

**DaneChristensen.com, Inc.**

*Laser-targeted Online Marketing  
for Life Coaches*



# **Life Coach Marketing Survey Results and Analysis**

**Presented March 24, 2014**

**By**

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## Abstract

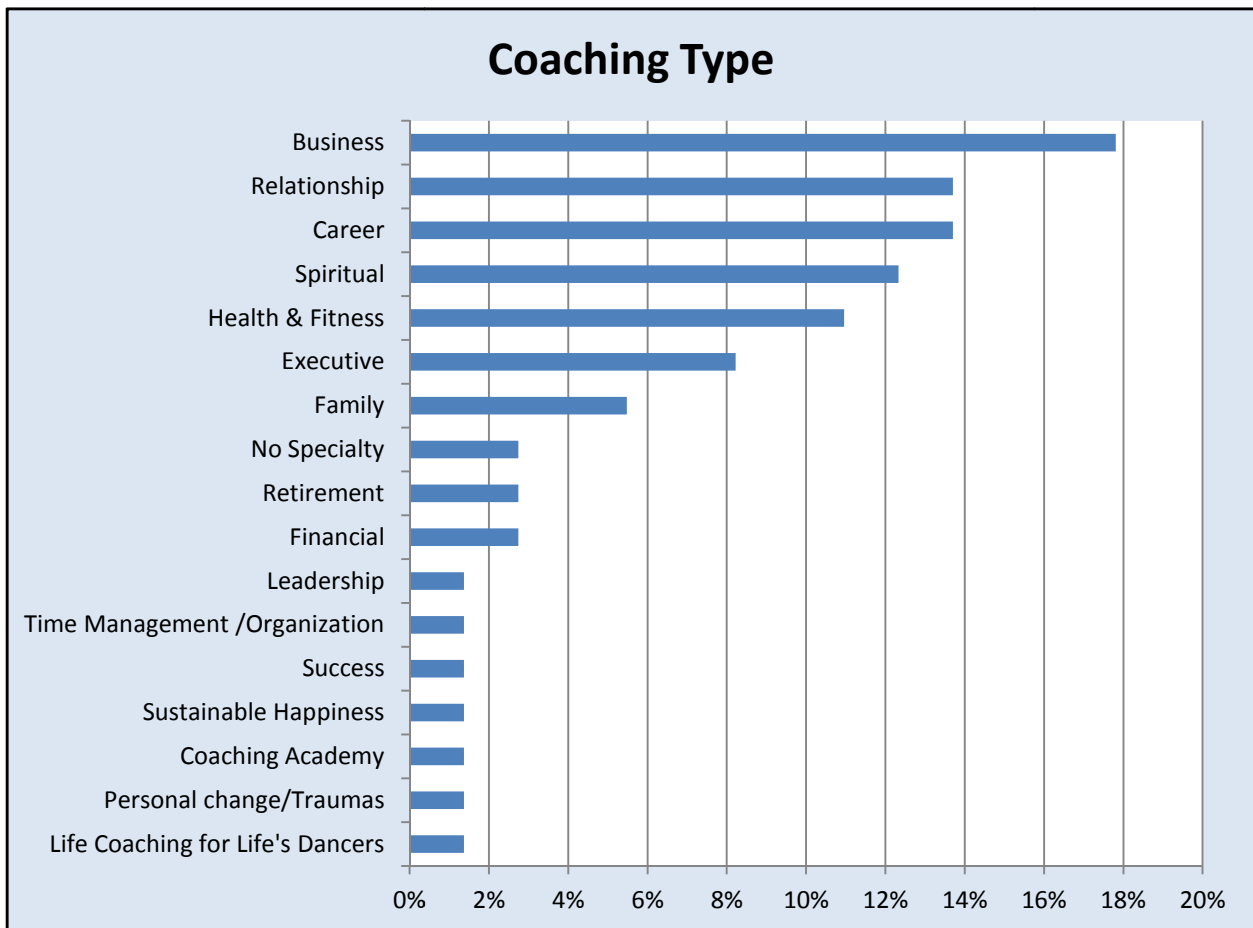
This report presents the results and analysis for the first survey of the marketing practices of life coaches conducted by DaneChristensen.com, Inc. The purpose for this survey was to determine how life coaches are currently promoting their practices and what kinds of results they are getting.

