

APRIL 2022 | ISSUE 33

Coaching Perspectives

THE ASSOCIATION FOR COACHING
GLOBAL MAGAZINE



Coaching and technology

Coaching leaders in the
world of hybrid work

The present and future
of coaching and technology

Artificial intelligence and
coaching – a change coming?

Exploring the ethics of
technological innovation



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ISSN 2632-9735 (PRINT)

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'The advance of technology is based on making it fit in so that you don't really even notice it, so it's part of everyday life.'

Bill Gates gave this straightforward viewpoint when speaking to *Newsround*, the BBC's news service for kids, around 20 years ago, as the chaos of the dotcom bubble was giving way to the tech revolution of the early 00s. Since then we have seen the smartphone in our pocket, fibre broadband in our offices and homes, online collaboration tools in the cloud, and countless other technological leaps that today we don't really 'notice' – for many of us, they are simply part of everyday life.

It's a given that we've all had to embrace technology a little more in the last couple of years. I'd be very surprised if anyone reading this hasn't coached online significantly more than they did before 2020. Those who previously would look blankly if asked to 'jump on a Zoom' or 'send me a Teams invite' now know exactly what you're talking about. We are all well-versed in bouncing from one online meeting to the next, trying to remember which platform we're on and how to unmute ourselves.

I've had my own run-in with technology, before the pandemic. I worked in social media for a number of years and found that the continuous requirement to be connected, to be aware of what was being said about your brand day and night, was exhausting. It led me to quit all social platforms for some time, for my own wellbeing. Now, I'm clearer in my own mind about my presence on social platforms – I'm mindful in how I use them, which is sparingly – and I find I have more space for deeper, uncluttered thought.

Of course there are blessings and curses to be found in the proliferation of any new technology. In the corporate world, many businesses are wrestling with the knotty problem of hybrid work: how to run a truly 21st-century business in an inclusive, fair and efficient way, when a large proportion of employees are not gathered in an office for five days a week. There is an ongoing, radical rethink of our workplaces and practices: why and when it's best to gather people together in a room or building, and what work can be done more efficiently, asynchronously.

Hybrid working is here to stay, and executive coaches will need to step up to help leaders redesign their businesses to take full advantage of its benefits: Fredrik Fogelberg has some steers to help you and your clients navigate this uncertain but exciting new space. Introverts have found new vigour, coupled with different challenges, with the advent of hybrid work: Martha Freymann Miser and Leatrice Oram explore what coaches can do in the online space to help clients who process their thoughts internally. How about switching the ever-present camera off, they advise?

Does the growth of artificial intelligence threaten the coaching industry? This theme emerges in a number of articles, and

is mirrored in the recent AC podcast series on Coaching and Technology. Are we, as coaches, about to be replaced by lines of code that can do our job quicker and more efficiently? The answer from several of our contributors to this issue is a resounding 'no' – not in our lifetimes, and likely never. AI cannot come close to matching the deep, human connection and rapport generated by a person-centred coaching conversation. Our intuitive questioning when we coach in the moment is unrivalled by any algorithm.

What AI could do, however, is take away some of the pain in coaching – to pick up the grunt work, leaving humans to do what they do best: be human. Silicon-based automation of booking sessions, on-boarding clients and initial goal-setting could create space for our carbon-based organic brains to do more nuanced and complex thinking together. Coaching bots could help clients with regular exercises between sessions: some bots are delivering CBT effectively, while others can emulate the GROW model, so that your client is making faster progress and forming good habits. AI-driven data could help coaches in their reflective practice, raising our own self-awareness as we do with our clients. And of course, with the proliferation of all this data come the ethical questions: who owns the data, where is it stored and what is it used for?

What about when we just need to switch off? How many of us deal with clients who are experiencing digital overwhelm – whether due to the scale of the information they must process daily or to increased hours spent in back-to-back online meetings – finding themselves exhausted each evening? An important counterpoint to our tech-filled lives is the need to switch off screens, to put pencil to paper, to step outside into nature, to breathe the air, to walk mindfully and practise slow thinking. Jackee Holder argues that the need for this is greater now than ever before – for ourselves as coaches as much as for our clients.

If I can summarise the message of this issue, it is one of balance: embracing the benefits that technology brings, while being aware of its risks and limitations. Undoubtedly, the advance of technology will change coaching just as it has changed most other industries. Our challenge as coaches is to maintain our humanity in the midst of this change: to hold space for deep thought, to listen and to empathise. I hope you enjoy this issue exploring the intersection of coaching and technology, as much as we have enjoyed assembling it. As always, we'd love to know your thoughts and reactions.

