Base Metal...

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Introduction

"Asks powerful questions" can be one of the competencies required of coaches seeking accreditation. What is a powerful question? An example is "What do you really care about?" - an inquiry into beliefs and values.

How much do you care about your coaching? How much do your clients care about the coaching? Prompting thoughts about expectations, motivation, contracting and re-contracting, Paul explores the significance of commitment for coachee and coach.

Paul and Ray **The Alchemy Team**

Time and Preparedness

I suspect that all of us coaches do some portion (and perhaps the vast majority) of our coaching via digital platforms now, and while there are perhaps certain elements of compromise in that setting, it works well. Particularly as a one-to-one interaction.[1] For me, this is one of the very few positives to have come in a traceable fashion from the COVID pandemic. The allied advantage to this shift is that coaching across borders is now much more possible, and I frequently find myself having 'worked' in more than one continent across a single day, all without leaving my home office. And this, leaving aside the positive effect on coaching footprint that no travel time entails, and indeed any climate impact of the decreased need for travel. However, one element which I observe to be a retrograde step is the increasing 'no-show' or last-minute cancellation.

Ease of organising coaching to suit both parties, and the potential to carve out small portions within an existing work pattern is generally a good thing, enabling sessions and impact to be integrated more easily into the day. However, this ease seems to also have an effect (in some coachees) of reducing perceived importance, and thereby, commitment. 'It was so easy to set the time for our session, so it's easy to rearrange – even at short notice – and as my coach isn't travelling to meet me (nor I to meet them), the impact of that change is significantly reduced.' While there is truth to this, it seems to me to be a worrying sign, potentially for both sides.

Of course, situations and individuals vary and sometimes 'life gets in the way', but I have found myself reflecting on questions of commitment in such scenarios. Is the cancellation/no-show a symptom of a coaching relationship that is not quite functioning? Is it simply busyness on the part of the coachee, an unwillingness to prioritise the work that can happen during and can come out of coaching interventions or a real diary malfunction? Or does it betray a lack of respect for the professional whose time has been committed? Often, there is material here for exploration in a future coaching session, but it can be uncomfortable to bring up.

I have also observed recently a trend where a coachee who missed their session responds 'why didn't you remind me?'. To my way of thinking, this is an even bigger issue if a meeting organised needs such prior intervention, it must be so far down the priority list as to be virtually dispensable. An 'in person' meeting requires no such reminder phone call half an hour before, so why is a virtual session any different?

If a coachee arrives in the digital space straight from another meeting, with a 'hard stop' at the end of that hour for them to move on to their next appointment, how likely is it that they arrive in a positive,

[1] Group or Team coaching seems, in my experience, much more problematic through the virtual delivery space.

developmental frame of mind? How much of the session time might be lost in 'landing', and how much potential outflow is jeopardised by that reduced opportunity?

This is true for coaches too of course – there is clear risk in cramming too many sessions into a single day, and with multiple back-to-back interventions. We have all experienced the feeling at the end of a session (or indeed in the midst of one) that we are perhaps not quite in the frame of mind to deliver the best for our client as a result of where we came from, or where we are about to go to.

Q. What does good preparedness for coaching look like for you and your clients? How can we encourage that in our coaching practice and what effect might that have on these issues of time in our increasingly diary driven professional world?

Book review

First reviewed in Base Metal in February 2025 - brought back to mind by Paul's article above:

"Cultivating Coachability - How to leverage coaching readiness so thinkers can optimise value", Clare Norman MCC with Dr Sam Humphrey, Right Book Press, 2024

The premise of this book is that not everyone is coachable: "the most significant variable in coaching is the readiness, willingness and ability of clients to change in ways that are meaningful to them" Drake, 2023. 'Coachability' depends upon context, stakeholders and readiness. Clare Norman re-asserts the principle that "your role as coach is to pull coachability out of the thinker, rather than attempting to pour something in through teaching and telling." In describing the first encounter session with the client she prefers the designation 'Compatibility' to the commonly used 'Chemistry'. She covers three-way contracting settings as well as one-to-one self-referrals. A consistent theme throughout is the importance of the agency of the client to make change: "Your job as coach is *not* to create value. Your job is to be a catalyst for the creation of value, but not to create value yourself. … "Change comes from within, not from without."

She shows how to recognise coaching readiness - and hence how to say "no" to a potential contract. She writes "I see this book as a prequel to *The Transformational Coach*, in which I say that coaching is a joint endeavour, a partnership. So how do you enable the thinker to fully inhabit the role of partner rather than consumer? All of your masterful coaching only works if you focus on their coaching readiness as well as your own."

I think that applies at any time in the coaching sequence.

Thoughts, ideas and quotations

"…checking that coaching is the right intervention, at the right time, for the right reasons and with the right motivation." Clare Norman

"Coaching…is not about clients achieving their goals. That's the client's business. My business is engaging them in a process of self-directed learning." Robert Biswas-Diener

"Commit to something. … Urge them to get involved with those things that are important to them. Help your clients to really 'dig in' to something and to make it important. Such a commitment can lead to excellence…" Bruce Peltier

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