For the sake of full disclosure, it should be noted that there were only 15 qualified respondents to this survey, which is not a large enough sample size to be confident that it is a representative sampling of the entire life coach marketing industry. However, the results do appear valid, and provide solid material for the analysis.

Overall, the survey reveals a pretty clear picture of the industry. It appears that the majority of life coaches are making a very modest income from their life coaching business, probably often as a side activity. They are spending very little money on marketing and conducting most of their marketing activities on their own, most commonly through social media and email marketing.

## Question 1: What type of life coaching do you specialize in?

This question allowed for multiple responses, and it's a good thing because there were an average of almost five responses for each life coach. This isn't surprising, as there is a good deal of logical overlap between many of these classifications (e.g. business, career, executive, leadership are all very similar). Among the top five types, it is noteworthy that there is solid representation from different spheres of life (i.e. business/career, relationship, spiritual, health & fitness). There were also a few "No Specialty" responses as well as a few other categories included.



Overall, these results suggest a market in which there is not a high degree of specialization, but rather one in which most life coaches take a more 'shot gun' approach, essentially offering to help with a wide range of life's challenges. This is no doubt a result of trying to be open to a wider potential market. After all, the more issues you can help with, the higher the odds of landing a client.

However, this may present opportunities for life coaches who choose to focus on a very distinct issue or area. People with specific issues may be more likely to choose a life coach who specializes in their area. Sometimes less is more.

## Question 2: What is your current status regarding number of clients?

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I have all the clients I need plus a waiting list	0%
I have just about the right number of clients	20%
I have several clients but I could use a few more	40%
I have just a few clients and need a lot more	27%
I don't have any clients yet	13%

I'm sure no one is too surprised to see that no life coaches responded that they had all the clients they need plus a waiting list. That is truly a rare situation. However, 20% of life coaches stated that they have just about the right amount of clients, suggesting that they have established a marketing strategy that is producing the results they need.

Of the remaining 80%, half of those seem to have well-established practices and simply need to improve their marketing incrementally. Roughly a quarter of the respondents appear to be in the early stages of getting their practices established while fewer still are just starting out.

These results are a pretty standard distribution that is pretty much exactly what we would expect to see. I predict that a larger sample size will produce very similar results. The bottom line is that there is plenty of room for improvement in terms of getting life coaches in general to a point of full engagement.

## Question 3: What type of website do you have and where is it hosted?

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My website is built on another content management system (e.g. Joomla, Drupal)	28%
I have a completely custom website	15%
I'm not sure	15%
My website is hosted with service that specializes in website for life coaches	13%
My website is built on Wordpress and hosted at another hosting company	10%
I don't have a website	8%
My website is built on Wordpress at Wordpress.com	5%
Other (Freewebs.com)	5%

The results of this question are admittedly a bit fuzzy, due in part to the inherently complex nature of the question. The question allowed for multiple answers because life coaches may have more than one website and because theoretically it is possible for more than one answer to be true. But assuming that most life coaches have only one website, we would expect there to be roughly one answer per respondent. In fact, there was an average of 2.6 responses per life coach, which could mean several had multiple sites, or that they selected one answer plus the 'I'm not sure' response, or that they thought more than one answer applied. Despite the lack of clarity on this question, we can make a few useful observations.

The large majority of life coaches do have websites. This study does not track correlations between answers, but it is likely that there is a strong correlation between those life coaches who are just starting out and yet to get their first clients and those who don't have websites.

It is noteworthy that the largest percentages of life coaches have websites built on robust content management systems like Joomla or Drupal or have completely custom designed websites with far fewer being hosted on simpler platforms like Wordpress or specialized website builders designed for life coaches. Taking into account the coaches with more sophisticated (and therefore more expensive) websites, those who don't have websites at all, and those who aren't even sure what platform their site is one, it appears that many life coaches are not aware of these simple and affordable options for websites. Gaining knowledge of these content management systems could provide a leg up for many coaches.

#### **Question 4: How satisfied are you with your current website?**

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In spite of the lack of clarity about the technology underlying the websites, our results indicate that life coaches are satisfied with their web presence, 93% of respondents indicating they are somewhat, quite or extremely satisfied with their sites. No respondents said they were completely dissatisfied with their site.