Warm wishes,

James Bridgeman

Co-editor

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Kevin Goltef
Cogent Partnership and AC Coach

REMEMBERING ALISON WHYBROW

Eve Turner and Josie McLean, co-founders of the CCA with Dr Alison Whybrow, remember their friend and colleague, who passed away earlier this year.

On Sunday 27 February, with her family and best friend at her side, Alison Whybrow passed serenely from this world. We were expecting the news, but it still came as a dreadful shock to us and to her global professional network of friends and colleagues. Sharing the news, we were constantly reminded of how loved Ali was and the respect and admiration people have for her.

We worked closely with Ali, on developing the Climate Coaching Alliance (CCA) since November 2019 and on a book, *Ecological and Climate-conscious Coaching: A Companion Guide to Evolving Coaching Practice* (with Peter Hawkins), which poignantly has just gone to press. The book is dedicated to Ali. We so missed her smile, her warmth, her gentle challenge and her whole being in the last few months of our writing and editing – and we continue to do so.

The CCA was born out of our collective vision of bringing people together to consider how we can make a difference in the climate and ecological crisis and what our actions might be. It now encompasses nearly 2,000 people and communities worldwide. We are all grieving, missing Ali's huge and inspirational presence. When we first heard of Ali's terminal prognosis in the second week of February we organised a web-based platform where many people left messages for her – though it's entirely possible that, with her 'don't fuss' attitude, she never looked at it. We are sharing just some of these with permission here.

Professionally and personally, Alison was courageous and at the forefront. For example, she was hugely active in her local community in Surrey and was a founder of the Hive, Kingston, a climate emergency centre; chief organiser of Kingston Greenzone, part of Kingston Carnival; chair of Transition Town Kingston; a regular supporter of the Kingston Chamber of Commerce; and gave talks and took part in consultations and meetings with Kingston Council on climate issues.

Ali also championed the inclusion of coaching into the practice of psychology, writing and teaching in coaching and coaching psychology, co-authoring the letter that gave birth to the CCA, and gently winning over many sceptical hearts about coaching leaning into the ecological crisis. As Michael Cavanagh from the Coaching Psychology unit in Sydney observed: 'It is a tragic loss of one of the shining lights in our field, all too young and all too early. *Vale* Alison.'

We have invited some people who knew and worked with Alison to share their reflections. As we hand over to them, we continue to hold Ali in our hearts as we take forward our work.

I recall when I first met Alison two decades ago. On reflection, probably a life changing day for me! A group of us were attempting to develop coaching psychology as a distinct area of evidence-based practice within the British Psychological Society (BPS) and Ali volunteered to join me as a co-proposer. What struck me most of all was her calmness and composure under pressure. It was during this period that I first met Georgie and Millie (enchanting babies at the time!). Over the following 18 years Ali continued to greatly influence the development of coaching psychology through her articles, research, chapters and conference keynotes, and through co-editing, with me, two editions of the *Handbook of Coaching Psychology*. Her insight, patience, people and organisational skills helped to keep projects on track. With the International Society for Coaching Psychology, Ali, Siobhain and I launched the Climate Change and Coaching Psychology Research Faculty in December 2021 in order to investigate climate change and how coaching psychology can assist in facing the challenges created by climate change. Ali's enthusiasm was inspirational. She was fun to work with and had an understated, yet often profound sense of humour. Like many of us, I will miss her as a friend and close colleague who was always there for me and others. Thank you, Ali.

Professor Stephen Palmer, president, International Society for Coaching Psychology

It is an honour to have known Alison, whose passion and commitment saw a drive and determination that few can match. She was instrumental as a teacher, coach, mentor and supervisor to many on their journey to becoming coaches. We were honoured to include her on the i-Coach faculty for many years – a team player with a great sense of humour. Students, too, appreciated her warm and gentle approach. It encouraged them to achieve more than they could have imagined. She has enriched the lives of her students and the clients they will touch.

Alison's impact will continue to live on. It will be realised whenever anyone picks up one of her books. It will be remembered in future connections where compassion, inclusion and calmness reside. It will be felt across the profession and the world.

Caroline Horner, i-coach academy

Almost 20 years ago, Alison was the first coaching psychologist I spoke to when I was keen to learn more about the relationship between coaching and psychology. My career might have been somewhat different had she not invited me to get more involved in the development of coaching psychology. Alison was, and will continue to be, inspirational to me and to many people through her tireless work and love for others and our natural world. It was an absolute privilege to work with her across different projects and pathways over nearly two decades. More recently, shared activities with the International Society for Coaching Psychology have involved the International Congress events and Climate Change and Coaching Psychology Research Faculty, as well as a range of publications. I will miss many things about Alison, such as her wisdom, insights, and energy – and our shared passion for horses.

