

## The Self-Assured Certification Candidate: Avenues to Confidence on Exam Day

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The weeks leading up to my exam are crystalline in my mind. I had a vague feeling of discomfort for what seemed like a *long* time. In fact, as the day approached, my anxiety rose steadily. It struck me that this feeling was very much like the one people typically feel right before stepping on a stage to perform: they know they're prepared, but they *don't* know what will unfold in any given moment.

After twenty years as a musician and educator (in a previous life), I have a lot of experience performing – singing, speaking, conducting. In the music world, people generally agree that thorough preparation usually involves several key things:

- each performer knowing the material (in this case, the music) inside-out
- each performer having confidence in his or her skills as a musician
- a quality rehearsal process which provides abundant and qualified feedback to the performers as they prepare

Looking back, preparing for the CPCC exam really paralleled the process of getting ready for a performance in many ways. After all, what will make you feel confident and ready as you go into the exam?

- having the benefit of relevant experience, and feeling comfortable with the exam material
- having a solid foundation of skills from foundational training
- benefiting from abundant and qualified feedback while preparing for the exam

Most people feel fairly secure on the second point, and have had at least a modest amount of experience which addresses the first. The third point, however, can be tricky.

After talking to a number of coaches, I found that there are two things they consistently wish they had gotten more of as they prepared for the exam and got their coaching businesses off the ground:

### Qualified Feedback

While I got good *quality* feedback during the certification program, I just didn't feel that I had gotten *enough* of it as the exam approached. Admittedly, part of that was my inner critic, to be sure – but part of it *wasn't*: I got occasional feedback from my pod leader during calls, and I had three chances to hear my supervisor's thoughts on my work. Beyond that, though, most of the constructive criticism I got was from my pod-mates. And as well-intentioned (and even knowledgeable) as these people were, they just didn't have sufficient experience to help me see where I needed to focus my efforts.

What was lacking was more time with someone who had been through the certification process – someone who had experience evaluating and assessing coaches, and could:

- a. give me accurate above- and below-the-line feedback
- b. help me identify the areas of my coaching that deserved the most attention

While my coach (a CPCC) was helpful in these respects, I still found myself wanting additional viewpoints on what was working well and what still needed work.

## Mentoring

The certification program goes a long way toward preparing a coach in terms of the exam objectives themselves. Many coaches, though, find themselves looking for a mentor to help them get started *working* as a coach in the real world. Sometimes, they need a sounding board for a new business idea (why reinvent the wheel?). Maybe they need help figuring out how to keep business records, get a website going, or just knowing “what works” and “what doesn’t.”

Help in both of these areas can be a bit of a challenge to find (without hiring a full stable of coaches!). A year or two after finishing certification, a group of us who had been through the certification process decided that something had to be done, so in the spirit of “being the change we wanted to see,” we created the [Coaching Tree](#). The way we have structured our offerings has allowed us the opportunity to give each client a *variety* of viewpoints on their coaching, since they work with two coaches in each preparation session.

Since 2005, when we began this venture, we’ve seen some other coaches and groups beginning to serve this population as well, and this is encouraging. For those of you who wish to feel consummately prepared for a career as a coach, or get the sense that something’s still missing in your training: you owe it to yourself (with all the precious resources you’ve invested in this journey) to get the thorough and effective support you will need as you get your business and career off the ground!

**Ariadne Moisiades, PCC, CPCC** is co-founder of [Coaching Tree](#), where she works with coaches in training, as well as coaches in certification programs. Acting both as coach and mentor, she helps them hone their coaching skills and build thriving businesses. She also founded [Sound Strategies Coaching and Consulting](#), where she works with female executives looking to develop exceptional leadership skills and foster a collaborative team environment. In addition, she has completed the Center for Right Relationship’s training curriculum in Organization and Relationship Systems Coaching (ORSC). For more information on how Coaching Tree can help you navigate coach training and certification, download our free article, [Top 10 Ways to Avoid Heartache During Coach Training and Certification](#).

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