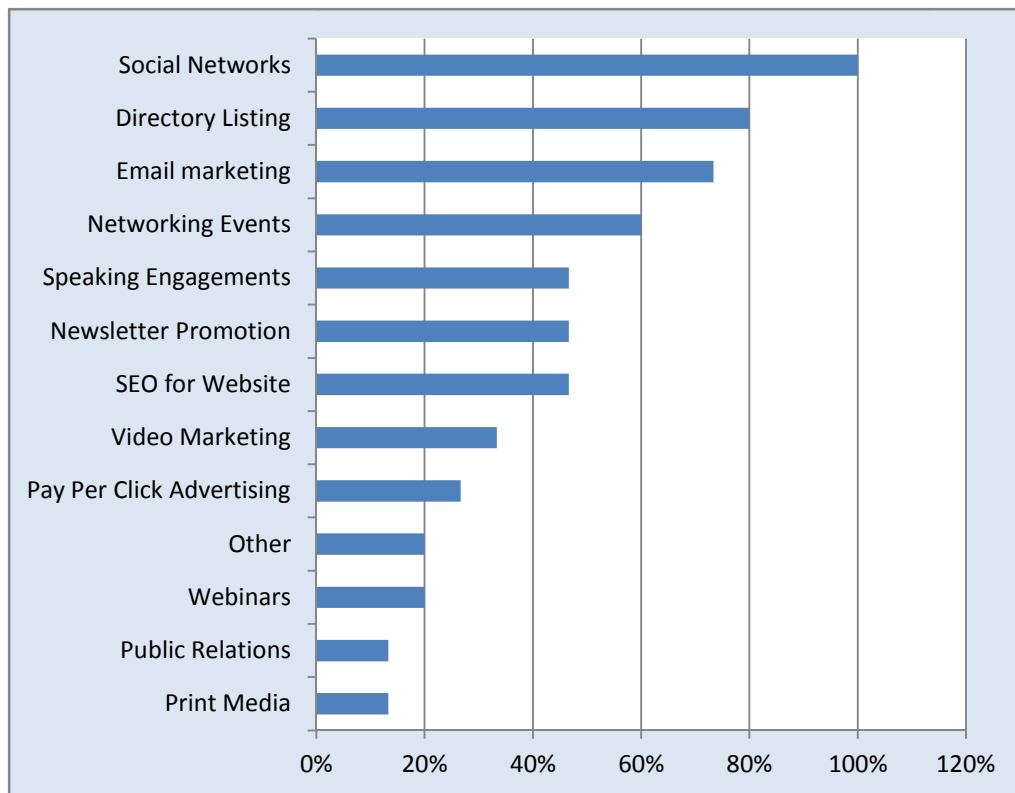
<b>I don't have a website</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Not satisfied at all.</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Somewhat satisfied.</b>	<b>27%</b>
<b>Quite satisfied.</b>	<b>47%</b>
<b>Extremely satisfied!</b>	<b>20%</b>

Given the questions about the underlying technology, however, it may be possible that many life coaches are not fully aware of what capabilities their websites lack and have simply set their standards for satisfaction lower than they need to be. In other words, it could be that life coaches are satisfied to be on par with all the life coach websites out there rather than standing out from the crowd or having a more powerful marketing tool.

## Question 5: What marketing channels do you currently use to promote your practice?

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If there is one clear conclusion from this survey, it is that life coaches are highly engaged in the promotion of their practice. This question allowed for multiple answers, and life coaches checked an average of about six answers, indicating that they are involved in multiple forms of marketing.