Dr Siobhain O'Riordan PhD, chair, International Society for Coaching Psychology

Alison worked with the Pachamama Alliance to build an environmentally sustainable, spiritually fulfilling, socially just human presence on the planet. Technically, she was a volunteer, but it felt more that she was giving us her pro bono expertise. She raised money, donated money, hosted workshops, enrolled like-minded souls and mentored participants from across the world who were eager to become game changers. Alison embodied what we sometimes call a 'pro-activist': someone who stood for a vision of liberation, who could resist and stop harm when needed, but was fundamentally guided by a north star infused with justice and sustainability. She was unstoppable, inspiring and an honour to work with. There are dozens of other pro-activists engaged in the world because of Alison's leadership. In that way, her life force continues.

Mario Trigueros, Pachamama Alliance

We first met Ali online in early 2019 through our mutual involvement with Extinction Rebellion. Very few in the coaching world were openly concerned about the climate and ecological emergency at that time, so we instantly felt a deep relief that finally we could talk about it together. When Zoe suggested we call on coaches and the coaching professional bodies to declare a climate emergency, Ali and I readily agreed, and together we crafted an open letter on LinkedIn, published by *Coaching at Work* in July 2019. When Ali, Eve and Josie set up the CCA we were both delighted to become founding members. Ali brought to this world a special set of qualities – her serenity, her clear bright intelligence, her warmth and sense of humor, her love for nature and her deep compassion – not forgetting the twinkle in her

eye! We all miss her greatly – her love and her beauty will shine on.
Zoe Cohen and Linda Aspey

Alison Whybrow died far too young, when not only her two daughters and husband but also the world still need her great love and determined heart.

I first met Alison 15 years ago when I was running a workshop for i-Coach. For many years I supervised her work, admiring her dedicated professionalism in her coaching, supervision, training and writing. I was privileged to watch her growing ecological concerns and her contributions to XR, Transition Towns and the Pachamama Alliance – as well as working with her local neighbourhood. She was one of the three pioneering founders of the CCA and developed her own unique contribution, Regenerative Coaching. In all her writing she blended rigorous theory with practical application and examples and I saw her heart and inner spiritual being increasingly shining through, not only her writing, but also her teaching, supervision and practice.

Our book *Ecological and Climate Conscious Coaching: A Companion Guide for the Journey* (published by Routledge September 22) has contributions from over 60 coaches from around the world. It stands as both a tribute to Ali and part of her legacy, which also lives on through the many people she trained and supervised, through her books and articles – and in all those inspired by Alison's generous heart and gentle wisdom.

Professor Peter Hawkins

You have inspired hundreds of us, and we walk in your footsteps and alongside you.

Samia Shehadeh

You exemplify the light warrior... a beacon for us all in this work to re-love our planet.

Hetty Einzig

I hear your heart, compassion and kindness in everything you do – and I also hear the fierceness, passion and devotion in the work you do... invoking a call to do better in support of all things living.

Jeanine Bailey

I shall always sense you in my remaining days because you chose to touch my heart and welcome me as if we'd been friends since birth.

Janet Harvey

You taught me so much about myself and how to allow and be. The vivid thread that you have weaved in the tapestry of my life and the lives of those around you is strong and lasting and will be taken forward, forever.

Gosia Henderson

Is it time to embrace the technology transformation of coaching?

While digitisation is a top priority in the corporate world, coaches remain nervous. [Omar Alaoui](#) and [Jonathan Passmore](#) dive deep and share their insights.

As the corporate world digitises, the coaching industry has begun to follow. In fact, digitisation and the development of multiple communication and performance apps has been driving coaching buyers' expectations over the past three or more years. Buyers who have seen the introduction of Slack, LinkedIn Learning and multiple other communication and development tools are asking how they can scale their coaching practice to deliver similar outcomes. What seems obvious is that the future of coaching is now being shaped by digital transformation, as has wider learning and development, and organisational life. But what is also clear is there is a nervousness within coaching – a desire to stick to the cottage industry methods of the 2010s.

THE WORK ENVIRONMENT: THE MOST PERMISSIVE TO TRANSFORMATION

Over the past few decades, technology has become ubiquitous in the work environment. The main drivers have been productivity, efficiency, performance and convenience. In coaching, it has become almost impossible to work without a computer over the past two years, given lockdowns and restrictions across the globe. But other technologies, from new coaching platforms to whiteboards, diary management systems and virtual reality (VR), are also beginning to effect the way coaches manage their businesses. Each brings implications in terms of management but also questions about the future of ethical practice and for coach training.

