

A full-page background image showing a hiker standing on the peak of a rocky mountain. The hiker is silhouetted against a warm, orange-hued sky at sunset or sunrise. The mountain's surface is covered in dark rocks and patches of dry, yellowish grass. The overall mood is one of achievement and reaching a summit.

COMPARING BUSINESS COACHING PLATFORMS: A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO CHOOSING YOUR NEXT DESTINATION

How experienced leaders like you can expertly explore franchise systems, flexible coaching networks, and solo practice.



STEP 1: WHY THIS DECISION DESERVES A DEEPER LOOK

The next steps are in front of you, but if you're reading this, you're likely at an inflection point.

You know you're ready to help leadership teams grow. Maybe you've already

been doing it informally as an executive, consultant, or facilitator. Maybe you've been working with another coaching system. What's for sure is you're considering a change.

What changes you decide to make next will shape:

- Your income and financial risk.
- Your level of autonomy and control.
- How you spend your time day-to-day.
- The kind of clients and work you say “yes” and “no” to.
- How easy or hard it will be to change paths later

With all this in mind, you deserve more than hype or a slick sales pitch. You deserve a clear view of your options.

Which is what this guide will do. Created by experts who've been in your shoes, it is designed to help you:

- Understand the main types of coaching business models on the market.
- Ask the questions that matter most to your future self.
- Spot red flags and green flags across programs.
- Compare franchise models, flexible coaching networks, and solo practice.
- Make a confident decision about where you belong next.

Whether you ultimately choose a franchise-style system, a flexible network like Pinnacle, or a solo path, our goal is simple:

HELP YOU MAKE THE RIGHT DECISION FOR YOU.

STEP 2: THE THREE MAIN BUSINESS MODELS FOR COACHES

While there are many brands and frameworks for coaches, most fall into three basic business models:

- 1. Model A: Franchise-Style / Highly Prescribed Systems Think:**
Strong single brand, tight playbook, tight contracts and rigid rules.
- 2. Model B: Flexible Coaching Networks / Methodologies Think:**
Shared methodology and community, but more autonomy and flexibility.
- 3. Model C: Independent Solo Practice Think:**
Fully build-your-own; you own everything, create everything and are on your own.

LET'S TAKE A HIGH-LEVEL LOOK

Model A: Franchise-Style, Highly Prescribed System

This system offers the least flexibility and tightest framework..

What this usually looks like for you:

- You sign a multi-year agreement with upfront and ongoing fees.
- You commit to primarily (or exclusively) using their framework, tools, and brand.
- Marketing, positioning, and language are tightly controlled to maintain consistency.
- You get a proven playbook and brand recognition, but you're expected to "color inside the lines."

Best for:

- Professionals who want a strong brand and a highly structured way of working.
- People who prefer a clear, step-by-step method over customizing their own approach.
- Those comfortable operating as a franchisee of a larger system.

Watch for:

- Long, complex contracts with restrictive non-compete or non-solicitation clauses.
- Limited flexibility to integrate other tools, frameworks, or your own IP.
- A culture that subtly (or explicitly) says "this is the one right way."
- A focus on getting you certified and branded, but is less supportive after Year 1.

Model B: Flexible Coaching Networks / Methodologies

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A FRAMEWORK THAT FLEXES WITH YOU

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Model B: Flexible Coaching Networks / Methodologies

This hybrid system is where Pinnacle sits.

What this usually looks like for you:

- You join a community of experienced coaches who share a common methodology and toolset.
- You are not a franchisee; you operate your own independent practice under your own business.
- You use a structured framework, but you have real latitude to adapt, integrate other tools, and design engagements that fit your clients.
- You have access to a peer community, training, and ongoing support without being locked into a highly prescriptive model.

Best for:

- Experienced executives, consultants, or coaches who want both structure and creativity.
- People who value autonomy and entrepreneurship, but don't want to reinvent the wheel.
- Coaches who want to integrate multiple frameworks and tailor their approach.

Watch for:

- Networks that talk a lot about community but offer little practical support for business development.
- Lack of clarity about how you will actually find and close clients.
- Methodologies that are too loose or "anything goes," making it harder to differentiate your value.

Model C: Independent Solo Practice

This is where you build the brand of you almost exclusively alone.

What this usually looks like:

- You build everything yourself: your brand, your messaging, your tools, your process.
- You may borrow ideas, but there is no shared framework or certification.
- Every part of your business (content, sales, delivery, operations) is on your shoulders.

Best for:

- Highly entrepreneurial, self-starting individuals who want total freedom.
- People who already have a strong personal brand and pipeline of potential clients.
- Coaches who enjoy designing frameworks and IP from scratch.

Watch for:

- Isolation and lack of peer support when things get hard.
- Underestimating how much time and energy it takes to build both a methodology and a business.
- Difficulty differentiating yourself in a crowded market without a recognizable system.



STEP 3: 10 AREAS TO QUESTION EVERY PROGRAM ABOUT (INCLUDING US)

No matter which model you're considering, these questions will help you see beneath their hood.

You can also use these questions as a one-page scorecard to help evaluate every program you research, including Pinnacle.

1. Financial Model and Transparency. Ask:

- What are the upfront and ongoing costs?
- What does a realistic Year 1 and Year 2 P&L look like for a typical coach?

2. Client Generation Support. Ask:

- How do coaches typically find their first 3–5 clients?
- What specific marketing/sales support do you provide beyond generic advice?

3. Flexibility vs. Prescription. Ask:

- How much freedom do I have to adapt tools or integrate other frameworks?
- Are there activities that are off-limits (other consulting, speaking, IP creation)?

4. Methodology and Tool Depth. Ask:

- How comprehensive and battle-tested is the toolset?
- Can I see a meaningful sample before I commit?