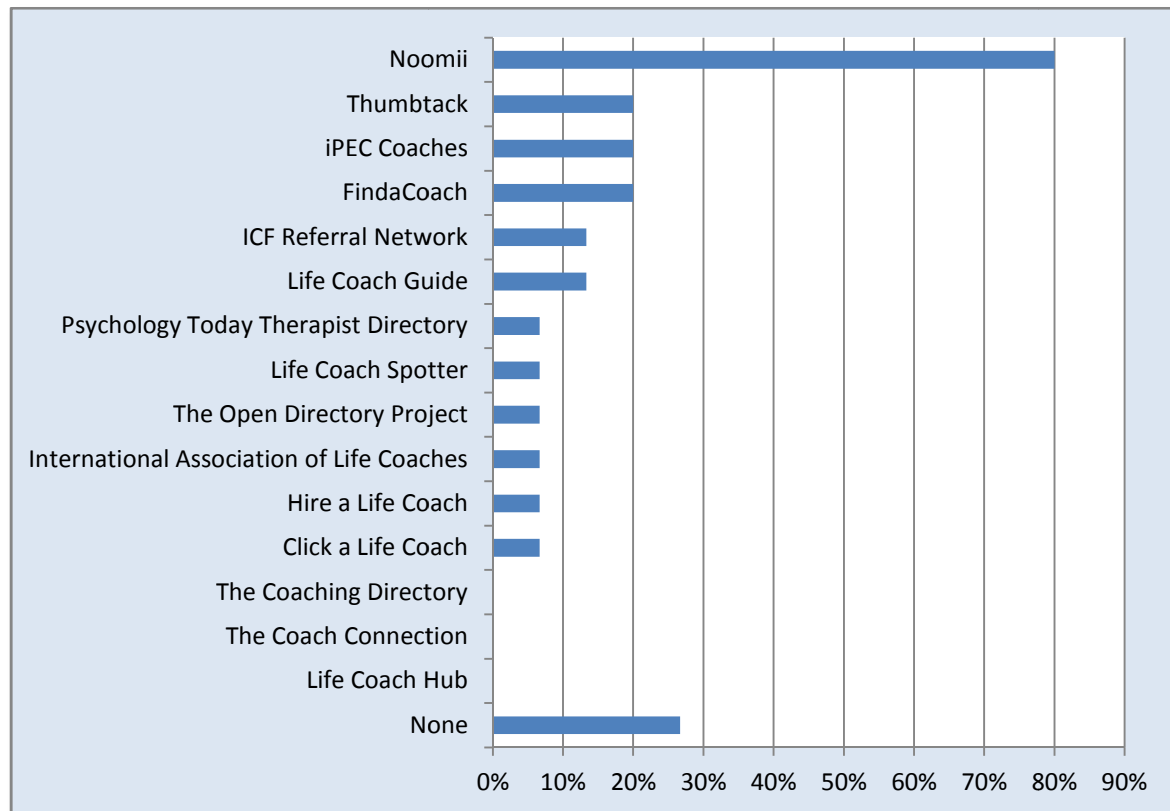


Social networks are the leading form of promotion with literally every life coach indicating they utilize social media to promote their practice. This is no surprise, given the nature of the service and of social networks themselves—it is a natural promotion channel. We explore this channel in more depth in a subsequent question. Directory listings and email marketing round out the top three channels, which could be considered the essential methods. Even so, only 73% of the coaches reported utilizing email marketing.

Other than those primary methods we see that life coaches are spreading their efforts out over a wide range of channels. We explore details about these activities in subsequent questions, but from this question we can probably safely conclude that life coaches are very busy trying to promote through as many of these channels as possible but falling short of being able to execute on a fully-integrated multi-channel campaign.

## Question 6: On what life coach directories are you listed?

Directory listings are obviously a key marketing channel for life coaches, so knowing which directories are most utilized is important information. This survey clearly shows that Noomii has obviously become the primary directory for life coaches, with 80% of respondents listed there. All other directories are distant also-rans in terms of life coach participation.



It's also worth noting that roughly a quarter of the life coaches reported that they were not listed on any directory.