EARLY TRANSFORMATIONS: CAN I USE A WIDELY USED TECHNOLOGY TO COACH?

The first widespread technological innovation in coaching was the telephone. In fact, many of the early American coaching pioneers, such as Thomas Leonard, started with phone coaching. Phone coaching enabled coaches to work with

clients spread across different locations. Coaches lacked the visual cues from facial expressions and body language, but they became highly skilled in drawing inference from tone of voice, pace of speech and silence. Research has confirmed there is no difference between face-to-face and 'distance' coaching in terms of the outcomes.^{i,ii,iii}

VIDEO-CONFERENCING TOOLS: THE ANSWER TO THE DRAWBACKS OF PHONE-ENABLED COACHING

The emergence of video conference tools in the early 2000s, such as Skype, provided a solution to some of the drawbacks of voice-only communication. Confidence in these tools grew during the early 2010s and increased dramatically from 2015 onwards with the growing popularity of Zoom. However little regard was given to GDPR or data protection in general, to scalability or to measurement. This was to all come later.

During the early 2010s other apps also started to emerge, offering coaches the opportunity to engage with online whiteboards (Mural and Miro, both launched in 2011), as well as calendar systems (Calendly). By the late 2010s, many coaches were starting to explore the potential of these tools for facilitating and for helping clients capture notes in sessions, as well as for booking appointments.

The impact of Covid in 2020 brought all of this into sharp focus. As data from the Global Coach survey noted, most coaches shifted their businesses online, while organisations started to turn their attention towards ways in which technology might enable them to overcome the challenges of supporting and developing workforces that were geographically scattered, and in the main working from home.^{iv}

USEFUL APPS FOR COACHES

White boards: Mural, Miro, Jamboard

Digital pictures/word cards: WOMBO Dream, thisartdoesnotexist, Hoppot

Creative writing: Magnetic Poetry, Dave Birss Story Dice

Constellations: ProReal, SystemicVR

Diary management: Calendly

Connection: Zoom, Google Meet, Teams

Client engagement tool: Quenza

Habit tracking: mood tracker Remente

Visual tools: Symbli

Career planning: Pathsource

One of the key concerns for many coaches is the impact that technology may have on outcomes. The reality is there is little evidence at this stage to confirm or deny these anxieties. Similarly, many writers in the field have highlighted the potential of online delivery, but again with little data specific to coaching.^{v,vi,vii} However, multiple studies have explored the impact of digital delivery compared to face-to-face delivery in contexts such as telemedicine and counselling. The evidence confirms that clients highly value the convenience of these modes of delivery – and that, depending on the nature of the conversation (assuming no physical examination is required), telemedicine has demonstrated its value as a way to deliver parts of the healthcare system. This echoes the result from the Global Coach survey, in which coaches identified convenience as one of the key benefits of online delivery, and in which more than 80% of respondents said they expected to continue using online delivery as their main mode of delivery post-pandemic.

DIGITAL COACHING PLATFORMS: DEMOCRATISING ACCESS TO COACHING

The most recent step in the technological revolution has been the emergence of digital platforms. Many only date back three or four years, and were experiencing strong growth before the pandemic, but the impact of lockdowns and the emergence of hybrid working in many organisations has supercharged this growth. Many have seen five-fold growth in 2020 and 2021. The best of these platforms bring together the science of coaching with technological innovations, offering large global organisations secure digital communications using audio and visual channels, with the ability to offer coaching to hundreds of employees across multiple countries. They have built-in performance metric dashboards collecting data on coach and coachee evaluations of the sessions, number of engagements, length of session and coachee evaluations of their progress.

LESSONS FROM PRACTICE

For a successful video enabled session, it is important to be attentive to a few details in setting up the session. For instance:

1. **Contracting:** agree with the coachee that you will allow more pauses than in normal conversation to ensure the person has finished speaking.
2. **Eye contact:** maximise eye contact by placing your camera directly above the window containing the streaming video of your client.
3. **Silence:** be mindful of the impact of silence online. It can sometimes be misinterpreted as a fault with the technology or as an adverse reaction to what has just been said.

A number of providers have now stepped beyond digital coaching to include as part of their offer access to asynchronous personalised learning content libraries, available in multiple languages to suit the needs of the global organisations they serve.

As a result of this shift in provision many coaches have taken up the opportunity to combine their own self-employed business activities with becoming a partner of a digital platform and a member of a large coach community. Research suggests that the early adopters of the switch to platforms, before the impact of Covid in January 2020, were those who did best during the pandemic, witnessing a growth in both income and in working hours.

This switch to an online working model, however, has other implications. It requires coaches to develop new skills, and professional bodies to think again about the competencies for a professional coach and the ethical standards for coaches who are working in these new digital environments.

