Where the growth actually is

An opportunity map for a coaching practice that has the credentials and not the pipeline.

Growth Audit · two hours remote, written deliverable · prepared for an executive coach in independent practice · irons | design, Los Angeles

THE FINDING

You are winning the wrong game beautifully

You told me your clients come 80% from a pay-per-lead marketplace and 20% from your website. That single sentence reorganizes every other question in this report.

A pay-per-lead marketplace works like this. A consumer posts a request, and the platform sells that introduction to as many as five professionals at once. You pay to contact, not to win. The competition is on response speed and price.

You have a doctorate in progress at a major research university, you teach leadership at a nationally known institution, and you have coached roughly 300 people. On the marketplace, none of that is visible at the moment of decision. You are competing on who replies fastest.

> **The market you want cannot reach you through the channel you use.** HR and learning-and-development departments do not source executive coaches on a consumer marketplace. They source through referral, internal vendor lists, and people who have already run a program somewhere adjacent. Four out of five of your clients arrive through a door your intended buyer never walks through.

There is also a risk here that has nothing to do with growth. Four fifths of your revenue depends on a platform that sets its own prices, lead volume and ranking rules, and can change any of them next quarter.

300	0	80%	6
clients coached	testimonials on your website	of clients from a rented channel	buttons linking to the page they are on

THE MAP

Nine opportunities, ranked

Ranked by return against effort. The right-hand column matters most: it says who has to do the work. Roughly half of this cannot be bought from anyone, at any price, because it requires you.

#	OPPORTUNITY	WHY IT RANKS HERE	WHO
1	**Testimonials from past clients**	Three hundred people have worked with you and not one is quoted anywhere. Free, fast, and it unblocks four other items on this list.	You only
2	**The corporate-sponsor bridge**	Some of those 300 had an employer pay the invoice. Those people are your route to HR, and it costs an email.	You only
3	**Fix the conversion leak**	Every consultation button on your site links to the page it is already on. The 20% who arrive have to hunt for the form.	Build
4	**A page for organizational buyers**	Your site speaks only to the person being coached. The person spending a department budget has nowhere to land.	Build
5	**Google Business Profile**	The local pack sits above organic results, it is free to claim, and reviews drive it. You have 300 potential reviewers.	Free
6	**Site structure for search**	One page can rank for one intent. Separate routes per service give Google something to index.	Build
7	**Entity and schema markup**	Your university and teaching affiliations are invisible to machines. Structured data connects them to your domain.	Build

#	OPPORTUNITY	WHY IT RANKS HERE	WHO
8	**Scope, price, and measurement**	A corporate buyer who cannot get a number cannot open a requisition. They pick whoever gave them one.	You only
9	**Content from teaching material**	You already write and deliver this material. Publishing it is transcription, not creation.	You only

OPPORTUNITY ONE

The proof you already earned

This is the highest-return item on the list and it costs nothing but asking. Three hundred completed engagements, and zero quotations anywhere on your website.

For comparison, the agency currently quoting you has two named testimonials with photographs and a fraction of your credentials. That gap is not a design problem or a ranking problem.

How to do it this week

1. Pull your client list for the last three years. Mark the ones whose company paid.
2. Email fifteen. Ask for three or four sentences on what changed, and for permission to use their name, title and employer.
3. Offer to draft something they can edit. Most people say yes to editing and no to writing.
4. In the same message, ask the corporate ones whether they would take a reference call.
5. Ask all of them to leave a Google review. Same email, two assets.

The logo question, before you build anything. Your site currently shows three well-known corporate and government logos as cropped screenshots. If those are the employers of people you coached privately, rather than organizations that retained you, that is a sentence, not a logo wall. A procurement reader who works out the difference stops believing the rest of the page, and the rest of the page is excellent.

OPPORTUNITY TWO

The reader who isn't there

Every word on your current site addresses the person being coached. Become the strongest version of yourself. Let me help you get where you want to go.