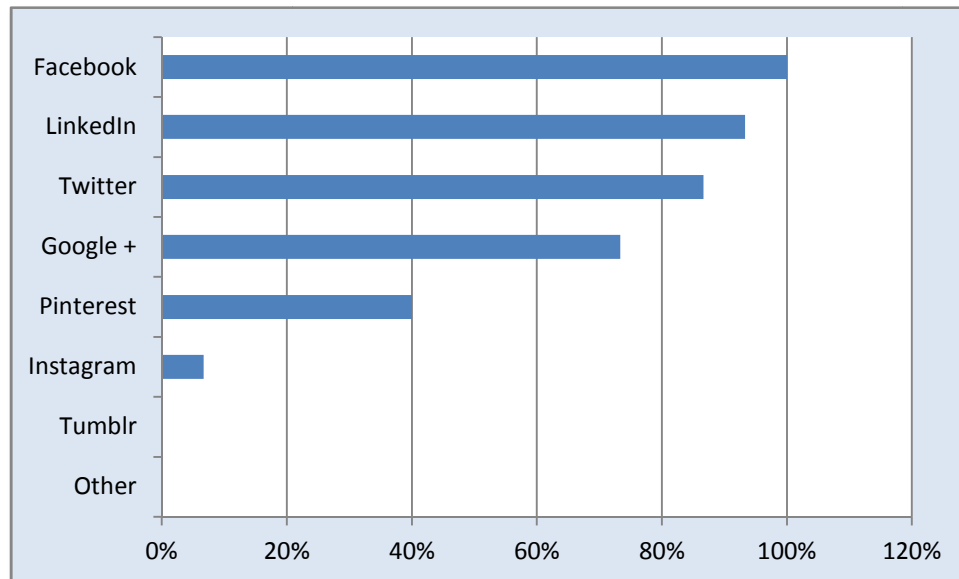
The key remaining question (which is not answered by this survey) is 'which of these surveys are most utilized by people searching for life coaches?' It stands to reason that Noomii has the most traffic from client prospects, having become the de facto center of gravity for the life coach marketing industry. But does its traffic exceed that of the other directories by in the same proportion as its life coach membership? A directory that gets solid traffic but that has fewer life coaches might be an even better source of leads since there is less competition.

Of course, that's all conjecture at this point. But either way, it makes sense for life coaches to have a presence on as many directories as they can—particularly the free ones—and at this point most life coaches are clearly not doing so.

## Question 7: What social networks are you active on?

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Having already established that social networks are the leading channel for promoting life coaching practices, it should come as no surprise that the most frequently used social networks fall in line with the size of the networks. Literally every life coach responding reported using Facebook, and all but one use LinkedIn. Twitter rounds out the Big Three, but Google+ is not far behind with 73% of the sample reporting being active there. It isn't until we look at Pinterest that we see a sharp decline.



It is also significant that no respondents mentioned any other social networks where they promote, indicating that these leading networks are the focus of the social world.

The question that is not answered by this poll is just what techniques life coaches use to promote on these networks and to what effect. That may be a subject for a future poll.

In terms of opportunity, Pinterest and Instagram appear to be potential opportunities for life coaches to increase their exposure. There is virtually limitless imagery available across the web that visually represents to ideals of life coaching. I photo of the day with a life coaching-oriented meme could help keep your practice maintain mindshare.

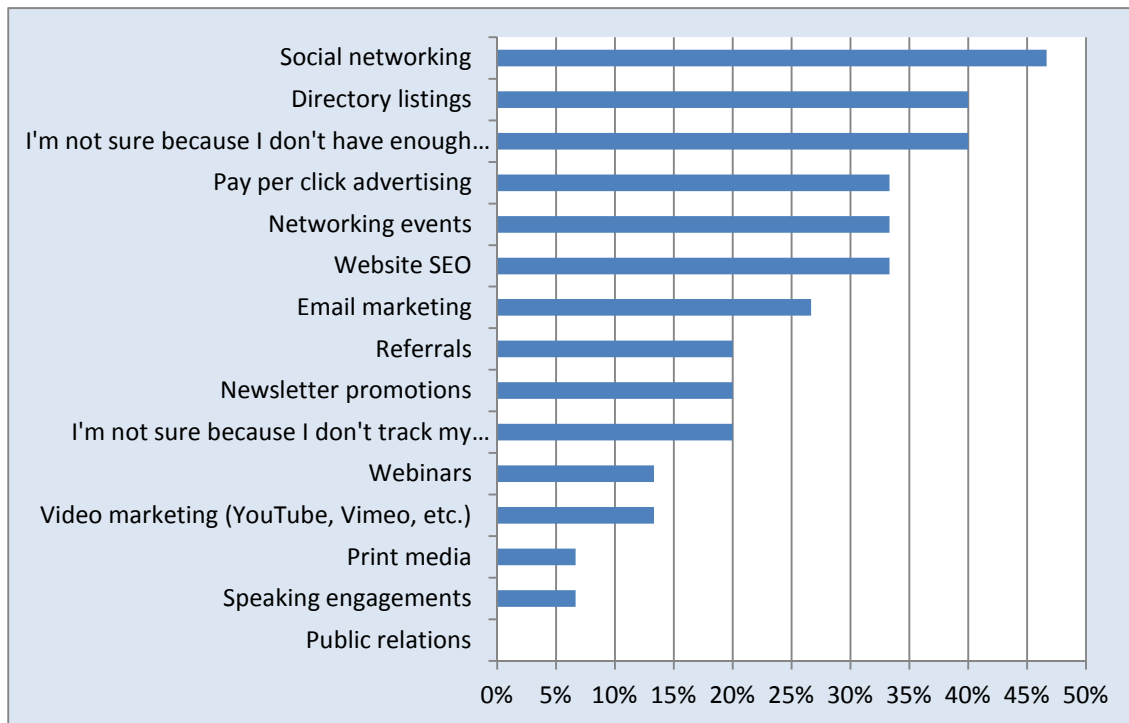
## Question 8: Which marketing channel generates the most clients?

