Alchemy of Coaching

Base Metal...

October 2025

Introduction

Last month's Base Metal addressed what coaching offers for our clients and for us as coaches, and the importance of training to build our skills. In this edition, prompted by a conversation with Ian, Ray writes about what those skills are and how we can develop and strengthen them.

Paul and Ray The Alchemy team

The skills of a coach

Designing our coach training programme required us to think carefully about what makes a coach and how the competence of a coach can be demonstrated. Our programme gained accreditation from the Association for Coaching, which entailed evidencing that we covered the AC Competencies. We involved our participants in coaching each other and receiving feedback from client, observer(s) and tutor(s). We came to a view that we wanted to describe what we called Capabilities and support our participants to recognise and develop these. These we have published, along with a series of 20 highly accessible coach development guides - which took a prodigious amount of reflection on theory and practice!

My first thought when setting out to write this short article was that the core skill of coaching is **listening**. I hold to that thought. How we listen deserves a paper all to itself. One of the questions we ask our participants is "***What are we listening for***?" This question connects both to our purpose and motivation and to the manner in which we pay attention.

Other skills required of the coach are suggested by the Capabilities we specify. These are:

- Works to professional standards, legal requirements and coaching **ethics**
- Understands, develops and can clearly explain their own **coaching approach**
- **Contracts** and agrees outcomes
- Creates relationship and holds the **coaching space** effectively
- **Communicates** effectively
- **Raises awareness** and enables insights
- Designs strategies, plans and processes to **maintain momentum**
- Undertakes **CPD, supervision and evaluation**

Readers familiar with the AC Competencies will notice that we have not included Organisational capabilities: our experience is that whilst these are relevant for many coaches they are not universal to all coaches. We do deal with them where required.

The Coach Development Guides direct attention to the depth and breadth of the capabilities. Their titles show the scope we seek to cover - and lend credence to the need for significant coach training.

Ten of the guides encompass the full range of aspects of coaching:

1. What is at the heart of coaching?

2. Who am I when I coach - and developing my coaching approach
3. Five essential components for successful coaching
4. The coaching process
5. The coaching relationship - the SOCK-I Diagram and building trust
6. The journey towards mastery - the need for a sense of purpose and good guidance
7. Listen and question, support and challenge - using the Coaching Triangle
8. The Alchemy Coaching Capabilities
9. The importance of Reflective Practice
10. Individual learning - the Conscious Competence model and Practice, Rehearsal and Performance

Guides 11 to 20 delve more deeply into particular domains:

11. Individual difference and its impact on coaching
12. Perception and bias
13. Directive versus non-directive approaches to coaching
14. Personal strengths
15. The importance of language in coaching
16. Observation and feedback
17. Noticing, understanding and working effectively with resistance
18. Developing my resilience as a coach
19. Tackling the difficult conversations effectively
20. Continuing Professional Development - an essential activity for any coach

Simply listing these has challenged me to study them again, so that I can audit and strengthen my knowledge and practice: the skills of the coach are, it seems, many and varied!

Q. What ideas for your own development as a coach are prompted by these capabilities and topics?

Book review

"The Complete Handbook of Coaching" edited by Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck, Sage, 4th Edition, 2023

We reviewed the second edition of this work in January 2016. It has subsequently been twice revised. Currently on Amazon this book enjoys a rating of 4.9. Whilst the price is significant, the value of the investment is at least as great. This is a comprehensive and informative work, appropriately described as "a must for students and practitioners of coaching alike". Highly recommended.

Thoughts, ideas and quotations

"Education does not consist merely in adorning the memory and enlightening the understanding. Its main business should be to direct the will." Joubert.

Contact us We look forward to all kinds of communication for **Base Metal**... it's a forum for sharing and learning about coaching. Please do send us ideas, thoughts, suggestions or feedback. ***We welcome guest contributors!***

paul@alchemyofcoaching.com **ray@alchemyofcoaching.com**

Our coach development guides, articles and papers are available from www.alchemyofcoaching.com

Alchemy of Coaching