The buyer you described is a different person. They are spending a department budget on someone else's development and they are answerable for the choice. They need engagement scope, what a 360 program costs and how long it runs, prior organizational clients, references, and a route through vendor approval.

None of that exists on your site today. This is the single largest structural gap between what you have and what you said you want.

OPPORTUNITY THREE

Search, in the right order

Search is worth doing. It is not worth doing first, and it is not worth doing as a monthly retainer before the machine it maintains exists.

Ranking first for executive coach delivers individuals looking for a coach for themselves. That is the same customer the marketplace sells you, sourced more cheaply. Real improvement to your margins, no change in altitude.

Structure comes before optimization

A single page can rank for a single intent. Separate routes for executive coaching, 360 feedback reviews, team coaching, organizations and about give Google something to index, and give each page one job. This is a build task, once, not a retainer.

Google Business Profile is the free lever nobody mentioned

For a service professional, the local pack appears above the organic results. Claiming the profile costs nothing. Reviews are the ranking factor, and the same fifteen emails from opportunity one produce them.

Your advantage is entity, not keywords

Google weights author credibility heavily on advice topics, and it keeps a graph of real-world entities. Your university department page, your teaching, and any publications are not connected to your domain in any way a machine can read.

Person schema with sameAs links to those profiles, plus service and FAQ markup, is a one-time job that almost no competing coach has bothered with. Being genuinely who you are counts for nothing until you are in the register.

Content only you can write

The head terms belong to the large coaching platforms and to directories with domain authority you will not match. What you can win is the long tail attached to your expertise: what a 360 review actually involves, how to tell whether a leader needs coaching or a different role, what the research says about delivering feedback.

You teach this material already. The marginal cost is transcription.

The technical floor

Unique titles and meta descriptions per route, one H1 per page, semantic headings, a sitemap, canonicals, alt text, and Core Web Vitals. Your site is currently on a hosted site builder with a copyright three years stale and nothing added in that time, so there is nothing to rank even if someone were optimizing it.

> **What this means for the quote you are considering.** Roughly four fifths of the work above is either one-time build or things only you can produce. A monthly SEO retainer is maintenance on a machine that does not exist yet. Whoever you hire, the shape to ask for is the build once, plus a written procedure for running it, then reassess in six months with data rather than a projection.

SEQUENCE

Ninety days, in the order that compounds

WHEN	WHAT	WHY IT GOES HERE
Week 1	Email 15 past clients. Testimonials, reference permission, Google reviews. Claim the Google Business Profile.	Nothing else can be built well without proof, and this is the only item with a two-month lead time you cannot compress.
Weeks 2–3	Answer the four questions only you can answer: logo provenance,	These are copy blockers. Every page waits on them.

WHEN	WHAT	WHY IT GOES HERE
	credential, 360 scope and price, how you measure success.	
Weeks 3–6	Build the site: five routes, working calls to action, the organizations page, schema, technical floor.	Now there is something true to put on it.
Weeks 6–8	Publish the first three pieces from your teaching material. Set up the review request as a standing step after every engagement.	Turns proof collection from a project into a process.
Weeks 8–12	Work the sponsor list. Ask for introductions to the people who hold the development budget.	This is the actual route to the room, and it runs on the relationships from week one.

HONEST LIMITS

What this report does not know

No traffic data

We had not seen the analytics, Search Console, or marketplace spend. Every priority here is reasoned from structure, not measured from your numbers.

No forecast

There is no projection of rankings, traffic or revenue anywhere in this document, because anyone offering one before seeing your data is guessing.

No buyer research yet

The language your corporate buyers actually use should come from your own past sponsors, not from us. That interview is a real step and it has not happened.

The agency is competent

Their portfolio runs to dozens of case studies including consultants close to your business, and the work looks good. The question is sequence and price, not capability.

Sources: the client's live site, the competing agency's site, the marketplace's published seller terms, and what the client told us directly about where his clients come from.

> Redaction note: the client's name, domain, institutions and client logos have been changed or removed for publication. Everything else, including every number, is the document as delivered.