian Coaching Movement

and your client: if everyone feels compelled to get their say in, your sessions can devolve into advice-giving times pretty quickly. Part of the role of the chairperson is to act as a traffic cop for your meetings. The chairperson isn't there to order the others around, but to make sure you are all on the same page with where the conversation is going.

Here are three questions we recommend that chair ask before each interaction:

- **What** is your agenda?
- **Which** mode are we engaging you with?
- **How** will we work together to attain that end?

What Agenda?

For your cell to be a place of safety, authenticity and accountability must be voluntary. In other words, the person who you are talking about gets to choose the agenda (just like in coaching). So when one member asks to talk about his or her life, the first question from the chair is, "What's the agenda?" The group should honor that agenda, and ask permission if they want to ask about an intuition item that takes the discussion outside of it.

Which Mode of Engaging?

At different times, you may want to engage each other as friends, coaches, mentors, accountability partners, consultants or even advice-givers. One of the biggest reasons cell discussions break down is that you aren't clear on what mode you are functioning in. We recommend that you choose a coaching style as your default mode: in other words, unless your peer specifically asks for advice or mentoring or something else, the assumption is that you will be asking questions and drawing insights and solutions out of them. There is nothing wrong with just hanging out and being friends, or even with asking your peers for advice. But having an agreed-upon default style means you don't have to ask in every conversation how your peers want to be engaged.

Make coaching your default mode, and specifically ask for it when you want something else.

How Will We Coach Together?

Even if you are all clearly in a coaching mode, it is easy to trip over each other when you each want to ask a different question or draw out a different thread in the conversation. There are **several options** for how you can work together. Again, the most important thing is just to be clear on which method you are using:

1. One Coach

One person coaches while the others just listen. A great way to choose the coach is to ask the coachee which person he or she would prefer to be coached by. This structure isn't as much of a team feel or team process as the other options.

The Relational Coaching Network

Building a Spiritual Foundation for the Christian Coaching Movement

2. Lead Coach

Designate one person as the lead coach for the interaction, while the others take the second chair. If the lead coach gets stuck or wants to broaden the conversation, he or she can invite the others to ask a question or offer an insight. Or the lead coach can step back at any time and invite one of the others to take over the lead. You coach as a team, but the lead coach asks most of the questions and manages the conversation. For this to feel like a team process, the lead coach needs to be mindful of drawing the other coaches into the interaction and not dominating the conversation.

3. Team Coaching

You work together as a team to coach your peer. This requires some practice to develop a flow and not step on each other's toes. The chairperson should still moderate, but instead of deciding who asks a question next, he or she simply watches to make sure the conversation stays on track with the client's agenda and the ground rules of your cell. The coachee in this kind of conversation needs to be more active as well: "I want to pursue Bill's question" or "Let's leave that for now and stick with this other thread."

Challenge

Challenging each other to reach higher is part of the life of an accountability group. There are two types of accountability we can function in. A *situational accountability* is when you say, "Hold me accountable to do such and such." In other words, there is a one particular issue or event you want specific accountability for. Life accountability is when you say to a select few close friends, "If you see something in me that's off course, I want to know." Both types are voluntary: you decide whom you want to be accountable to for what. But situational accountability has much tighter boundaries around it, and hence is safer. That's where you're group should start.

We make this distinction so that we don't presume to offer life accountability when permission has not been given. Your group should become more open to each other over time as you build relationship and trust.

In any coaching situation, a coach may query you or challenge you about what comes up in the conversation. A coach's job is not to ensure that you are comfortable, but to help you grow. However, you always have the right to choose what topics you want to delve into further without recrimination.

Your group may want to talk about expectations for challenge and feedback: what do you want from your team members? How direct do you want them to be with you? What level of challenge are you comfortable with? It may also be productive to discuss how to recognize when things get uncomfortable, or even what to say when you want the others to back off. Since the chair is managing the conversation, s/he should keep one eye open for times when things get awkward, then step in and help the group get things back on track.

The Relational Coaching Network

Building a Spiritual Foundation for the Christian Coaching Movement

Prayer

While prayer is often a part of these community sessions, it is not often the primary focus. The main purpose is creating accountable community, so this isn't a prayer meeting, although it may be a meeting where we pray as well as do other things. At some point, you'll probably want to talk through what you want in the area of prayer as a group and how to best achieve it.