5. Training and Certification. Ask:

- How long does it take to become fully capable of delivering the system with clients?
- What kind of practice, feedback, and evaluation will I receive?

6. Ongoing Support Structure. Ask:

- What support will I receive after initial certification or onboarding?
- When I get stuck with a client, who can I call?

7. Community and Peer Learning. Ask:

- How active and engaged is the coach community?
- How often will I be with peers in meaningful ways (not just on an email list)?

8. Selection Standards. Ask:

- How do you decide who to accept into the program?
- Do you ever say “no” to applicants because they’re not a fit?

9. Values and Culture. Ask:

- What behaviors are encouraged and rewarded in this community?
- How do you handle conflict, disagreement, or misalignment?

10. Exit Terms and Flexibility

- If I decide to leave, what are the implications?
- What restrictions will I face on continuing to coach, using tools, or serving clients?

Use these questions in your conversations. Any program that hesitates to answer clearly is not giving you important information, while at the same time telling you a lot about them.



STEP 4: RED FLAGS TO WATCH FOR

As your talks progress with different organizations, pay attention to these warning signs:

High-pressure sales tactics

- “You have to sign by Friday or you’ll miss your chance.”
- “Real leaders don’t hesitate.”

Lack of transparency

- They won’t let you see any real tools or materials until after you’ve paid.
- They give vague, hand-wavy answers to questions about income ranges, costs, or contracts.

Complex, restrictive contracts

- They have very long agreements that are hard to understand.
- There are strong non-competes and non-solicits that could limit your future options.

Limited access to leadership

- You only speak with sales reps, never with experienced coaches or leaders.

- Their current coaches are hard to reach or carefully screened for you.

Promises that sound too good to be true

- Overly rosy income claims without realistic ranges or timelines.
- Zero mention of the real challenges of building a practice.

If you encounter any of these, slow down. Ask more questions. Get outside perspectives. And consider having an attorney review any agreements before you sign.

STEP 5: GREEN FLAGS, HEALTHY SIGNS

On the positive side, look for:

Honest conversations about trade-offs

- They acknowledge pros and cons of their own model.
- They're willing to say, "We might not be the right fit for you."

Transparent financials

- They can walk you through realistic income ranges and timelines.
- They're clear about all fees and costs, upfront and ongoing.

Access to real coaches

- They encourage you to talk with current coaches without over-scripting the interaction.
- You hear consistent themes and not just "everything is perfect."

Strong, values-driven community

- Coaches describe real peer relationships and support.
- There is evidence of collaboration, not just competition.

Respect for your autonomy

- They treat you as an experienced professional making a serious decision.
- They respect your timeline and encourage due diligence.
- If you encounter any of these, you're likely heading in the right direction.

STEP 6: A SIMPLE SCORECARD TO COMPARE OPTIONS

A simple scoring process can help you move from a "gut feel" to a clearer comparison. A simple way to do this is to:

1. List your options

- Program 1: Franchise-style system.
- Program 2: Flexible network (e.g., Pinnacle).
- Program 3: Solo practice.
- (Add any other specific programs you're exploring.)

1. Choose your top 8–10 criteria

- Criteria examples: financial model, client generation support, flexibility, community, exit terms.

3. Score each option on each criterion (1–5) 1 = Poor; 5 = Excellent.

- Use what you learn from conversations and materials, not just impressions.

4. Look at both the total and the pattern

- Total scores can be helpful, but patterns matter more.
- Notice where each option is particularly strong or weak for you.
- To make it even easier for you, we've created a simple, one-page scorecard you can use with any program you're considering, including Pinnacle. Just click here: (Insert link or instructions for the scorecard here.)

STEP 7: HOW TO DECIDE WITH CONFIDENCE

You're making a big decision. It's okay to take all the time you need until you're confident enough to move forward.

To do so, here's a process many successful coaches have followed:

1. Explore multiple models intentionally

- Talk with at least one franchise-style system, at least one flexible network, and at least one solo/independent coach who's built their own practice.

2. Use the same questions and scorecard with each

- Don't let any program define the conversation entirely.
- Bring your own framework (like the 10 questions above).

3. Talk to current coaches in each system

- Ask what surprised them, good and bad.
- Ask what they would do differently if they could decide again.

4. Check the alignment with your goals and lifestyle, such as:

- Income targets.
- Travel and time away from home.
- Type of clients and work.
- The kind of community you want to be part of.

5. Give yourself 1–3 months to decide

- Don't rush to meet someone else's deadline.
- This decision is too important to hastily make on impulse.

WHERE PINNACLE FITS, AND HOW WE APPROACH THE CONVERSATION

Pinnacle is a flexible coaching network built by experienced guides who wanted:

- A deep, practical methodology that works in the real world.
- Freedom to tailor tools to each client and integrate other frameworks where appropriate.
- A true peer community of experienced business leaders.
- A values-driven culture that balances ambition with humility.

We believe the flexible model is the best fit for many experienced leaders who want both structure and autonomy. But we also know:

- Some people truly thrive in a franchise-style environment.
- Some are better suited to building a completely independent solo practice.

Our job is not to “close” you. Our job is to help you see clearly. Which starts with a conversation.

NEXT STEP: What a Pinnacle discovery call looks like

If you’re exploring your options, here’s what you can expect from a Pinnacle discovery conversation:

- A two-way fit conversation, definitely not a hard sell.
- Honest discussion of the trade-offs between franchise, flexible, and solo models.
- Clear answers to your questions about income, support, flexibility, and exit options.
- Transparency about who tends to thrive in our system, and who might be better served elsewhere.

If you’d like to explore whether Pinnacle is the right home for you as a coach, we’d be honored to talk.

And if, after using this guide, you choose a different path, we’ll still consider this a success, because you’ll be moving forward with your eyes open and your values intact.

