

Alchemy
of Coaching

Base Metal...

The Monthly Newsletter
from
Alchemy of Coaching

The 2022 edition

Introduction

We write Base Metal every month with the intent that it stimulates, challenges, encourages and may even provoke coaches into thinking about and reflecting on their coaching. We write in a largely questioning mode that aims to encourage thinking and reflection.

We are passionate about the importance of coaches continually reflecting on what they do and how they do it, and even more about how they are being when acting as coaches.

Each month we write a short article about a topic we believe is of interest and ally it with an accompanying book review that is relevant or connected to the article.

In this e-book we have compiled all the articles and book reviews from the twelve editions of Base Metal in 2021.

We hope that you find Base Metal useful and ask you to pass this annual review on to anyone that you believe may be interested. Please also ask them to let us know if they would like to receive the monthly version of Base Metal.

The Alchemy team — Ian, Ray and Paul

December 2022





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January 2022

Cultivating resilience in the coaching space - Krishna Ruparelia

"More than education, more than experience, more than training, a person's level of resilience will determine who succeeds and who fails. That's true in the cancer ward, it's true in the Olympics, and it's true in the boardroom." - Harvard Business School Press

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the lives of billions of people around the world. Factors such as social disconnect, juggling home and work commitments, alongside the pressures of childcare, have placed enormous pressures on employees and the businesses they work for. In the changing face of our professional lives, the resilience of individuals, teams and organisations is paramount to ensuring a successful and thriving business. Two years on, and who would have predicted this reality? With hybrid working now becoming increasingly common and reoccurring lockdown frights hanging over us, boundaries of work and home are increasingly blurred, and life seems to happen in a very fragmented way with constant interruptions. According to Harvard Business Review, our brains find it difficult to switch attention between tasks. Consequently, we perform interrupted tasks with only part of our cognitive resources and risk performing poorly. Being present by paying attention to what we see, hear and sense right now without getting carried away by our opinions and judgements is an ideal state, yet researchers have found about 50% of our time is spent thinking about something other than what we are doing, and 80% of that thinking time is more stressful than what we are actually doing. Cultivating tools of resilience is not a “nice to do” anymore but a necessity to adapt to the ever-changing climate we operate in.

So, what is 'resilience'? I like to think of it as 'bouncing back from adversity and setbacks'. The Unshakable Resilience Programme I deliver focuses on four pillars that build resilience to help people thrive. These are simple and yet scientifically proven tools that can help busy people cultivate the resilience 'muscle' in times of sheer change and uncertainty. Resilience is all about adapting, creating an armour like an 'umbrella for a rainy day' and can benefit the coach-coachee dynamic too. For the coach, mindset tools can provide him/her with thinking space to get into the 'flow' state. Developing a greater level of presence can enhance listening and focus as a coach. For the coach, listening with presence and showing compassion and empathy are pillars of great coaching conversations. For the coachee, the benefits are endless: A calmer mind enables greater agility to explore various solutions so s/he can respond rather than react to the challenges explored. Overall, a greater level of presence given to the coachee means s/he feels heard, listened to and this can bring profound shifts and translate into a richer coaching experience.

Leading yourself "Mindset Rest"

- ✓ **Stay flexible** by adopting a growth mindset and see challenges as an opportunity for growth.
- ✓ **Manage your mind** by taking regular breaks to achieve mental clarity and allow the brain to "reset". When we are in a calm and clear state, only then can we make better decisions.

Your Self-Care Toolkit

- ✓ **Giving Yourself Permission To Pause.** Pausing is a powerful tool to manage stress as it allows us to practice being in the present. The more present we are, the more focused we become.
- ✓ **Refuel To Accelerate Performance.** Self-care has been found to increase empathy, strengthen your immunity and reduce anxiety levels. When we look after ourselves, we are better equipped to take care of others.

Nurturing Meaningful Relationships

- ✓ **Create Meaningful Connections** that build trust and increase engagement.
- ✓ **Set Clear Boundaries** - by having open conversations that encourage people to do their best work.

Q. How are you caring for yourself? How will you cultivate your resilience?

Book review

"From Question to Quest - Your Route to Transformation", Krishna Ruparelia, WOW Book Publishing, 2021.

Krishna's mission, arising from her own self-transformation and growth, is enabling others to live a life of purpose, passion and impact. She invites her readers to adopt a sense of wonderment and curiosity. "From Question to Quest" is a life story, in which Maaya Thacker experiences loss, grief, setbacks and emptiness, yet she is helped to find meaning and renewal to transform her life. Krishna invites her readers to adopt a sense of openness and curiosity, to discover how to tap into their personal power to come alive and be their best selves. Each chapter begins with an inspiring quotation. There are website links to further resources. The book is a celebration of life and of life coaching, valuable for coaches and coachees alike.

February 2022

Caring about coach development

What is coaching? Coaching provides a resource for self-development. In service of the client, the coach listens; acts as witness, sounding board and mirror; inquires; supports, provokes and challenges. Coaching is a relationship and a process of "evoking excellence" (James Flaherty).

What's distinctive about coaching? This question may perhaps be answered in terms of what coaching is not. Coaching is not instruction, nor is it teaching. Coaching is not management or direction. Coaching is not counselling or therapy. A 'pure' view of coaching holds that the client does the work of figuring out what's required, without advice. Our perspective at Alchemy of Coaching is that we cannot be wholly objective - as coaches we bring the whole of ourselves and our experience to the relationship whilst holding focus on the client's needs at the heart of our responsibility. At times we may choose to ask if the client would like a suggestion or some guidance. Where a mentor might contribute proactively, the coach will wait, allowing silence - in this way the coach is patiently committed to have the client search deeply for their own answers. Whilst the coach holds the process the client decides and owns the content.

