Base Metal...

August 2023

Alchemy of Coaching

Introduction

Coaching occurs in many different settings. Coaches specialise, their particular approaches reflecting the diverse contexts in which they work. Common to all coaching is the essential element of listening. For some coaches listening is the essence of their offering and considered sufficient support for the client to access their own agency and resourcefulness. For other coaches additional elements complement the listening. In this edition of Base Metal Ray takes a view on two such tools valuable for coach and client.

Paul and Ray **The Alchemy team**

Tools and techniques for coaching

The range of tools available to coaches is extensive. Many such tools are included in the Resources area of the Alchemy of Coaching website, for example in the *Alchemy Tools* for learning, change and development and our *Coach Development Guides*. There are others we have used which aren't included there. I have chosen two to describe in this discussion: a structure and a process map. ***Q. What variety of coaching tools do you employ?***

A tool to provide a coaching structure

This tool is based on a concept developed by Paul Hersey, at the Center for Leadership Studies. Whilst designed for use by managers coaching those who report to them, it also has value in other coaching contexts. The structure follows a mnemonic: **ACHIEVE**.

- **A**bility - skills, knowledge, expertise, competence, capacity
- **C**larity - absence of confusion; clear expectations, responsibility, ownership
- **H**elp - existence of and access to support, guidance, encouragement, resources
- **I**ncentive - intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and rewards; imperatives
- **E**valuation - assessment of process effectiveness; nature and quality of outcomes
- **V**alidity - relevance, realism and accuracy of feedback
- **E**nvironment - influence of factors in the context including climate, culture, speed of change

By asking questions of each of these factors, coach and client can focus on what's missing and what's required. In the manager-with-employee setting, each will prepare by addressing these questions before the session. In the coach-with-client setting the coach can facilitate inquiry by asking these questions. The information generated provides a basis both for employee or client self-assessment and further interventions by the coach. ***Q. How might the ACHIEVE structure be of value in your coaching?***

A process map

Coaching clients may or may not know what they want. Some ask for coaching because the process or the particular coach has been recommended to them or apparently presents an attractive prospect. Other clients attend coaching as one ingredient of a wider programme: some of these may be fully engaged, others involved only so far as to be seen to participate. Whether clearly committed or not, clients can experience frustration or concern that the coaching is not working for them: they are not getting value. They may or may not say so.

I have used a process map to gain traction in such situations. This tool is called **The Discounting Matrix**.

The framework consists of three elements (horizontal), six levels (vertical) and twelve stages (numbered).

Stimuli	Problems	Options
1. Existence of stimuli e.g. "Awareness of pressure"		
2. Significance of stimuli e.g." How much does it hurt?"	**3. Existence of problems** e.g. "It hurts!"	
4. Variability of stimuli e.g. "How often/for how long?"	**5. Significance of problems** e.g. "Can I live with it?"	**6. Existence of options** e.g. "What choice do I have?"
7. Personal ability to react differently to stimuli e.g. "How adaptable am I?"	**8. Solvability of problems** e.g. "Can I crack it?"	**9. Significance of options** e.g. "What do I choose?"
	10. Personal ability to solve problems e.g. "Will I try?"	**11. Viability of options** e.g. "Is the choice practical"
		12. Personal ability to act on options e.g. "Do I change?"

Gain agreement to use the process. Follow the steps from 1 to 12, using questions specific to each stage. This flow is most powerful when twelve chairs are arranged in the matrix as above and the client is invited to move to the next chair in the sequence - and sometimes back again if need be. As chairs are seldom available, the next best method is to write the stages on sheets of paper, lay these on the floor in the pattern as above and ask the client to step onto each page in turn. Or the stages can be printed on cards and laid out one at a time in order on a table top. As the client engages with each stage, the "discounting" blockage can be identified, investigated and, potentially, resolved. ***Q. How might you find this tool useful for coaching - of self or client?***

Book review

"LEAP - How to be more you", Steph Tranter, 2023.
Beautifully presented, open and real, inspired by the writer's own experience, and easy to follow, this book by Hybrid Executive Coach Steph Tranter provides **11 practical tools** for self-discovery, finding your strengths, getting unstuck and moving into effective action to become more the unique person you really are. This is a great resource for coach and client alike. "…a step-by-step guide to help anyone find more joy and inspiration in their life." Highly recommended!

Thoughts, ideas and quotations

"I don't like to lose - at anything - yet I've grown most not from victories, but from my setbacks." Serena Williams.

Look on our website for **Alchemy Tools** and for our two sets each of ten **Alchemy coach development guides**.

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Our coach development guides, articles, papers and back numbers of Base Metal are available from https://alchemyofcoaching.com