DIGITAL COACHING PLATFORMS AND AI APPS

Sharpist
BetterUp
Ezra
LeaderAmP
Zoomi
Axoniffy
Vyou

CASE STUDY: LACOSTE

Renaud Legrand, people development manager (Lacoste)

ABOUT LACOSTE

With more than 1,200 stores and 8,500 employees across four continents, Lacoste is a unique brand of casual luxury embodying French elegance.

CONTEXT

Lacoste's goal was to enable top managers, international leaders and high potential employees worldwide to:

- Learn from each other, share best practices and create lasting relationships.
- Deepen their knowledge of the Lacoste culture, vision and strategy.
- Understand and apply the Lacoste managerial reference framework.
- Effectively manage performance.

There were three main reasons Lacoste selected a digital partner:

- The desire to create more consistency between cultural and managerial practices within the group, in all countries.
- The possibility of blending individual and collective coaching approaches with a strong conviction that collective intelligence is a powerful lever for advancing talents.
- The benefits and features offered by the digital coaching platform.

SOLUTION

The initiative was first launched with HR managers located around the world.

- Collective approach: groups of colleagues met monthly for six months through a platform (digital

group coaching). The collective sessions were facilitated by a group coach or a team coach. Participants discussed joint issues and shared best practices.

- Individual assignments: the collective sessions were followed by individual development coaching assignments to support participants in their journey towards transformation, working on specific development areas (identified during group coaching sessions or with line managers).

Participants were able to learn from their peers, adopt new behaviours and create lasting professional networks. They developed a sense of belonging and could foster cross-functional collaboration.

ADDED VALUE OF TECHNOLOGY IN THIS COACHING PROGRAMME

First and foremost, the simplicity the digital platform came along with:

- Easy access to coaching assignments' management (coach choice, (re)scheduling sessions, technical support).
- The easiest access to a quality coach pool (with high selection criteria).

Secondly, the extensive learning content: as a participant, you learn and grow during the coaching session. But you can go even further thanks to the micro-learning content (tool sheets) the coaches shared with their groups according to their specific needs.

Thirdly, the capacity to easily bring people together, no matter the location: connecting to the same session, with the same coach, people from different places and even different countries.

Last, but not least, the very good feedback the HR team received from the beneficiaries, with a visible impact within the organisation as a whole.

DATA PROTECTION AND GDPR

With the switch online, one challenge facing many global organisations and digital providers is the need for compliance with data protection rules in the regions where they work. Among the most challenging are the EU's GDPR regulations, recently amplified by Schremes II, a court ruling that further raised the bar in terms of compliance.

While EU providers such as MoovOne, CoachHub and Sharpist built GDPR compliance into their processes from the start, many non-EU players are engaged either in a catch-up process, trying to adapt processes such as where data is stored, or in some cases have abandoned compliance and instead are opting to focus on regions where lighter regulation applies.

At least one large provider has decided to move in the opposite direction, and has implied that it will be recording all conversations as part of its processes. The intention here is likely to be to create the datasets to be able to programme an AI coach.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

For many coaches, this last point is their main fear: that professional coaches will be replaced by AI. Some non-EU providers are indeed interested in this – hence these secret recording practices – but EU platforms appear to be more interested in leveraging AI to help in coach-coachee matching in selecting personalised learning through creating a 'Netflix experience' in their learning libraries, creating nudge activities to encourage continued learning between sessions and exploring the potential of VR as a tool to enable new experiences for coaches and their clients.^{viii}

What's clear is that technology will play an increasingly important role in the coaching industry, and this trend will gain in speed in the following years. Digital transformation remains one of the major priorities in the corporate world.

Given this, what should coaches do? First: make the choice to embrace technology, engage with multiple platforms, seek out and explore new apps and approaches – from whiteboards to digital calendars – and review the opportunities on digital platforms. Second: make an active commitment to keep up with new technology. In this space, early adopters have the advantage.

What is the one technology innovation to watch for 2022 and beyond? Probably VR. VR devices, such as Facebook's Oculus Quest 2 are becoming increasingly cheap. These are supported by the emergence of new apps like MeetVR, providing spaces for coaches and their clients to meet. These don't offer simply meeting rooms with whiteboards, pens and so on; many also offer the chance to integrate data from other applications, and immersive environments. Such tools might offer the perfect destination for global teams to connect and engage in team coaching or development workshops, reducing their carbon footprint, saving time and creating an engaging experience.

As coaches, we should take responsibility for shaping the future of our industry. While new tech giants have emerged, it is coaches whose skills and insights are playing a part. It's our responsibility to ask about the data they hold and collect. Professional associations also have a role to play setting standards for digital provision, ensuring legal and ethical compliance.