Why do clients seek coaching? George Metcalf writes "…to reach a goal, solve a problem or take advantage of an opportunity" and "No one will invest in paying for a coach just for fun." The problem may be not knowing what to do, whether at a practical or a profound level. A client may present for coaching with neither a goal nor an opportunity in mind. Some clients are participants in a programme, where the coaching is an expected or required element - they may have varying understanding and expectations of the coaching.

What is the range of coaching? Coaching covers a wide spectrum of specialisms, for example wellbeing, mindfulness, wealth, life, executive, performance, development. Technical coaching which does involve instruction is common in sport and the arts.

Boundaries and competence In the unregulated world of coaching, as professional coaches we are responsible for ethics and codes of practice. Such considerations are both for the benefit and protection of clients and for the conscience and reputation of coaches. Understanding my competencies helps me to determine if I am qualified to coach and whether coaching is the appropriate service for this client.

Fitness to coach How fit am I to coach? Right now? Generally? What state am I in? How is my wellbeing, my resourcefulness, my capacity to be fully present? Do I ensure when coaching that I prepare my state before I begin? In a recent co-supervision I was challenged by the demand for every coach to sort self out before venturing to coach - my response was both to invest in the never-ending journey of my learning and to allow that I am not perfect nor entirely sorted out! Nonetheless this was a timely reminder of the importance of self-care, support and renewal.

What is coach development? By asking myself how I well I coach and by seeking feedback from my clients and other coaches, I can ensure I am attending to continual learning. I can

take part in practice groups and supervision, and keep a personal development plan, regularly reviewing and updating it. I will pay attention, too, to the wider context in which I and my clients are living, the better to appreciate the societal pressures and challenges which we are experiencing. I have gained greatly from helping to write the Alchemy of Coaching Coach Development Guides. As Jeannette Marshall says in her foreword to these guides "Training is only the beginning of a Coach's journey, with continuous professional development firmly placed at the very heart of coaching."

Q. How much do you care about your development as a coach? What are you doing about it?

Book review

"12 Rules for Life - an antidote to chaos", Jordan B. Peterson, Penguin, 2019; "Uncharted - how uncertainty can power change", Margaret Heffernan, Simon & Schuster, 2020.

In his book "Coaching - Evoking Excellence in Others", 1999, James Flaherty provides a rich resource of further reading at the end of each chapter: it is the scope of these references, across the human condition, which I find engaging - a reminder to me of the importance of personal development. In that spirit of eclectic curiosity I have selected for review two books in which Jordan Peterson and Margaret Heffernan provide well-researched, thoughtful and provocative invitations for us to address our part in navigating and influencing the troubling issues of our time. Jordan Peterson: "I hope that my writing has proved useful to you. I hope it revealed things you knew that you did not know you knew." Margaret Heffernan: "Everything … young people do in the world today is an experiment because no certainties are available to them. That they have never grown up with certainties may be their greatest strength and our greatest hope."

March 2022

The debate about competencies

In a recently published White Paper Paul Lawrence, the Principal of the Centre for Coaching in Organisations argued that competencies are not an effective way to assess coaches, at least not as a means to recruiting coaches using the assessed accreditations/credentials of many of the coach professional bodies. He also suggested that using competencies to assess or define a number of different accreditation levels was inappropriate. In a subsequent and brief exchange of emails, where I had challenged some of his assertions he responded by saying something to the effect "I wanted to get a debate going about this topic…" My intention, in this short article, is to continue the debate and to be intentionally provocative. My hope is that this leads you to reflect and consider this topic from your own experiences and perspectives.

The Association for Coaching and the International Coach Federation - two of the leading coach professional bodies - have used competencies as a means for assessing accreditation/credentials for many years. These competencies are reviewed from time to time and updated or revised when necessary. How helpful are they to coaches and to those that hire coaches?

Q. To what extent do you take note of and show interest in the lists of competencies from the coaching professional bodies?

As an assessor some of the competencies are more difficult to evaluate and judge than others. e.g. "Ask

powerful questions …" which is one of the sub-bullets in the AC's competence ***No. 8. Maintains momentum and evaluation***, or "Responds to non-verbal signals" in ***No. 5. Communicating effectively***. Both are somewhat imprecise or difficult to assess from only written or spoken material and so when assessing I have to exercise 'intelligent' judgement based on all the evidence in an accreditation application to take a view about whether the applicant does these competencies sufficiently well for a pass at the level of the application.

It is understandable that the professional bodies created lists of competencies that are simple and straightforward to facilitate a consistent assessment process. If the lists of competencies were long and complicated there would inevitably be an increased risk of variation between assessors. The consequence of this approach is that the accreditation/credentialing process acts as a relatively 'coarse filter' for competence. It shows that applicants have gone some way to display how they coach and articulated their approach to common issues. These processes cannot cover all eventualities and when assessing it requires the assessor to make judgements at times about how the coach acts as the coaching field is broad and embraces many approaches, techniques, models and ideas. There is no one way to coach effectively and so any accreditation process needs to take this into account. The Association for Coaching – in my view – does this particularly well and sees the accreditation process as a development opportunity not a box ticking exercise. It encourages applicants to see the process as one where they learn and get feedback. This is valuable. The accreditation/ credentialing process also requires adherence to codes of ethics and practice, to be in supervision and to undertake CPD. This, too, is a valuable indication of the applicant's intent on personal development and improvement.

Q. To what extent do you see any accreditation process as 'developmental rather than box ticking?'

The Alchemy team took the AC's list of competencies and expanded them to make them more useful when teaching coaches. We called them **capabilities** and took a lot of trouble to make them consistently behavioural and useful for development. Under each of the eight capabilities there are a number of broad areas with each of these having a series of more detailed skills and behaviours. They are a valuable tool for ongoing personal assessment and development.

When seeking to work with a coach or to hire a coach or group of coaches finding out about their 'qualifications' can, surely, only be a part of the process. Coaching requires such a personal connection that individual contact, relationship building and trust are more important than any paper qualification.

Q. As you reflect, what is your view about qualifications, accreditation/credentialing and the value of the professional bodies? Do you support them, ignore them or actively encourage people to achieve them?