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Question 5 asked which marketing channels life coaches used more often whereas this question asks which generates the most clients. We should expect to see a rough correlation between these, and indeed we do. But any discrepancies between the results could be telling.



It should be noted, however, that this question is somewhat flawed because of the wording of the question. Asking which channel generates the *most* clients suggest that we were looking for a single answer. But the questions allowed for multiple answers. This could have been confusing so some users, which could explain why only seven of the 15 respondents answered that social networking returned the most results while literally every respondent reported using that channel. So these results should be treated as suspect, and we will take care to word questions more carefully on future surveys.



Not surprisingly, Social networking and directory listings show top the lists of channels that generate the most leads. The anomalous result is Pay Per Click, which was the third highest lead generating channel but was not frequently used according to Question 5. This is possibly not surprising because pay per click is widely understood to be a market for people who are more serious about purchasing. Also, because vendors are paying for the clicks, their pitches tend to be more direct. So it makes sense that that channel would produce proportionally more leads.

Another anomaly is email marketing, which appears further down the list than we would expect to see based on the frequency with which it is employed. However, this can be explained by the fact that email marketing is more often used as a prospect maintenance strategy rather than a lead capture strategy. In other words, life coaches aren't generating leads/clients through email, but are rather keeping them engaged via email.

Otherwise, the various marketing channels all seem to be doing their part to produce leads, suggesting that an integrated, multi-channel strategy is the best approach.

## Question 9: Who manages your marketing campaigns?

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Perhaps the most surprising result we see in this study is the degree to which life coaches manage their own marketing rather than sourcing that to other marketing professionals. Three out of five life coaches handle all their own marketing and another 20% basically manage their marketing, hiring contractors to do execute tasks as needed. Only 13% hire dedicated marketing professionals to manage marketing, not a single respondent hired a marketing agency.

<b>I manage all marketing campaigns myself</b>	<b>60%</b>
<b>I contract with various consultants on an as-needed basis</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>I have an established relationship with a marketing consultant/specialist</b>	<b>13%</b>
<b>I don't do any marketing</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>I sign up for services and promotions on an ad hoc basis as they come up</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>I contract with a marketing agency</b>	<b>0%</b>

Clearly, life coaches are collectively very capable people, which is something of a prerequisite for being a life coach in the first place. The question is whether they are as capable at marketing as a marketing specialist would be. Asked more directly, would hiring a focused marketing professional produce more client revenue than the cost of hiring the professional?

It would be interesting to correlate the answers to Question 2 about whether they have all the clients they need with whether they work with a marketing professional. Unfortunately, correlations are outside the scope of this study. This is a question worth further investigation in future studies.

## Question 10: What kind of online marketing tools do you use?

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Unfortunately, the survey was misconfigured on this question for some of the respondents so as to allow only one answer when multiple answers should have been allowed. The configuration was changed part way through testing period, allowing multiple answers for most respondents. Nevertheless, results should be considered suspect (particularly in combination with the overall small sample size).

