Alchemy of Coaching

Base Metal...

July 2026

Introduction

At the time of writing, many places in England and Wales have broken meteorological records for heat and lack of rainfall. Hot and bothered, we have probably been less productive than is usual. We may ask what is, any longer, usual. Climate change is one of several severe threats for which we require urgent responses. How is increasing uncertainty affecting us and our clients and how will we respond? In this edition of Base Metal Ray poses some questions and offers some possibilities.

Paul and Ray **The Alchemy Team**

How do I provide my clients with what they need?

As the human world becomes, or at least seems to become, more turbulent and uncertain, what challenges are our clients experiencing? Many are unable to plan ahead: if employed they may lack confidence in continuity or prospects for improvement; if unemployed, they are facing increasing difficulty in finding work. Implications of AI for jobs in the UK indicate the rapid disappearance of entry-level opportunities except in manual trades, and availability of such jobs is constrained by employer reluctance to hire. Overloaded by information whilst denied responses to their many applications, job seekers are demotivated and dispirited. Many young people have not entered paid employment and lack access both to vacancies and to real support. For those in large organisations, demands to perform and increase productivity generate unhealthy stress and overwhelm. Interpersonal connection, development of social skills and access to peer support, damaged during the pandemic, have become rare - or have never been available. The gap gets ever wider between the super wealthy and the majority. The capability of the working population to fund the growing proportion of older people is in question and will become unsustainable. Meanwhile the wider context of wars, wildfires and loss of biodiversity contributes to unease. Whilst search engines and large language models offer instant responses which until recently we could only dream of, we are poorly equipped to separate the accurate from the false and to exercise critical thinking to help navigate a virtual environment driven by algorithms which exaggerate difference and exacerbate conflict. Whether we are dystopian, realistic or determinedly optimistic in outlook, we certainly live in “interesting times”.

Q. How are the circumstances of your clients changing, and how does this affect their needs?

Some of my coaching is with postgraduate students, already highly qualified and enjoying good prospects for meaningful employment. Yet they are beset by significant challenges, for example in how to navigate complexity, make informed choices, and deal with the “new normal” of continuous change. If the most able and well-resourced find uncertainty unsettling, how much more so for those without such advantages. We need not be surprised by rising numbers of people presenting metal health difficulties. How capable and confident are we to add value as we coach? How well do we recognise our capacity and boundaries? Are we able to provide for our clients’ needs? What does this mean for our learning and development?

Q. How equipped are you to meet the needs of your clients, or to refer them for other specialist support?

Coaching as a profession continues to grow. More people are choosing to be coaches. More people are being coached. Some of this is happening within organisations, the coaching provided by internal staff. A proportion is still provided by external coaches.

If you earn your living solely through coaching, you are doing well! This could be because you work for a large organisation or as an associate of an established coaching provider. Or you may be accomplished at attracting, and replacing, your clients. Many coaches have a portfolio of work which may, for example, include personnel services, teaching and consulting.

Another way to attract sufficient work is to offer more than one kind of coaching, or even a range of different kinds of coaching-related services. Examples are coach training, webinars, coach supervision, coach mentoring, action learning facilitation, team coaching - and marketing training and advice for coaches. Some coaches specialise in providing support and guidance to organisations wishing to develop a coaching culture and/or to establish and maintain an in-house coaching cadre.

Q. How do you organise and deliver your coaching to generate the income you need?

Increasingly, coaching is now provided and accessed on line. Some of this provision is through on-demand "book a time" appointments. Some is provided by coaches who work only remotely, whether by telephone or via on-line platforms. Some coaches offer an either/or option for face-to-face or remote coaching.

Q. How are you able to make use of your strengths to coach at your best via your preferred channels?

More clients are choosing to engage with virtual coaches: 'coach bots' rather than human beings. As in counselling, so with coaching: there are advantages (e.g. ease of access, ease of showing vulnerability, freedom from perceived judgement by another person) and disdvantages (confirmation bias, lack of challenge, inability to take account of non-verbal, emotional and somatic information) for the client.

Q. How does the growth of virtual coaching affect you and your business?

Book Review

"The Future of Coaching - Vision, Leadership and Responsibility in a Transforming World", Hetty Einzig, Routledge. 2017

Almost ten years on, this compilation of eleven essays continues to inform and provoke. A rewarding resource for coaches and leaders - highly recommended.

"Coaching In Times of Crisis & Transformation - How to help individuals and organizations flourish", Liz Hall et al, Kogan Page, 2016

With a foreword by Tatiana Bachkirova, several chapters by editor Liz Hall and twelve notable contributors, this volume presents perspectives, theories and frameworks - including neuroscience, NLP and mindfulness - through which the coach can respond to crisis, transition and transformation. Alison Whybrow comments: "The generosity of the material that is shared, the power in the stories, the vulnerability and honesty in the case studies make this book an exciting and compelling read that brings you face to face with your own learning edge of working with crisis *(and)* stretches the assumptions of what it is to coach."

Thoughts, ideas and quotations

"Doubt is not a pleasant condition, but certainty is absurd," Voltaire, quoted by Hetty Einzig (see above).

"Our situation is not comparable to anything in the past." Einstein, ditto.

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