

Transforming MBA Coaching at Haas School of Business

with the Group Coaching HQ Certification



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Coaches Information

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Current Role & Affiliation with MBA Program: Career Coaches

Years of Coaching Experience: Julia: 6, Linda: 9 at Haas and 15+ over all

Certification Completion Date: 5/9/24

Background & Context

Julia Rosof has been at Haas School of Business for over 11 years, initially working in the program office supporting student leadership and events. She transitioned into career coaching 6 years ago, driven by her passion for student-facing work.

Julia works primarily with full-time MBA students and has a deep understanding of the student experience, which she brought with her when joining the coaching team.

Linda Yach has been at Haas for over 9 years, and has 15+ years of coaching experience. She supports the working professional programs, including evening and weekend students, executive MBAs and alumni. Before Haas, she worked in the corporate legal world.

Linda and Julia are part of a core team of approximately 15 coaches, including adjuncts. The team is integrated into the MBA experience at Haas, with coaching available at no cost across various stages of the student journey, including post-graduation.

They support a broad range of students and alumni, across the ages of 25-60 from the US and internationally. These students cross all industries and functions and are referenced in 4 categories: explorers, pivoters, advancers, entrepreneurs. Students are coached on topics ranging from career pivots to interview prep.

Main challenges faced in coaching MBA students before completing the Group Coaching HQ certification

In the Fall of 2023, the coaching team at Haas was facing a few specific challenges:

- **Capacity:** “Very few coaches for many students!”, as described by Linda. Their core team consists of ten core coaches, and 3-5 adjuncts depending on the time of year.
- **Lack of a shared context among participants:** The first group program was intended for individuals who had recently graduated and were beginning their post-MBA careers, but some participants had been in a job for 10 years, making it difficult to facilitate relevant and cohesive discussions.
- **Finding the right facilitation balance:** Julia described being either “too directive and talking too much,” or “too hands off,” leaving participants unsure of the purpose or flow of the session. These experiences underscored the need for structure, clarity, and training in how to manage group dynamics effectively.
- **Managing group dynamics:** The lack of specific techniques to help manage situations such as participants showing resistance.
- **Engagement:** It was difficult to get students to engage in peer coaching.



Together, Julia and Linda’s reflections highlighted the need to increase coaching capacity for the team, as well as the need for structural frameworks and tactical tools, engagement, group dynamics, and participant alignment. Those challenges led them to pursue formal group coaching training.

Choosing the Group Coaching HQ Certification

Julia and Linda mentioned that part of the motivation for pursuing a group coach training came from past experiences running group sessions and struggling with the challenges highlighted above. It also stemmed from an institutional directive to implement group coaching as a way to impact more students, as well as Julia and Linda's own desire to handle group dynamics more skillfully, grow beyond individual coaching, and engage with a structured, practical certification offering tools and opportunities to learn by doing.

There was a readiness to deepen learning, having reached a point where they were gaining mastery in one-on-one coaching. Julia shared: "This just felt like such a great way to expand and deepen my skill set."

Julia's motivation was solidified when she discovered Group Coaching HQ online and explored the materials and videos on the website. "That really helped me start to realize what group coaching could be."

The two were further drawn to join Group Coaching HQ's 12-Week, ICF-accredited certification program by the opportunity to learn and practice in community with a group of other qualified coaches.

Specific aspects of the certification that stood out

For both Julia and Linda, the structure, process and frameworks were key attributes of the program. In particular, the group matching process stood out and they had learned a significant lesson about the importance of clearly filtering participants and setting expectations from the start.

Linda and Julia also appreciated the resources provided by Group Coaching HQ, including visiting coaches who modeled different approaches, allowing participants to see these different styles of coaching from a participant or observer standpoint.

They described the Group Coaching HQ Certification Program as "the perfect mix of lecture and experiential learning", acknowledging that practicing in front of others felt uncomfortable at times, but that was the way to start learning and diving in.

According to Julia, “what made the experience especially unique was that “while it was a class, it was definitely a group... and it was a cohort that the instructors were leading.” That setup created opportunities to apply what was being taught in real time. “It was a little meta!”

Linda spoke of the the way instructors held space for the group and made sure everyone felt safe sharing.

The Haas coaches also appreciated learning alongside a wide range of coaches as there were many people from different walks of coaching life. This allowed for learning to come not only from the teachers and the experts, but also from the other students in the room.

The Impact of Certification

How the certification changed their approach to group coaching

In September 2024, Julia implemented a new program at Haas, and described a dramatic shift in approach after completing the Group Coaching HQ certification. “It was night and day.” She shared that she felt much more equipped: “I knew how to handle challenging dynamics. I knew how to structure the sessions effectively. I put more emphasis on building psychological safety. I just had a better understanding of my role.”