Failures of government reveal how over-dominant firms in the tech space can become unethical over time. It is only through a collaborative approach with coaches, professional bodies, apps and tech companies that we can ensure that the industry adjusts to changing needs in training and practice – while ethical and legal practice stays at the heart of the profession.

VR MEETING APPS

VR Meeting Apps, Immersive, MeetinVR, AltSpace VT, Sinespace Breakroom, Horizon Workrooms, Mozulla Hubs, Frame VR, VTime XR

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LEADING HYBRID TEAMS: WHAT LEADERS AND COACHES NEED TO KNOW

Fredrik Fogelberg asks what we need to know about hybrid working models and explores how we can support clients to come to terms with this radical transformation in work organisation.

The shift to a hybrid model of work, which for many of us came in quite suddenly, has now become a permanent feature for many workplaces. Inevitably, it has also raised a number of questions for leaders. Some of the ones I have been hearing from my executive clients include:

- ‘How can we create more engagement and a sense of belonging throughout the whole company?’
- ‘How do we set clear principles and expectations for when to work at the office?’
- ‘How can we achieve the proper balance of remote and in-person work, and reap the benefits of both?’
- ‘How can I make sure that people who participate virtually in a meeting or workshop get the same experience as people who are participating in the room?’

Yet there are also huge potential positives in these developments, which as coaches we can help our executive clients to realise.

NOT BACK TO ‘NORMAL’

Among experts, there seems to be a consensus that even when the Covid pandemic comes to an end, there is no ‘back to normal’, meaning we won’t be back to five days a week in the office.ⁱ

More and more jobs can be handled perfectly well remotely, and leaders who think that they can expect all employees in a post-Covid situation to be present, in the office, from 9 to 5 are clearly fooling themselves.

A recent McKinsey study showed that 29% of the 5,000 people surveyed were likely to switch jobs if their employers required them to work exclusively onsite and nearly three quarters of people prefer to work from home for two or more days per week (see Figure 1).

Some talk about the ‘Big Resignation’, a trend since the start of the pandemic, where a high number of employees have switched jobs.ⁱⁱⁱ

If leaders choose to ignore this trend, they will face a disconnect with their employees and risk losing a large amount of talent, as well as a drop in motivation and engagement levels for those that stay. This is one area where we as coaches can challenge our clients’ view of how work is organised.

On a more positive note, we can help leaders see the return to the workplace as a chance to create a new, more effective operating model that works for the organisation and its employees. Let’s put it in a historical perspective to see how significant the ongoing shift is.

In the 19th century, there was a massive move of workers from fields to factories during the Industrial Revolution. The Second World War witnessed the entry of women into industry on a large scale and in the 1990s, when personal computing and email became commonplace, we saw a huge leap in productivity. Recently, since the start of pandemic, remote working has become the norm and, as a result, the role of the office is fundamentally changing.

DEVELOPING THE HYBRID POLICY

How do organisations set themselves up for this transition and what is required of senior leaders? The main question is how to manage this

Figure 1: Most employees now report preferring a more flexible working modelⁱⁱ

Working model before COVID-19 pandemic and desired working model after COVID-19 pandemic, % of employee respondents (n = 5,043)



Source: McKinsey Reimagine Work: Employee Survey, January 2021

polarity: on the one hand the preferences of the workforce and on the other the core work that needs to do to get the job done.^{iv}

These are the three steps to achieve this.

1. Starting with the workforce, senior leaders need to identify its needs and preferences. Questions that may be useful to ask at this stage are:

- How do people define the ideal balance between in-person and remote working?
- Which tasks require in-person vs remote presence?
- Who would relocate if they could work from anywhere?
- How many employees would consider leaving the organisation if they are not satisfied with the work arrangement?

It is important to look at demographic differences in the responses to these questions: are there clear differences across gender, generations, functions, cultures and commuting distances? Which personality differences appear?

2. Moving to the core needs of the organisation, these aspects come into play:

- Which of our products and services require in-person presence and which can be provided remotely?
- What type of balance between in-person and remote fits and supports our organisational culture?
- Which in-person meetings are truly necessary? Which meetings are ‘nice to have’ in person?
- How do we best on-board new employees?
- How do we enhance connection between the organisation and employees, both online and in person?
- How do we ensure team cohesion, both online and in person?
- How do we ensure cross-functional connections, both online and in person?

3. Developing a framework with guidelines

Different teams will have different needs, so overall guidelines should be high-level. They may include:

- Defining specific collaboration activities that are best done in person (and why).
- Defining which meetings are mandatory in-person (and why).
- How remote and hybrid meetings are best set up and facilitated.