However, the results are consistent with the results of the Question 9, indicating that life coaches do manage their own marketing activities and utilize the basic marketing tools to do so. As with other questions, there appears to be a group of approximately 20% who get all their business through referrals only and who don't do any form of marketing at all.

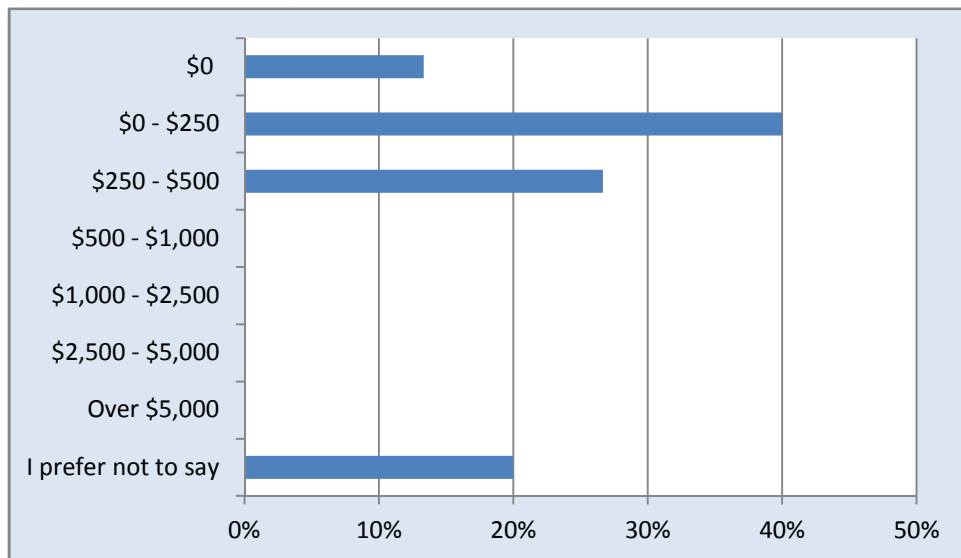
Content management system (e.g. Wordpress, Joomla, Kajabi)	67%
Email marketing system (e.g. MailChimp, Constant Contact)	60%
Social media automation (e.g. HootSuite, TweetDeck, Social Oomph)	47%
Analytics (e.g. Google Analytics)	33%
Keyword research (e.g. KeywordSpy, SpyFu, Moz)	20%
None. I don't do any online marketing.	20%
Customer management system (e.g. InfusionSoft, aWeber, Zoho CRM)	13%
I'm not sure. My marketing person handles that.	0%

The tools used correspond with marketing channels coaches said they use most frequently. And coaches again confirmed that they generally manage their own marketing by the fact that none said they weren't sure about what tools they used.

So while the actual percentages may not be accurate, the conclusion seems clear: life coaches currently manage their own marketing efforts.

### Question 11: What is your average monthly marketing budget?

Perhaps one reason life coaches are able to handle all of their own marketing is because they do very little of it. Every respondent that was willing to answer this question reported spending less than \$500/month on marketing, with the largest percentage spending under \$250/month.