One of the most meaningful aspects for her was how Group Coaching HQ’s certification sessions became a space for learning in real time. “After every session, I walked away with this grab bag of ideas, tactics, activities I could try out.”

Though it was a lot to manage the certification while leading a group, she shared that her second program became a playground for experimentation and trying the new techniques she was learning in real time.



She also became more thoughtful and intentional about group formation. While the team at Haas doesn't have the bandwidth to talk to every single student who applies, they have refined their application process and have a better sense of what constitutes a flag for students with whom a conversation or an email would be helpful.

Skills or techniques that have been the most valuable in their coaching practice

Engagement: One of the most impactful skills developed in the certification program was learning exercises to help people engage. Early experiences asking a powerful coaching question resulted in "blank stares," especially with their population! After the Group Coaching HQ Certification Program, there was a shift towards using "an elegant tactic for getting people to share."

Developing Participants' Coaching Skills: Another key skill acquired was building participants' peer coaching skills, including techniques and exercises to help participants practice coming up with questions, which was "really powerful" in early sessions and helped build foundational group coaching capabilities.

Structuring for Impact: They also reported having learned to be more intentional in how to structure sessions, especially focusing on how to open and close them.

Facilitation: Beyond coaching groups, they applied many of these same strategies to workshop facilitation. For example, Julia began incorporating the use of chat more actively and used small but effective tactics that helped foster participation and connection.

"There were so many people from different walks of coaching life that I got to learn from the caliber and quality of the participants. I felt like I was learning, not just from the teachers and the experts, but from the other students in the room."

-Linda



Impact on the MBA Coaching Program

Changes implemented in the MBA coaching program after certification

Julia and Linda shared that there was not only interest but “a directive to bring group coaching to the full-time MBA population.” Up until that point, group coaching had only been implemented with alumni, which served as a better place of like learning and piloting.



Building on that foundation, a team of 3 coaches started working on a three-session group coaching engagement for students who had just graduated and were looking for a job.

The aim of the new group coaching program was to help these recent graduates move to a space of having more agency, and taking more ownership of how they were showing up in the process.

As a result of the certification, Linda and Julia also shifted how they market and set expectations for their group coaching programs.



How the MBA program leadership or fellow coaches responded to these changes

Haas' Career Management Team is now planning to implement group coaching to student populations beyond alumni. There has been a lot of interest in what the coaches who took the Group Coaching HQ Certification program have been learning.



There is curiosity and engagement from fellow coaches, especially as Julia and Linda were able to apply what they had learned in real time. Julia shared the following: "When I was running my group and I experimented with something that I learned in the Group Coaching HQ Certification Program, there was a desire to hear about why I was doing what I was doing and to understand both tactically and strategically."

Student Outcomes & Experience

How the MBA students have benefited from group coaching

The team had intentionally encouraged people in their last group to apply as friend groups, and even among close peers, the group coaching experience deepened relationships. Students shared in feedback forms that this approach created stronger connections.

Julia recalled two participants who were close friends saying things like: "I have two best friends in the group, and the group coaching allowed for conversations that we don't have outside."

In addition, students learned coaching skills that they apply at work. Participants began trying to adopt a coaching mindset and gained increased confidence in making changes and advocating for themselves at work.

Finally, students attained a better understanding of their own trajectory: "From the start of the group to the end, people had more clarity about what they wanted in this phase of their career and... more ideas about how to go after what they want."



Lessons Learned & Best Practices



"I loved the ton of resources, including the visiting coaches, because you also got to see frameworks and how they did it. Then we got to practice: Watching or doing it ourselves. So I think the variety and the expansiveness of all of the resources and tools was amazing."

-Linda

Key lessons about group coaching in an MBA program setting

Building Momentum Early: One of the biggest lessons Julia emphasized was the importance of building momentum early in the program. To support that, the team structured the program to meet more frequently at the start, then shifted to a once-a-month cadence.

Ownership: Another powerful engagement tool Julia identified was "laser-targeted peer coaching." She described how participants "can't decide if they love being coached more or coaching others more!" This, she noted, helped them really shift into ownership mode, a key leadership skill. As Linda noted: "You have to own your career... own your choices."