Book review

Among the many books about coaching I've found few which directly address either accreditation or competencies. Two volumes which do relate to this month's Base Metal discussion are: "**Becoming a Coach: The Essential ICF Guide",** by Jonathan Passmore and Tracy Sinclair, 2020 and **"Succeeding as a Coach: Insights From the Experts",** edited by Jonathan Passmore, 2021, both published by Pavilion Publishing. Otherwise those books I think relevant and valuable for development and competencies are written through the lens of coaching supervision: **"Coaching Supervision: a Practical Guide for Supervisees"** by David Clutterbuck, Carol Whitaker and Michelle Lucas, Routledge, 2016; **"Coaching Supervision: Advancing Practice, Changing Landscapes"** Ed. by Jo Birch and Peter Welch, Routledge (EMCC), 2019; **"Supervision in Action: A Relational Approach to Coaching and Consulting Supervision"** by Eric de Hann, Open University Press, 2012**; and "101 Coaching Supervision Techniques, Approaches, Enquiries and Experiments"** edited by Michelle Lucas, Routledge, 2020.

April 2022

Inertia

Inertia (noun) - a property of matter by which it remains at rest or in uniform motion in the same straight line unless acted upon by some external force (Webster's dictionary)

Inertia is something which I have been quite cognizant of in recent times, both personally and professionally, as I manage and notice both the need for change and what might get in the way. As a leader, developing awareness of where such factors might act within a team or organisation can be a significant factor in the success or failure of these sorts of change processes. Finding ways to release people from such situations, whether in the purely psychological space or where there are more concrete factors is just as big a challenge.

We will all have worked with people (colleagues, direct reports, managers, coachees) who are, in some important and noticeable sense, resistant to change by preference: such individuals tend to be much more comfortable with the known, lean towards the familiar, and are likely to focus on what they might lose through change rather than the potential gains to be had. These are all symptoms of what one might term 'status quo bias', which has also been shown to have a major impact on decision-making processes.

As a coach, this situation is a doubtless familiar one - a client presents with a particular issue, but shows little progress towards a change goal, despite substantial discussion in coaching about it, and what it might mean. The standard answer (which is of course true), is that clients have to want to change in order for the shift to actually take place. My recent experience in this area points towards a rather more complex picture, where client motivation and heightened awareness also need something of Webster's 'external force' in order to be effective for some. This is one space where a coach can provide that meaningful intervention to free a client from the inertia that is holding them back.

A metaphor might be helpful here - this latter case, where client motivation for change, understanding of the potential gains and of what is needed to change are present, we have moved from a static object "needing a push", to something closer to a balloon that is tied down, or weighted. In this situation as a coach, our job is perhaps twofold:

1) to enable the client to see that there is something that is holding them back; and

2) to facilitate the psychological environment that is needed for the client to cast off that weight or undo/cut the cord.

There is a fine balance to be struck here, as the perceived risk of cutting the cord may seem overwhelming, and cutting it for them may well result in a compromising of the bond of safety which is needed for effective coaching to proceed.

In yet another nuance, I noticed in a recent case that there was a significant difference between not acting to change as a result of some sort of inertia, and the conscious informed decision to not act. As a coach, these two scenarios seem to me to require very different approaches, depending of course on the desired outcomes, and on the preferences and mindset of the client in question.

Which all leads me to ask two developmental questions:

Q. How can I, as a coach, recognise inertia?

Q. How might I enable my client to see it too?

And what about any inertia in myself …..

Book review

'Clarity - Clear Mind, Better Performance, Bigger Results' and 'Results - Think Less, Achieve More', Jamie Smart, Capstone, 2013 and 2017.

In 'Clarity' (2013) coach and consultant Jamie Smart references Kierkegaard's view that life is not a problem to be solved, it is a mystery to be experienced - and asserts that our habitual thinking is "not a reality - it's just a dream". He invites us to escape the illusion and "continue to wake up". In 'Results' he develops this theme, quoting A. A. Milne; "You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think". These books provide many ideas and resources for personal and organisational transformation: starting points for overcoming inertia.

May 2022

Motivation

External rewards, however attractive they may be, are likely to be insufficient to propel me into action. Daniel Pink, in his book "Drive: the surprising truth about what motivates us" quotes behavioural economist Bruno Frey: "Intrinsic motivation is of *great importance* for all economic activities. It is inconceivable that people are motivated solely or even mainly by external incentives". When I do act, something more than the lure of a material improvement is involved. What are the implications for pay settlements, incentive schemes and prizes? Alfie Kohn offers some answers in his book "Punished by rewards".

Q. *How can attention to intrinsic motivation enhance my coaching?*

The idea of individual, idiosyncratic motivation is central to one of the Alchemy of Coaching Tools, the "Fried Egg" - a simple diagram to illustrate how no matter how much attention I give to specifying **what** I want (tangible outcome) and **how** I intend to get it (means and methods), in order to engage I will require a big enough reason **why**, consciously or unconsciously, to care. If I (or my coaching client) sincerely and conscientiously invest, repeatedly, in the what and the how, yet cannot deliver, this is a clue that something about the why is missing. Think of an example. What in this case could that ingredient be? What might be the big enough reason?

Q. *How do I explore my client's reason to seek change? What need may their current behaviour be meeting? How else could that need be met such that change becomes feasible?*

In her book "The Influential Mind" neuroscientist Tali Sharot writes "What you know affects not only what you decide to *do* but also how you *feel*. This is because information is the bread and butter of your beliefs, and what you believe has a profound effect on how happy you are." If I believe I can't achieve my wanted outcome I'm likely to be right. My inner dialogue helps or hinders. Hence the value of paying close attention to my thinking and speaking, and inviting my clients to notice patterns - negative and positive - in their self-talk. How can examining beliefs assist with motivation?