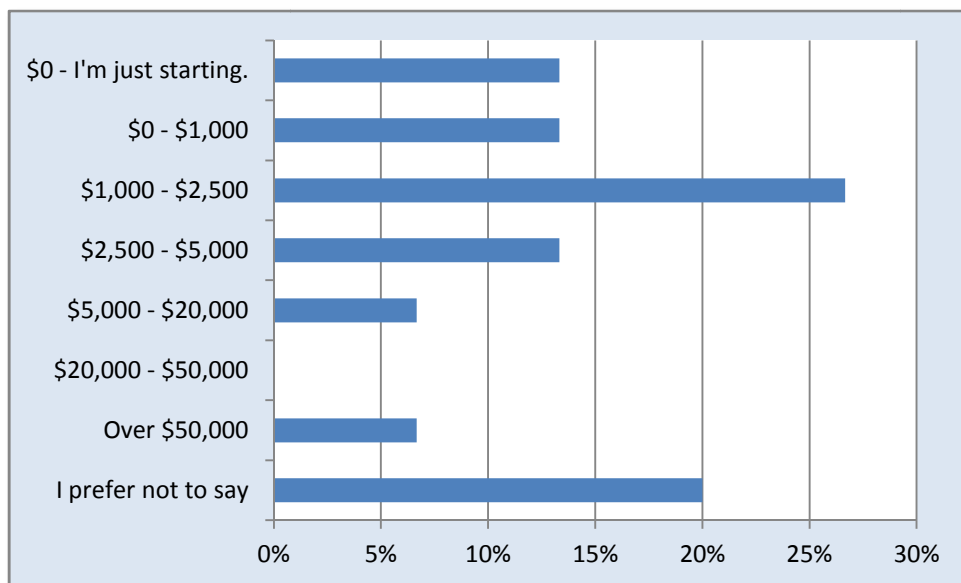


Given these figures and the data produced before a clearer picture of the online marketing field is beginning to emerge. Life coaches are paying for websites and a few basic online marketing tools such as email marketing, social media management, etc. They get listed on a directory, probably Noomii, and work the social networks to drive traffic to their website where they provide various types of content to engage prospects. A smaller percentage of life coaches utilize the search engines either through SEO efforts or through pay per click advertising. The next question sheds light on the effectiveness of that approach.

## Question 12: What is your average monthly income from life coaching?

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The average income for respondents correlates roughly with the marketing budget as it is skewed toward the lower end of the income bracket.



Two thirds of the respondents who were willing to answer this question reported earning less than \$2500/month from their life coaching business. As that is basically a poverty level income, obviously most coaches are operating their life coaching practice as a side project and/or are just getting their practice started. Only two of the respondents reported earning an income that would be considered lucrative, and of those, it seems likely that the person who answered 'Over \$50,000' probably misread the question and thought it was asking for an annual income.

Clearly there is a correlation between low marketing spending and low income. But the question for life coaches is no doubt 'which comes first: the chicken or the egg?' Would life coaches generate enough revenue from increased marketing effort to pay for that marketing effort in a timely fashion? Or should they wait for revenues to increase and fund marketing out of profits?

## Question 13: What obstacles prevent you from getting all the clients you need?

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We must point out the irony that the top answer for why life coaches aren't getting all the clients they need is "I'm not sure". It just goes to show that life coaches are right there in the soup with the rest of us!

We also see that the next two main challenges are the same old issues that life coaches probably hear from their clients on a daily basis: Time and Money.



That next highest response is yet another universal obstacle for people in any field: lack of knowledge, which is of course a function of the lack of time and money.

What life coaches don't seem to lack to any great extent are credential, experience, testimonials, material, or social connections. In other words, they are ready to deliver the goods but their own marketing efforts have not been providing the clients to whom to deliver those goods.

# Summary

This survey captured responses from 15 life coaches who responded to a request to complete the survey with the promise of a full report on what marketing practices work. Given the small sample size, the fact that the population was self-selected, and the fact that the incentive itself might have biased the sample toward people who are more in need of help with marketing, it is definitely possible that this survey does not provide an accurate portrayal of the overall life coaching business. We think further study is warranted.

Nevertheless, the results seem reasonable and internally consistent, so it is also likely that it provides a reasonable approximation of life coaches marketing practices and provides useful information.

Though life coaches advise their clients in how to advance their own lives, the results of this survey suggest that life coaches themselves are generally not prospering. They are operating on very limited marketing budgets and managing their own marketing efforts while simultaneously providing life coaching services to clients and, we would assume, working a second job or gig to augment their income.

Life coaches are fairly savvy about online marketing strategies and tools, but lack the time and money to truly leverage that knowledge. Furthermore, although they probably know much more about marketing than the average business person, they do recognize a significant gap in their knowledge about marketing as well.

Like many of the people they coach, life coaches find themselves in a ‘chicken or egg’ scenario in which they aren’t sure whether they should invest money in marketing in hopes of increasing revenue or wait to generate the money and then only spend the excess money they can afford on more marketing. Life coaches would no doubt benefit from a pay-for-performance marketing strategy that would allow them to pay only for highly qualified leads rather than paying for marketing programs that may or may not bear fruit.

Life coaches would probably benefit by following advice that they obviously give to their clients: to hire a professional to assist you in those areas that you lack experience and are unclear about which path to take.