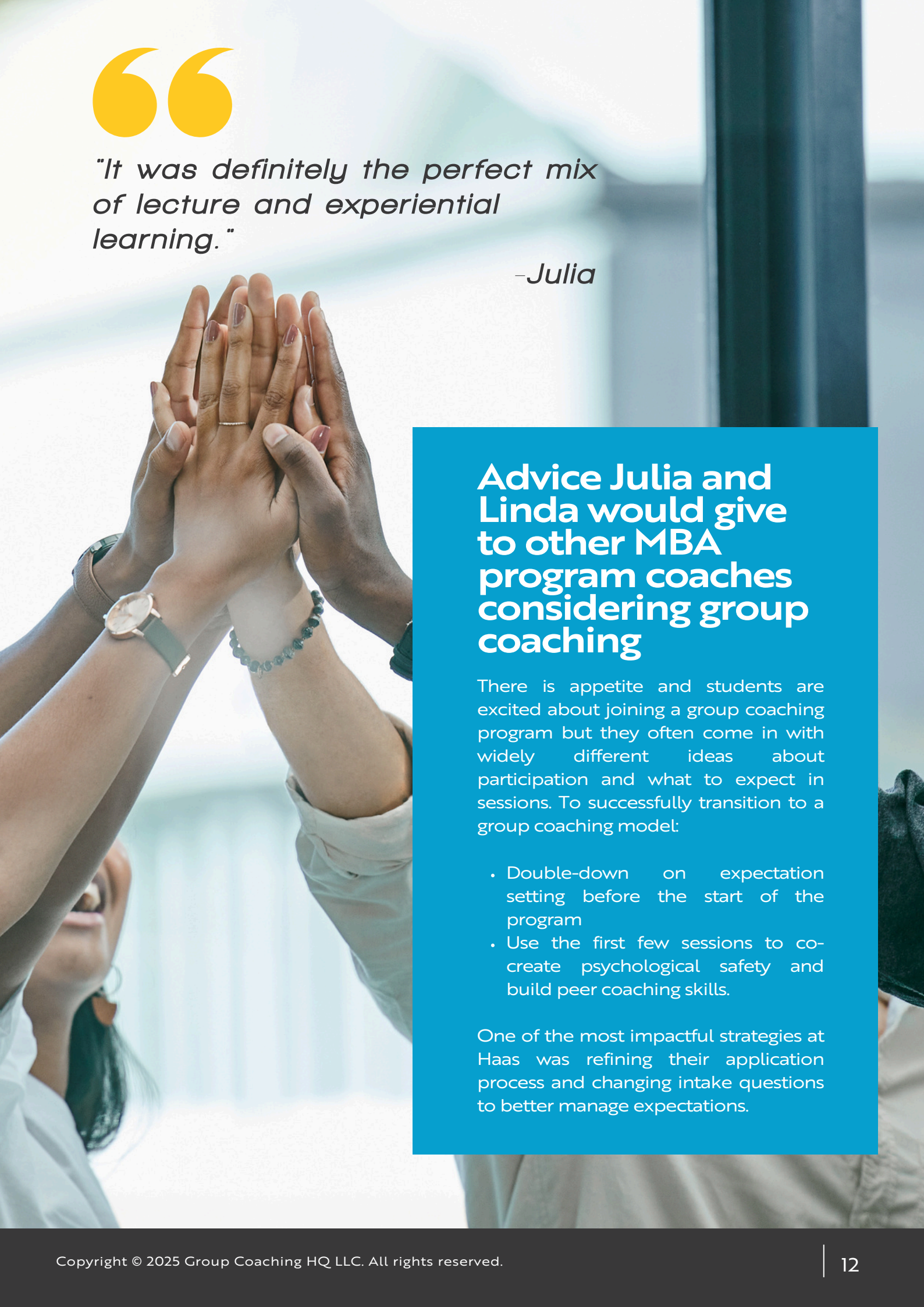
Co-created Spaces: Both Julia and Linda emphasized that groups must be positioned as spaces of "shared ownership, shared power." This shift begins with expectation-setting through applications, one-on-one outreach, pre-program emails, and continues by intentionally using the early sessions to build psychological safety and peer coaching skills.

Growing Together: Linda emphasized MBA students' inherent tendency to learn collaboratively. This shared mindset should be at the center of the program's messaging: Communicating not just how, but the value, during and after, of what they're going to get out of the program.

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“It was definitely the perfect mix of lecture and experiential learning.”

–Julia



Advice Julia and Linda would give to other MBA program coaches considering group coaching

There is appetite and students are excited about joining a group coaching program but they often come in with widely different ideas about participation and what to expect in sessions. To successfully transition to a group coaching model:

- Double-down on expectation setting before the start of the program
- Use the first few sessions to co-create psychological safety and build peer coaching skills.

One of the most impactful strategies at Haas was refining their application process and changing intake questions to better manage expectations.

Final Thoughts

The essence of the value of the Group Coaching HQ certification

Julia: "This certification taught me how to create and lead effective group coaching programs, transforming my program into an empowering and developmental experience."

Linda: "This certification provided me with a rich learning experience, a wide array of resources, and a community through which I can contribute to and continue to evolve as a group coach."





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