Alchemy of Coaching

Base Metal...

December 2025

Introduction

Ray has recently attended in-person and virtual meetings and webinars about Artificial Intelligence and coaching. Reading and conversations with other coaches have added to his interest in the opportunities and implications arising. In this edition of Base Metal, he takes an overview of potential benefits and concerns, then recommends a new book of practice for navigating difference, described by a reviewer as "for anyone committed to leading, listening and living with presence and courage".

Paul and Ray **The Alchemy team**

Artificial Intelligence and coaching

I am an exponent of, and enthusiast for, AI: Appreciative Inquiry - a method for identifying what we do that works well and playing to our strengths by adapting and developing this: a process informed by positive psychology which I regard as greatly superior to the kinds of benchmarking employed by many organisations. Hence my chagrin that these initials have been supplanted by another AI: Artificial Intelligence. This kind of AI is now so evident and fast evolving as to require us to pay attention.

Machine Learning has been with us for some time, contributing to information largely without our awareness. Now we can access multiple versions of Artificial Intelligence whenever we wish, displacing familiar internet search engines, providing structure and content for authoring material and supplying pictures and sound - all almost instantly. Meanwhile AI is also contributing to analysis of data in, for example, science, medicine and engineering, beyond anything thought feasible only a few years ago. What are the implications?

Those in the creative arts - literature, theatre, music, painting - have expressed their concerns that AI is a threat to their continued livelihoods. Part of the problem is how the developers of AI have 'trained' their information engines by incorporating content without permission or payment of royalties. Another downside of the AI data banks is that in absorbing vast amounts of material some of this content is flawed, resulting in output being incorrect or misleading. When we interact with AI to produce our own outputs, we can't know how accurate the contributing information is. By being selective as to which AI provider we use, we can to some extent reduce this risk. The quality of questions we input will determine how valuable the response will be; by thoughtfully refining our questions we can, with astonishing speed, obtain text and images from a specified viewpoint or in the style of a certain author or artist or entertainer or for example in a particularly optimistic or dystopian mood. To avoid our material being recognised as AI generated, we do well to edit or rewrite it; this will likely have saved us much time and given us many fresh perspectives. A downside if we have asked for processes or designs is that we may not have the requisite skills to bring these into effective use, perhaps even when we have supplemented our understanding with the aid of on-line "how to" videos. Beyond copying of our original work without appropriate attribution, a further serious risk from AI is that as well as being unaware of false information we may be victim to identity theft, or subject to attributions of what we have said or done that are untrue, with resultant damage to reputation, finances and mental health.

What, then, of AI and coaching? Benefits include easing or speeding up administrative routine tasks; rapid generation of outlines for articles, marketing content and design for events. Downsides include replacement of live coaching by programmed robots - displacing coaches. Who are your clients? Will they be content with automated services - with significant ease of access to reflective partnering and reduction in cost? Are you already competing with, or will you want to compete with, providers of automated coaching? Do you prefer to

offer live coaching, especially to be fully present for your client, really listening, responding with sensory acuity to somatic and emotional states, tone and volume of voice, visual expressions and mannerisms, and having in-the-moment flexibility and responsiveness to whatever is occurring? If so, in an increasingly remote and digitised society, who will be your clients?

How are you dealing with AI in your coaching, for example concerning contracting and data security? If you use technology to record and/or transcribe any part of your sessions, whether for personal reflection by your client or yourself or for review with your supervisor or for accreditation or credentialling purposes, how have you ensured that there is full transparency for your client, that there is client consent and you share a common understanding of what you have both agreed, and that you are both aware of the security or otherwise of the recording? Have you protected all confidential material from being absorbed or integrated into a third-party database? As highlighted in a November 2025 Association for Coaching webinar on AI and Coaching, using free digital tools means paying with your data.

Q. Are you using AI in coaching? How aware are you of risk? What are your views about AI governance?

Book review

"Approaching Difference Differently - Practices for transforming leadership conversations" by Amanda Ridings, Originate Books, 2025

In an increasingly fractured and fractious world, locally and internationally, in which divisions are heightened by posts in social media, reaction and blame occur almost instantly, and conflict and violence are common, a call to pause, inform, consider and reflect before judgement is very much required. "Approaching Difference Differently" does more than this: it provides a thoughtful manual of "How to…" practices to meet the need. Dedicated to the late Wendy Palmer, Amanda's book combines Conscious Embodiment, somatic awareness and Dialogue to help us to engage carefully with difference. Underpinned by theory, this is a practical manual to show how we can behave more effectively. Change occurs in our conversations - both through self-talk and externally in our relationships with others. Aimed at transforming leadership conversations, this guidebook is relevant to every kind of communication - face-to-face and virtual. Detailed chapters are accompanied by examples and thought exercises: the author creates a conversation with the reader to examine and test the propositions. Habits are illuminated and questioned; differences between what is felt and thought and what is said are highlighted; and better alternatives are explained. Values, principles and beliefs are addressed. Dialogue and embodied practices are described and illustrated. Sources and resources are referenced.

Reviewers say "…a deeper, richer, more coherent account of how we can engage with difference skilfully and constructively" and "I wholeheartedly recommend [this book] to anyone who wants to lead, learn and live with greater skill in our divided world". I endorse these views! Do find out for yourself.

Thoughts, ideas and quotations

"The shoe that fits one person pinches another; there is no recipe for living that suits all cases." Carl Jung.

"A great deal of talent is lost to the world for the want of a little courage." Sydney Smith.

"If more of us understood the difference between debate and dialogue, the world would be a better place." Anouk Brack.

Let us know your response to Base Metal articles and reviews. ***We welcome guest contributors!***

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.

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

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