Q. *In my coaching, do I investigate beliefs, e.g. by using Robert Dilts' model of Neuro Logical Levels?*

Information is necessary and may be insufficient. Most decisions are essentially emotional - how I feel really matters. My decisions tend to be robust when reason, passion and instinct are aligned: when mind, heart and gut are in agreement. The absence of sound rationale, enthusiasm, or good feeling can be indicators for what's missing that's stopping me (or my client) from acting. What is the "ecology" of the outcome - if I had it, would I really want it / what implications does it have?

Q. *Do I use methods such as future-pacing to invite my client to test the outcome they are seeking?*

Change can be difficult and daunting. When I change, other people - including those who want and even urge me to make this change - may be so invested in the status quo or discomforted by my unfamiliar behaviour as to resist or criticise it. I can easily be discouraged by such responses, and give up. What inner resilience can I call on? What sources of support, in myself and from others, can I access? What will I believe and do in order to persevere and succeed?

Q. *As coach, how do I assist my client to obtain the quantity and quality of support they need?*

So I (or my client) have found real motivation, moved into action and begun to achieve the desired outcome. How I/they deal with obstacles in the way will be subjects for inquiry in future editions of Base Metal.

Book review

The three sources cited above may help me to consider my learning about inertia and motivation. They can prompt worthwhile development opportunities to strengthen my capabilities and competencies to work productively with motivational challenges for myself and my clients.

"Drive: The surprising truth about what motivates us", Daniel H. Pink, Canongate, 2011.

A classic guide to how the findings of social scientists are not yet reflected in the understanding and practice of motivation of self and others in organisations, schools and at home.

"Punished by Rewards: The trouble with gold stars, incentive plans, A's, praise, and other bribes", Alfie Kohn, HarperOne, 2018

Challenges the dominant paradigm of carrot and stick approaches to motivation and reward.

"The Influential Mind: What the brain reveals about our power to change others", Tali Sharot, Abacus, 2017

"An indispensable contribution from the coalface of cognitive scientific research." Science.

June 2022

Accessible Performance

I recently changed my fun car for something slightly more usable though with significantly less outright power, and the whole experience of starting to get to know the new vehicle (though

rather COVID interrupted at present) has got me thinking about the notion of accessible performance. Essentially, one thing I am enjoying is the potential to use more of the car's available performance more of the time, safely - and indeed legally.

The analogy with coaching relates both to the actual work and to thoughts about coach development. If I am operating most of the time well inside my comfort zone, short-shifting into a higher gear, and simply cruising around, am I likely to be giving my best for the benefit of my client? Am I making best use of my skills and training? Am I likely to put the requisite effort into developing either the vehicle or my driving skills? Perhaps not.

I am reminded of the 'Comfort-Stretch-Panic' model, where my best work, and indeed my learning potential, typically takes place in that 'stretch' zone. Too large a percentage of my time spent in comfort, risks me losing my edge, and potentially my motivation too. Note, however, that it is undesirable (and could even be damaging) for me to spend all of my time in such a real stretch zone, as panic and burnout wait at the end of that road.

The other significant facet here of accessible performance relates to ease of access, consistently and in a safe and appropriate manner. Modern performance cars (particularly turbocharged and electric ones) are all about instant go, and there is much to be learned from taming such a beast, and using its potential appropriately. But it may not be for everyone, either sitting behind the wheel or in the passenger seat. How often have you jumped headlong into a new and exciting model or approach in a coaching session, and later realised that it wasn't quite landing in the way you anticipated, and that perhaps it may not have been serving the client best in that moment? Was the choice to use that particular tool really serving the client's agenda? And, if that performance is delivered like an on-off switch, where is the challenge in developing, and the reward for the outcome that requires effort to extract? Similarly, what legal (or ethical) issues might I face by simply going 'pedal-to-the-metal' without enough consideration for safety and appropriate use of that potential? Have I put in the effort and focus to make good judgements about what I can and should use, and when as well as how?

The challenge here seems, to me, to be twofold. It is incumbent on me generally to be aware of my performance envelope, seeking to ensure that I am using what is available to me to its best effect, and in a safe and appropriate manner. I am also responsible for ensuring that I have some element of my focus on expanding that envelope, both by developing myself, and the tools that I use in a real and meaningful fashion. Having a Ferrari in my garage that I polish at the weekend and that comes out for a periodic photo on social media, alongside the owners club membership card in my wallet, isn't making use of the potential of the vehicle or myself as its pilot.

If these ideas resonate for you, perhaps you might ask yourself:

Q. ***How might I actively use more of my potential performance more of the time, safely and appropriately for the benefit of my client?***

Book review

Three resource books relevant to 'Comfort-Stretch-Panic' and achieving potential for self and others.

"The C Zone - Peak Performance Under Pressure", Robert Kriegel and Marilyn Harris Kriegel, Cedar Books, 1987 A clear, informative distillation by psychologists of forty years of experience

working with high performers. Provides descriptions, examples and models for performance improvement. “A practical guide for anyone who would like to move further in developing their talents and fulfilling their potential” David Hemery.

“100 Things Successful People Do - Little Exercises for Successful Living”, Nigel Cumberland, John Murray Learning, 2016 “Packed with great ideas for working smart and living well, all carefully chosen to help you achieve any kind of success you can imagine.” Mindsets, habits and *how to* instructions.

“Recover Your Energy”, Olive Hickmott, MX Publishing, 2009 Written by a former director of engineering. Informed by her personal experience, by research, and by applications of NLP, this book is designed for those seeking to increase their energy and restore their vitality - whether from occasional exhaustion or through having been running on empty to the point of major fatigue. Contains links to further resources. “Look after yourself and then you are free to look after others”.