Adjustments will be made as we go along: this is new territory for everyone, and trial and learnings are part of the journey.

‘Management skills are amplified in a remote setting. A good manager becomes excellent, and a mediocre manager is more likely to fail miserably.’ — Neil Gandhi

COMPETENCIES FOR LEADERS IN A HYBRID ERA

Given these challenges, what competencies are required? Here an important role of the executive coach becomes apparent: to help leaders assess their competence and identify development priorities.

Figure 2 is a ‘clock’ showing the competencies and behaviours that I have found to be important for leaders in hybrid organisations.

Figure 2: Important competencies for leaders in hybrid organisations



GREEN

Trust is at the heart of the model because it is the foundation of hybrid or remote leadership. In the 'old days', meaning a fully in-person setting, the manager could observe whether employees came in on time and did not leave early, and control their activities. However, in a remote or hybrid setting, control and command leadership simply does not work. The leader, whether they like it or not, must shift from an input-based to an output-based model of performance management. There has been plenty of evidence since the start of the pandemic that productivity increases rather than decreases when people work from home, so there is no valid reason to mistrust employees' commitment.^{vi}

BLUE

The blue competencies are related to leadership style – aspects of leadership that work differently in a hybrid setting:

- **On-boarding.** It is important to integrate new employees into the organisation and build their emotional connection to the team, the wider company, its culture, the products and its clients. This is harder to do when the employee works completely from home. My 25-year-old son recently started his career with Deutsche Bahn (German railways) and, despite lockdown restrictions, his team manager invited him into the office on his first day to meet team members in person and to brief him on the organisation, the tasks and how the team works together. He felt very welcome and included.
- **Developing a team** can be done perfectly well remotely, as has been proven in many global teams long before Covid. The principle of building 'virtual closeness'^{vii} is about integrating task and relationships aspects into all virtual contacts, a key habit of high-performing remote teams. The hybrid setting, where some team members may be together in person and others are remote, adds a layer of complexity when it comes to team dynamics. Here the proximity bias comes into play: a phenomenon where we, subconsciously, tend to perceive persons who are physically close to us more positively than those who are remote. Research shows that team members who are more present in person tend to have easier access to information, be more visible to senior management and be considered for promotion earlier.^{viii}
- **Facilitating hybrid meetings.** In hybrid meetings typically some participants are together in one room and others join via communication technology. This setting, by default, creates an 'us' and 'them' dynamic. The preferred approach is to have every participant join individually, from separate rooms and through their own device. The second best is for the chair of the meeting to constantly engage the remote participants by calling them by name, pulling them into the conversation and using digital collaboration tools.
- **Physical and mental health.** Remote workers tend to work too long without breaks and extend their workdays with what used to be commuting time. This can have a detrimental effect on physical and mental health. Many clients tell me that their day consists of back-to-back meetings, and some even skip their lunch breaks. Hybrid leaders are faced with the new task of

keeping an eye on their team members' wellbeing, seeing them only through technology. This requires more than just asking 'are you ok?' and taking 'yes' for an answer. A deeper type of listening and observing is needed. As coaches we distinguish between different levels of listening, with 'higher' listening including not just the words but also the feelings and values. Many managers find this hard to do and may also miss what is not being said, expressed between the lines or simply by using silence. In an international context, team members are likely to differ in how explicitly they express themselves, something managers must be sensitive to and know how to interpret. For instance, in many so-called 'high-context cultures', saying no or disagreeing with your boss is seen as inappropriate.

As for physical wellbeing, some organisations provide budget for setting up a proper home office arrangement or home visits by an ergonomist, who gives advice about how to arrange a chair, desk and computer.

GREY

Networking. Informal and spontaneous encounters in the office are often seen as essential to networking. One often-heard argument is that the number of cross-functional conversations is reduced in hybrid organisations – the chats at the coffee-machine, elevator or canteen. In my opinion, this is not correct.

First, in the old 100% in-person office days, spontaneous contacts were mostly limited to the building or even the floor where one worked, which tended to house one's closest co-workers anyway.

Second, most networking nowadays is done through digital tools. Ask a 30-year-old how they build and maintain relationships and the likely reply is that this is done mostly on their mobile devices.

YELLOW

Digital savvy and cybersecurity. A hybrid leader relies heavily on digital tools, so they should be comfortable with these. They know which tools to use for which purpose and are curious about new digital developments that can benefit the team. For example, when a working relationship is under pressure, they will call the person rather than address the issue in email.

In addition, being aware of and adhering to the organisation's security policy becomes more and more important as cybercriminals pose an increasing threat to organisations.