The Relational Coaching Network

Building a Spiritual Foundation for the Christian Coaching Movement

The Pre-Session Update

Some groups use a session prep form (similar to what you'd use with a client) so you can get a quick update on everyone before you meet. If you use an Update form, it gives everyone a chance to scan over what is going on in your life and think about what they might want to ask you about. So sometimes the agenda for your conversation will come from the update forms. Here's a representative update form you can modify and use:

Update Form

Write a couple sentences for each question below just to bring us up to date. Please complete this and e-mail it around at least 24 hrs before our calls.

1. What have you done or what is going on in your life in the areas we discussed in our last call?
2. What is new in your life since we last met that you'd like the others in the group to know?
3. What's a win or good thing that happened that you'd like to celebrate with us?
4. What's something that you might like to bring to the group this week?

Debriefing

You may wish to include short debriefing times at the end of your calls. Debriefs can increase your learning from what happened, as well as providing time to celebrate or clear the air from what happened. There are two types of debriefs:

- **The Relational Debrief**
We debrief on our feelings, experiences and how they impact our relationships.
- **The Analytical Debrief**
We step back and examine what we can learn on a skill or process level from our interaction.

Relational Debriefing Questions

- *“How did you feel about this interaction?”*
- *“How did you experience our conversation today?”*
- *“What do you want to express to others in the group about this conversation?”*
- *“What do you want to celebrate about this conversation?”*
- *“Is there anything we need to talk through from the meeting?”*
- *“How did this impact you?”*
- *“Where do we most want to grow relationally?”*

Analytical Debriefing Questions

- *“What can we learn from this session about coaching skills?”*
- *“What was behind it when you asked _____?”*
- *“How well did our conversational process work? What could we do better next time?”*
- *“What did we do when we were engaging you that was most/least effective?”*
- *“Where do we most want to grow*

Summary: Suggested Meeting Practices

1. Agree on ground rules from the start. Create a covenant.
2. Appoint a chairperson for each session.
3. Use an update form to make your time more efficient.
4. Allow the coachee to set the agenda.
5. You can always choose whether or not you want to answer a question or open up a new area.
6. Determine what mode the coachee wants to be engaged with (i.e. coaching, consulting, mentoring, etc.)
7. Choose a default mode to engage in and a default coaching style to make things go more smoothly.
8. Decide on a coaching style (one coach, lead coach, or team coaching).
9. The chairperson moderates/manages the conversation.
10. When you get several conversational threads going, let the coachee choose which to pursue.
11. Be clear on the difference between situational accountability and life accountability, and don't cross boundaries.
12. Take time as needed to clarify expectations: about boundaries, challenge, feedback, etc.
13. Pray in the meeting, don't make it a prayer meeting.
14. Use debriefing if you want to increase practical learning or check up on relational health at the end.
15. Modify these guidelines however you want, as long as what you are doing is in accordance with the RCN values

The Relational Coaching Network

Building a Spiritual Foundation for the Christian Coaching Movement

Meeting Ideas

This section includes a variety of ideas for what you can do in your cell meetings. If you have other ideas that have worked well for you, I'd love to hear them!

In Your First Few Meetings

- Make sure you know each other well. You may wish to take time each week for one person to share a **life story** (for 20 or 30 min) until you've gone around the circle. Another good exercise is to have each person share dreams or life goals.
- Use the **update form**. Often the thing you most need to talk about will appear there, and the other coaches will get curious, ask about them, and start things rolling.
- What will make you an authentic community is the chance to **share and be engaged** on the struggles and victories you are experiencing right now. Make sure everyone gets to share or be engaged about what is going on in their own life. Don't allow one person's needs or talkativeness to dominate.

Creative Ideas

- **Accountability and Life Sharing** (typical meeting)
Have one person share what is going on in his/her life, or offer something s/he would like to be engaged on by the rest of the group. Process it through to an action step, then move on to the next person. At subsequent meetings, get a progress report on an action steps you are providing accountability for.
- **Loveseat**
Put one person on the "Loveseat" and have the others share the greatness you see in them, what they have done for you, what you admire about them, and what you see as their future
- **Sharing Dreams**
Take time to share your dreams with each other. What do you want to do in life? What do you want your legacy to be? What do you dream of doing or experiencing just for fun or personal satisfaction? This is a great way for others to get to know what makes you tick.
- **Discuss a Life Area**
Start with some area of life: family, church, marriage, health, personal growth, practice, long-range goals, etc. Discuss it. What are your joys and sorrows in this area?
- **Joys and Sorrows**
Great way to start a meeting. Simply ask, "What's one joy and one sorrow in your life since we met last?"