July 2022

Coaching in the organisational setting

Whilst all coaching is focussed on the individual, a distinction commonly encountered in our work is between Life Coaching and Executive Coaching. Executive coaching can be internally or externally resourced. **Q. How separate are these fields?**

In her book “Be Your Own Life Coach” Fiona Harrold sets out “How to take control of your life and achieve your wildest dreams”. Laura Berman Fortgang in “Living Your Best Life” offers strategies for “work, home, balance, destiny”. Anthony M. Grant and Jane Greene start with self in “Coach Yourself: make real change in your life”, an approach echoed by Duncan Coppock in “The Self Factor - the power of being you”. Curly Martin’s “The Life Coaching Handbook” supplies “Everything you need to be an effective life coach”. All of these authors are concerned with how as individuals we can exercise choice and be purposeful. Life Coaching provides a means of support to discover who I am, what matters most to me, and how I can realise my desires. **Q. In Life Coaching, who are the stakeholders?**

Executive Coaching starts from a different frame: typically the client’s organisation commissions and funds the coaching and the employer’s interests are a central component. The coaching is likely to be about behaviour, relationships and performance at work in support of the organisation’s goals - which may include the development of the coachee for managerial and leadership responsibilities. For example In “Executive Coaching - A Psychodynamic Approach” Catherine Sandler addresses how the coach can help clients to remain effective and skilful under pressure. “Mastering Executive Coaching”, edited by Jonathan Passmore, Brian O. Underhill and Marshall Goldsmith, is written for executive coaches and consultants who want to develop their knowledge and practice, including in multi-stakeholder contracting. **Q. In the Executive Coaching context, whose goals are paramount?**

As a coach I may be working with self-funding clients. Some may be preparing to seek a job. They may be employed and may or may not bring concerns related to their employment. Some clients choose to be coached privately on issues which affect them at work - because they prefer that the employer is unaware of the coaching, or because the employer is unable or unwilling to pay for the coaching. Coachees may explore difficulties with relationships at work, or possibilities to move to another job

or employer. Where the parties are confined to the coach and the individual client, maintaining confidentiality is straightforward. **Q. How much is their employment a concern for my coachee?**

Where the coaching contract is with the organisation, as coach I am accountable to the employer and to the employee. I seek to ensure that respective roles are understood and agreed by all parties; they may be several e.g. the coachee, their manager and/or director, their HR department or other funder.

This complexity can be problematic, as for instance when the manager expects to be told by the coach of the progress of the coachee, or when the manager is not committed to the coaching which is owned or imposed by HR, or where the HR Department may be using the coaching inappropriately to assess the style or performance of the manager or as a substitute for the manager. Whether or not I choose to decline to report on the coaching, I need to act ethically and to be clear and consistent in fulfilling my obligations to each of the stakeholders. **Q. How do I recognise, agree and conduct multi-stakeholder contracting and reporting?**

Arguably, all coaching takes place in an organisational setting - family, educational institution, and/or workplace. My appreciation of context is important - whether for Life Coaching or for Executive Coaching. The setting in which the coachee operates will influence what is possible. Systemic interdependencies will allow or constrain what can be achieved. I can support my coachee (and stakeholders) to recognise systemic features and issues and respond to these. Much of my coaching has taken place as an integral part of leadership or organisation development programmes where the coachee is expected to participate and rarely has any say over which coach is assigned to them - the dynamics here are different from one-to-one coaching agreed after a successful chemistry meeting. **Q. How important for the success of the coaching is my awareness of the organisational context?**

Book review

"Mastering Executive Coaching" edited by Jonathan Passmore, Brian O. Underhill and Marshall Goldsmith, Routledge, 2019.

Assembled in four parts - Mastering themes, Delivering value to clients, Contemporary challenges, Case studies - this book contains contributions from twenty-eight Master Coaches and researchers in the field of Executive Coaching. Topics include ethics, contracting, evaluation, delivering behavioural and organisational change, health and wellbeing, challenge, coaching across cultures, coaching board members and non-executive directors, centralising supply of coaching provision, neuroscience, use of psychometrics, and 'super-vision'. Four case studies are provided, of well-known organisations; some models, and a glossary. This volume is a valuable resource for executive coaches, consultants, trainers and students of coaching.

August 2022

Coaching Quiet Clients – Amanda Bolger

I was a delegate on a Somatic Coaching course a few years ago and at the end of the two days, a fellow coach came up to me and said: 'at the start of the course I thought you were a bit weird because you were so quiet, but actually you're alright'. After an awkward pause, I said to him: 'I'm not weird, I'm an introvert' – and then it was his turn to look rather shocked. The conversation ended there.

This scenario got me thinking about how important it is that coaches have a solid grasp on how different personalities will show up both inside and outside coaching sessions, to understand their own personality type (as a coach) and how it might be different to that of others. Psychologists tend to agree that the extrovert and introvert continuum is one of the most fundamental differences in personality. In the western world, as a society, we tend to favour extroversion and Susan Cain in her ground-breaking book, Quiet, says that introverts can feel misunderstood and reproached for being quiet.

As an accredited coach with the ICF at PCC level, I now have a niche working with introverted leaders and as introverts make up 47% of the population in the UK, (data source: the Myers Briggs company), it's a large group! As a coach you will be working with clients who have a 'preference' for introversion, even if they don't appear to be quiet. The MBTI definition of the difference between extroversion and introversion is about where you get your energy from. Do you need to be alone to recharge or do you prefer to be with people to increase your energy levels? Do you prefer to think as you speak or reflect first and then speak? When you first meet a client, how do you gauge what type of personality your client might be? How do you modify your own style to improve the communication between you?

When I'm working with introverts, coaching themes that emerge are typically things like: networking, speaking up in meetings, resilience at work, (introverts hate busy open plan offices) and personal impact and presence. Many introverts have learnt to behave in a more extroverted way at work and in society, however, this comes at a price in terms of depleted energy levels and exhaustion. I can remember working with an introverted leader who spoke of being so tired at the end of the day that she can remember standing on a station platform waiting for her train and wanting to lie down on the platform as she felt like she didn't have the energy for the journey home. If you tell that story to introverts they tend to nod in recognition of that feeling of being completely depleted.

As I said earlier the dominant culture in the western world is one where extroversion is valued. This can lead to introverts feeling like they don't fit in, that they are different and that they don't belong – they are 'weird'. This can lead to a dip in confidence. I have found that a strengths-based approach is useful when working with introverts. Supporting introverts to appreciate and value their strengths such as: listening, building relationships, reflection, creativity, focus and being a calming presence can be a useful way forward.

Thinking about your coaching practice, what assumptions might you be making about both introverts and extroverts? How could you challenge your own assumptions? What could you do to understand your introverted clients even more than you already do? How might you show up differently when working with introverted clients or is what you are doing already enough?

I would be really pleased to hear if any of this resonates with you and what you might be noticing when you are coaching quiet clients. You can get in touch with me at amandabolgercoaching@gmail.com or www.amandabolgercoaching.co.uk

Book review

"Quiet - The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking" by Susan Cain, Penguin, 2013.

This is a book for introverts - to recognise, celebrate and strengthen their importance in a world

dominated by extroverts. Equally it is essential reading for extroverts - to understand, respect and value the vital contribution of introverts.

Derived from her lifetime of inquiry and conversation, Susan Cain challenges the extrovert ideal. She illustrates her critique with examples of famous people, drawing on philosophy, religion, history and psychological research. She provides many detailed notes for all chapters and sources for further information.

Described as "…the most important book published for a decade…" this is a 'must read' for coaches.

September 2022

From Opportunist to Alchemist - a developmental journey – Alan Clark

"Some people have thirty years' experience. Some people have one year's experience thirty times." As my former work colleague Oscar observed above, people develop at different rates and to different extents. The monologue in Shakespeare's play *As You Like It* that begins "All the world's a stage" perhaps gives you another idea of the way people's potential and capabilities may develop over time. The speech describes seven ages: infant, schoolboy, lover, soldier, justice, pantaloon, and old age.

Likewise, being a highly effective leader is a developmental journey. The most effective leaders being notable for how their more developed internal worldview successfully perceives reality and responds to emerging situations and making plans. This internal world view is known as their *Action Logic*. This is not something that effective leaders are born with. Everyone starts equal and is then shaped by their life experiences.

Ongoing research since the 1970s has revealed a sequence of nine developmental stages of human meaning making, seven of these applicable to leadership. From the research it became apparent that the capacity to understand situations in progressively deeper ways develops through life experiences. The stages are shown in the image below in this representation of what is known as the Leadership Development Framework (LDF),



We all then have the potential to develop and add further Action Logic stages from our life experiences as suggested by the Russian doll metaphor. Retaining earlier stages, we can all still be impulsive when there's a gap in a traffic jam! One of the later stages will dominate and is known as the Primary Action Logic. A person can find out their Leadership Development Profile by completing the Sentence Completion Test.

Whilst selecting top-management and leaders of change conventionally may look at knowledge and

experience, does this ensure the sufficient capability to understand people and their whole situation? LDF adds a new dimension to managing organisations and particularly leadership of transformational change. Research that has led to the LDF shows that a person has the potential to develop, to evolve the way they think. Prior to the LDF there was no knowledge of this. Some people seemed to have "IT" and others didn't.

Proportionately few leaders profile as having a Primary Action Logic at *Strategist*. At this stage their meaning-making capability enables them to engage with, and lead in, the complexity and ambiguity involved in organisational transformation. Possibly ten times as many have profiled at the previous stage of *Individualist*. Beyond *Strategist* is the *Alchemist* who is concerned with societal transformation. Figures who appear to fit this profile are Mahatma Gandhi, Vaclav Havel and Nelson Mandela. It is suggested that to reach this stage one must have survived a near death experience! To move beyond your present stage without relying on accidental influence of life experiences for developing one's life experience is possible. LDF authority Bill Torbert suggests in his book *Action Inquiry* that reflective journaling can have a powerful developmental effect.

So, what's in it for coaches and their prospective clients? Firstly, coaches can become aware of their own Action Logic and the potential gains from working on development of their own meaning-making capabilities. With an understanding of the different stages a coachee may be at, a coach is able to both understand the way that the coachee sees their situation, hence work with them in an appropriate way. Coaching can also facilitate that developmental journey and can provide reflective time and space for leaders, aiding their development. This helps both coach and coachee to understand where the latter is along their path to take more effective action from the meaning they get from situations.
Q. How does/might knowledge of Action Logic add value for you as a coach?

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Book review

"Action Inquiry - The Secret of Timely and Transforming Leadership" by Bill Torbert and Associates, Berrett-Koehler, 2004.

Action Inquiry is a process of simultaneously conducting action and enquiry as a disciplined leadership practice which increases effectiveness. In his recommendation Peter Senge describes Action Inquiry as a work about how leaders and organisations can develop their capacity to learn continually and transform themselves. The book, created by a team of twelve, presents foundational concepts of management and governance which can contribute to sustainability. Each element in the Action Inquiry model is defined, explored and exemplified by reference to well-known individuals. A Postscript on scientific methods and an extensive bibliography are included. Coaches can gain from understanding the concepts, and may choose to collaborate in co-coaching development informed by the approach. Action Inquiry may equally be of interest and value to their clients.

October 2022

Coaching the non-invested coachee

I have recently begun working with the latest group of coachees from a particular programme that I coach on, which has lead me to think about two particular areas: context and high performance. Those

of us who coach on such programmes will be very aware of some of the differences there are in contracting in such situations: often the coachee has not only not chosen you as their coach (allocation is the normal pattern), but they often do not have any specific reason for engaging in the coaching, nor any particular outcomes they want from it. The number of sessions is also often highly restricted. The contrast in the context here is relatively stark from a coachee who comes to you through personal choice, research or recommendation.

As a coach, some understanding of this context, or at least the means to discover what I need to know about the context, is critical for any such assignment to be successful, and I have to do this quickly. But how much knowledge is enough? How do I go about building rapport, as the early part of the initial session has to fulfil several different functions at once, especially when only a small number of sessions are available?