The Relational Coaching Network

Building a Spiritual Foundation for the Christian Coaching Movement

- **Life stories**
Take 20 to 30 minutes for one person to share a life story. Do one story per meeting until you are finished.
- **Movie/Book Discussion**
Watch a pertinent movie or read all or part of a book, and then discuss it with each other during your session. What can you learn from it, and how can you apply that to your lives?
- **Discuss Group Dynamics**
Talk about prior experiences with accountability/fellowship groups. What's worked and what hasn't? Where have you been helped or hurt? Or take time to clarify expectations. Are we doing what we said we'd do? How is our community living out the RCN values? What can we change to make this even better?
- **Best Practices**
Have one person share or demo a particular business or coaching skill they are adept at, so the others can learn it. Or pick a topic (like internet marketing or coaching married couples) and share your best practices. One caution: spending the majority of your time on practice building is not what RCN is about—we want to build a community that touches all areas of life

The Relational Coaching Network

Building a Spiritual Foundation for the Christian Coaching Movement

RCN Vision, Values and Mission Statements

RCN Vision Statement

An international network of Christian coaching leaders, joined in an authentic community of generous service and on-purpose living, which forms a spiritual foundation for a coaching movement that transforms the world.

RCN Mission Statement

Empowering the Christian coaching movement to fulfill it's God-given call by:

- *Helping individual coaches cultivate lives of high character and purpose;*
- *Establishing and championing structures that build coaches into authentic, accountable communities;*
- *Rallying coaches to join in acts of service and generosity.*

RCN Value Statement

Authentic Community (with Depth and Breadth)

We value authentic relationships--open with each other about our plans, finances, inner growth and personal circumstances--and giving the gift of authenticity by catalyzing deep, meaningful relationships with others. In addition to this depth of relationships, we also value the breadth that comes from relating in many ways: through encouragement and accountability, having fun together, working together, meeting in person and by phone, and sharing our time, talents and treasure with each other.

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another;..."

I Jn. 1:17

Accountability to Our Calling

We value walking together in consistent, structured, accountable communities with peers in our vocation, because we believe that journeying together is the only way to fulfill our calling. We seek to be open to feedback, and create intentional feedback structures in our lives and organizations.

The Relational Coaching Network

Building a Spiritual Foundation for the Christian Coaching Movement

“...If someone is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Look to yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”
Gal. 6:1-2

Living the Life of Personal Transformation

We value living a life of ongoing personal transformation. We're committed to being coached ourselves, understanding and living our own life purpose, and maximizing our abilities and impact. We practice what we preach as coaches, because the power of what we do comes out of who we are.

“Not that I have already attained this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.”
Phil. 3:12

Personal Responsibility

We structure our network around the value of personal responsibility. We don't babysit or do things for people that they can do for themselves. Instead, we expect each member to take initiative, speak up when needed, and take responsibility to get connected with others.

“Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek and you shall find; knock, and it will be opened to you.” [In Greek, these verbs are a command to continually ask, seek and knock as a way of life].
Luke 11:9

Passion-Driven

We work together energized by our passion and not by external expectations. We are owners of this vision, not volunteers. Our projects and our network run because we care enough about it to invest in it. We find places for people that fit their passions, where they can serve gladly and give generously out of a sense of call, not one of obligation.

“Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”
Gal 6:7

“Him we proclaim... that we may present every man mature in Christ. For this I toil, working with all the energy he mightily inspires within me.”
Col. 1:29

Generosity

We are in this network to give, not to get. We focus our collective efforts on serving others and helping them fulfill their destinies because that's what the Kingdom is all about. Instead of

The Relational Coaching Network

Building a Spiritual Foundation for the Christian Coaching Movement

using our time and resources to make our own businesses more profitable: we've intentionally chosen to focus on meeting the needs of others. We have an abundance mentality, and freely give because we've received so much. We also freely share our insights, practices and documents to help catalyze networks in other countries, professions or spheres.

"...I have shown you that by so toiling one must help the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" Acts 20:35

"And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work." Gal 6:8

Being About the Kingdom Business

Because our work straddles the business and ministry worlds, we are intentional about seeking first the Kingdom and doing business in Kingdom way for eternal rewards. We value the integrity of doing what you say, of purposefully empowering and releasing others instead of using them to reach our own visions, of looking out for the interests of others. Because this is a call and not just about making money, we do business in a way that people meet God in our business practices.

"...you shall not make my Father's house a house of trade." Jn. 2:16

Values-Based Network

We major in the majors, by choosing to gather around common Biblical values instead of rules, beliefs or standards. In some areas (such as racial, political, or denominational) we remain unaligned in order to more effectively serve all. Our fellowship is values-based, not belief-based. We intentionally seek to cross cultural, racial, political, denominational, gender, socio-economic and national boundaries to serve others.

"...I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism, but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right." Acts 10:34-35