Building rapport and trust is, of course, an important part of the 'coaching proper' as well as being a competency that many accreditation processes assess. Following these recent sessions, I was left thinking about that sufficiency question, and how well I judge this early part of a coaching relationship. Encouraging my coachee to set some benchmark pictures on their terms helps many to feel comfortable and safe to share further down the line, and even that 'laying out the ground' can be valuable for many as an exercise in self-reflection. But, at what point does this conversation risk becoming a 'nice chat', and when do I (as the coach) intervene? If this goes too long, do I risk the coachee setting a context that becomes much more difficult to challenge or question later on?

In one particular recent case, I found myself working with one of the most self-assured, self-aware and lucid individuals I have coached. It will be fascinating to discover where they want to go with this coaching journey, but I know now that it will be a challenging assignment. In many similar cases before with high-performing leaders, my coachee has reflected on something during that first session that might be a coaching and development focus for them over the coming period. That was not the case here, which has lead me to reflect a little on what I might be able to bring to this relationship. And then further on the risks of my thinking that way at all, and potentially not allowing that agenda to be set first by the coachee.

Whether or not my initial perception is that this individual (or any other) 'needs' or 'doesn't need' coaching, whether they 'will' or 'are unlikely to' benefit from that opportunity, my job as the coach (in my view) is to hold the space with an open mind, and offer the possibility. My responsibility is to put myself in play in the service of my client so that, if nothing else, they come out of that assignment feeling that the time was well spent. For such high-performing clients in particular, this may, or may not, 'be enough'.

Can we be transformational for everyone we coach? Probably not. Are we even suitable as coaches for everyone we coach? Again, probably not (I am sure we have all had experiences where the partnership never got off the ground, and positive outcomes in such circumstances are few and far between). Does that make me a bad coach? Probably not.

The ongoing challenge is how to become a better one.

Q. What questions does this article raise for you about your own coaching and contracting?

Book review

"Coaching Relationships - The relational coaching field book", edited by Erik de Haan & Charlotte Sills, Libri Publishing / Ashridge, 2012.

Whilst this book takes the particular perspective of Relational Coaching it contains ideas and information valuable for many other coaching approaches. Especially relevant to Paul's topic above are chapters on "The coaching contract: a mutual commitment" by Charlotte Sills, "Outside forces in the coaching room:

how to work with multiparty contracts" by David Skinner, "Relational modalities in executive coaching" by John Nuttall, "Shame in the coaching relationship: reflections on individual and organisational vulnerability" by Simon Cavicchia, "The coaching relationship and other 'common factors' in executive coaching outcome" by Erik de Haan and Anna Duckworth and "The working alliance in executive coaching: its impact on outcomes and how coaches can influence it" by Louis Baron and Lucie Morin.

All five sections of the book consider 'executive coaching as it really happens'. Experience from the US and Canada is included with that of the UK. Learning and re-learning, working with the unconscious, supervision and research are among the subjects addressed. An especially rich and thorough resource of over twenty pages of references is provided. This is a rewarding read and companion to Erik de Haan's "Relational Coaching - Journeys towards mastering one-to-one learning", John Wiley, 2008.

November 2022

New styles of leadership and management

There is a belief that leaders, in the 21st century, need to adopt more 'collaborative' styles of leadership, leaving behind the notion of 'command and control'. More collaborative styles include the leader acting as coach. This has actually been apparent for about 40 years and some organisations are beginning to change both their styles of leadership and their organisational culture. The following quotes sum up some reasons for developing styles, including the leader acting as coach.
"In turbulent times, only organisations whose managers develop employees faster than the competition can succeed." *Quest Leadership Group*
"The main cause of 'strategy execution failure' is an outdated notion that the role of the leader is to command and control people". *The Oxford Leadership Group*
As John Cleese said in his Video Arts film on 'Coaching' *"Coaching is the best way to develop people"*.
Developing new styles of leadership also requires a change in organisational thinking. Phrases such as 'allowing mistakes', 'individuals taking greater responsibility', 'being more collaborative', 'sharing ideas and learning together' and 'developing as individuals' have become more common.

A coaching style has become something of a popular cry for leaders. In Alchemy's view developing a coaching style needs to be seen as one of a number of styles that leaders are able to adopt and utilising a coaching style benefits from a wider sense of developing a coaching culture where the ideas mentioned in the previous paragraph are seen as important. In an important study of leadership styles Daniel Goleman identified 6 different styles which are outlined in his book, The New Leaders.
Pacesetting "Do it my way"; **Commanding**[1] "Do it because I say so"; **Visionary**[2] "Let's remind ourselves of the larger purpose"; **Affiliative** "People first, task second"; **Democratic** "Let's work it out together"; **Coaching** "Let me help you develop". So what does the leader as coach mean in terms of the skills, knowledge and context that a leader needs to develop?

Context - the leader

- ✓ has a focus on development
- ✓ is good at spotting opportunities to coach
- ✓ is able to 'turn on' their coaching style quickly
- ✓ appreciates when a coaching style will have little benefit
- ✓ knows how to end an opportunistic coaching session and how to end a more formal session

Skills and knowledge - these are key to becoming an effective 'leader as coach'

- ✓ listening and being patient
- ✓ good at asking questions to encourage dialogue with staff about development

- ✓ builds their insight into when to coach and how far to go in any particular session
- ✓ allows space and time for staff to develop their own ways of making progress
- ✓ is good at building rapport and develops partnership relationships for development
- ✓ is aware about how their own style and preferences will influence their coaching style
- ✓ is able to adapt their communications to best suit their coachee
- ✓ notices and responds to non-verbal signals
- ✓ is able to give effective 'me to you' feedback to aid the development process

There are a number of significant benefits to developing a coaching style with the ability and wisdom to use it appropriately including:

- Consistently higher levels of employee productivity and engagement
- Improved economic performance
- Individuals are able and willing to take greater personal responsibility for their performance and continual improvement
- Team members work collaboratively and share responsibility
- Individuals grow their skills and knowledge such that they can take on greater responsibility
- It frees up time for leaders to focus on longer term goals.

These benefits are clearly worth achieving. We encourage all leaders to take up the challenge of developing themselves into 'leader as coach'. ***Q. What part in this might you play?***

Book Reviews

"The New Leaders - Transforming the Art of Leadership into the Science of Results", by Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee, Little Brown, 2002. Published as "Primal Leadership", Harvard, 2004.

Best known for his ground breaking "Emotional Intelligence', 1996, Daniel Goleman has produced a series of books on related themes. This one draws on research to show that effective leaders demonstrate emotional intelligence to express 'primal' and 'resonant' leadership, evoking resonant energy and enthusiasm. The six styles noted in the article above are described and explained and the associated competencies identified. Chapter titles include *The motivation to change*, *The emotional reality of teams* and *Creating sustainable change*. The nature and importance of *distributed leadership* are asserted in the introduction. Each chapter is supported by detailed notes. This book is a valuable resource for leaders and coaches alike.

December 2022

Coaching and mentoring

A challenge commonly reported by coaches and action learning facilitators is how to avoid offering advice and instead to support the coachee to trust their own resources and find their own way. Why is this a challenge? Very probably because the coach thinks or intuits what they would do in this context, or did do in an apparently similar circumstance, and wants to save their client's time and effort by advising them on a sensible - perhaps even 'obvious' - course of action. Remaining silent or asking open questions from a place of non-judgemental curiosity may require excellent listening and great patience. A way to inhibit the instinct to advise is to remember that as coach I may not understand, I most likely do not know 'the answer' and I do not have to 'fix the problem'. Allowing the client to do the work honours their integrity and agency - and can engender frustration and even guilt in the coach ('Am I adding sufficient value?'). Whilst such doubts and desires can be aired, for example by the coach asking "May I offer a suggestion?"

this can be problematic if the client feels dependent or defers to the power and experience which they perceive the coach to have.

Q. If this issue of offering advice arises in my coaching, how do I deal with it?

Being aware of, and managing, such choices can be assisted by clear contracting - mutual recognition of, and agreement on, role and process expectations - and by recontracting. The more experienced the coach, the more likely that re-contracting can be achieved appropriately and effectively. Boundaries which may be encountered can be between coaching and other roles with their respective responsibilities and skills e.g. counselling, therapy - and mentoring.

Q. Where on this continuum does my practice reside? What is my level of confidence? How do I stretch?

In organisational contexts coaching and mentoring may both occur, with varying degrees of separation. These roles may be fulfilled by internal or external contributors or a combination of both. Members of the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) will probably be more familiar with this territory than unaffiliated coaches or those belonging to other professional coaching bodies.

Q. Is 'coach or mentor' relevant to me? If so, what considerations does this prompt?

Peter Hawkins and Nick Smith observe that "The mentor is normally of the same profession or business as the mentee and has a more general guiding influence than a coach". They quote David Megginson and David Clutterbuck: "Mentoring is 'off-line help by one person to another in making significant transitions in knowledge, work or thinking'." In 2004 the CIPD provided a table identifying differences between mentoring and coaching by contrasting focus and types of activities, reflecting the typically longer-term focus of the mentoring conversation, its concern with future career development, and access to the mentor's experience as a source of guidance for the mentee. The coach does not necessarily require a direct knowledge of the coachee's discipline, or to have worked in their organisation, so long as the coach appreciates the context.

Q. How important for you as coach is your understanding of the coachee's particular organisation?

Many years ago Marlys Hanson defined four stages of professional development: apprentice, journeyman, mentor and senior (ready to move on). Lis Merrick and Paul Stokes, writing about supervision in mentoring programmes, in an echo of Hanson's model, quote Hawkins and Shohet's (2002) four categories of counsellor development: novice, apprentice, journey person and master craftsperson. Merrick and Stokes generated similar distinctions for mentor development: novice, developing mentor, reflective mentor, and reflexive mentor (mentor supervisor). In Alchemy of Coaching we have explored the coach's journey towards mastery, describing similar stages and emphasising the never-ending nature of the development journey. See Alchemy of Coaching Development Guides Nos. 6, 8 and 20 at www.alchemyofcoaching.com .

Q. what part does appreciation of boundaries and competencies play in my professional development plan?

In the USA the role of coach mentor is recognised in terms of an experienced coach providing support for the learning and development of a less experienced coach. Elsewhere, including in the UK, the importance of supervision for coaches is emphasised. Rather than in a didactic instructional mode, the nature of coaching supervision is to deliver a learning partnership between supervisor and coach, designed to assist the coach to make sense of theory and practice and to consider and resolve issues of approach, style, efficacy and ethics. The importance of this type of supervision is equally applicable for mentors. Supervision can be provided one-to-one, in supervision groups where each participant has their turn, and by peer supervision in pairs.

Q. Whether as coach or mentor, am I in regular supervision (and/or providing supervision for others)?

Book Reviews

“Coaching, Mentoring and Organizational Consultancy - Supervision and Development”, Peter Hawkins and Nick Smith, Open University Press, 2006

This substantial volume provides definitions and information on key skills and capacities, effective personal development and ethical practice for coaches, mentors and supervisors, and OD consultants - including necessary qualities, capabilities, and values. Further resources and extensive references are included.

“Coaching & Mentoring Supervision - Theory and Practice”, Edited by Tatiana Bachkirova, Peter Jackson and David Clutterbuck, Open University Press, 2011

Whilst aimed primarily at supervisors, this book contains information, ideas and examples of value to coaches and mentors, as supervisees, and likewise to participants in mentoring programmes. Thirty experienced contributors have created twenty-four chapters covering models, theoretical approaches, modes and contexts and practical case studies. Each chapter is supported by references for further study.

Both books provide accessible material to inform and support personal and professional development plans for coaches, mentors and supervisors.