ORANGE

Using physical spaces. The role of the office is undergoing a fundamental transition. This requires leaders to think creatively about what the office is for. There is hardly a need anymore for individual cubicles where employees spend the whole day behind their laptop or in remote meetings. The office will be redefined as a place to meet peers and colleagues across functions, collectively engage in complex tasks such as problem-solving, product and strategy development and conflict resolution, to name a few.

RED

Cross-cultural savvy. Hybrid teams are often diverse in nature, so being aware of how cross-cultural differences influence the team dynamic and knowing how to leverage this diversity to the team's advantage is an asset. Also, the leader needs to be sensitive to how different cultures relate to remote working and how they prefer to express themselves in virtual meetings.

We can help leaders see the return to the workplace as a chance to create a new, more effective operating model that works for the organisation and its employees.

HOW THE EXECUTIVE COACH CAN HELP

The transition to hybrid working is a fundamental change in how we organise work – and therefore also in leadership. The landscape on the horizon is unclear, with many ambiguities. Leaders embark on a journey of trial and error and need to be open to experimentation, learning and readjusting.

Navigating unfamiliar territory and developing new competencies are 'home ground' for the executive coach. Many leaders are going through this process and the executive coach is well positioned to guide their client on this journey. This article has sought to provide some frameworks to support the coach in helping their clients make sense in this land of ambiguity.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Where business comes to life

Skilled and empathetic listening is important for everyone, but we would argue even more so for introverts, who prefer to process their thoughts and feelings internally.

ALL EARS: THE GIFT OF THE INTROVERT

What do introverts have to offer in this new era of hybrid working?
Martha Freymann Miser and Leatrice Oram explore the gifts of introversion in coaching.

Leatrice: To this day, I love being alone in my internal world. It's not that I'm unsociable. It's just that I long for the moments when I'm entirely with myself and no longer have to translate what's in my head.

Martha: I was an outgoing and physically active child, I just preferred to read a book or climb a tree than share my feelings. For as long as I can remember, I have treasured my vibrant, secret, interior life.

INTROVERSION AND NEW WAYS TO WORK

Let's face it: after a couple of years staring into the Zoom camera, most of us no longer marvel at how the world of work has changed or how we've adapted.ⁱ Clearly, though, this has been more difficult for some

than for others. In particular, we've noticed that many introverts have adapted well, even flourished, in the face of lockdown, isolation and remote work. Curious, we set out to explore why.

Introversion is generally understood as the more-reserved companion of extroversion, part of a spectrum of preference for processing and interaction that manifests across cultures. Typically, introverts need quiet to recharge their batteries, while extroverts thrive on external stimulation. But through experience, we've come to a deeper understanding. We've both felt misjudged for being awkward, shy, aloof, even lacking in the attributes of 'natural leaders'. Conversely, we've benefited from being perceived as empathetic and careful listeners and see our introversion as a source of joy that we've learned to champion in ourselves and others.

This article began as a conversation about our reactions, as introverts, to the disruptions of the pandemic, the rapid shift to remote work and the explosion of virtual technologies. Recognising the privilege of being able to work remotely, continuously and safely throughout this crisis, we decided to deepen our inquiry and see what insights we might offer leaders and coaches when they look at these challenges through the lens of introversion.

LOVING LOCKDOWN AND OTHER LESSONS

Leatrice: Working from home was like a reward: 100% pleasure. I missed nothing about working in an office. Nothing. My concentration, time on task and productivity surged.

Martha: Before Covid, I was on the road all the time. In comparison, quarantine was still and safe. When it ended, I grieved the loss of serenity and the security of my inner world.

'Are you dreading a return to normal?' That was the question asked in a poignant *New York Times* editorial published in June 2021.ⁱⁱ In the video, one self-identified introvert described the relief she felt during quarantine: 'like how a circus animal would feel on a day when there's no shows', she said. She added: 'It was like a snow day from life . . . I felt safer.' In contrast, she shared feelings of dread and 'pressure to re-engage' as the end of quarantine loomed.

By and large, our introverted clients and colleagues reacted in similar ways to lockdown: happy about the solitude and apprehensive about the return to pre-Covid work conditions. In fact, many say wistfully that they miss quarantine. To be clear, these sentiments are not meant to diminish the enormous human cost of the pandemic; instead they underscore the introvert's often unattainable longing for solitude. In contrast, researchers found those with higher levels of extroversion struggled during quarantine. The lack of social connectedness had a negative impact on their sense of wellbeing.ⁱⁱⁱ

What are the implications for coaches? Interestingly, several of our colleagues — both introverts and extroverts — told us they became more withdrawn during quarantine and have continued to be more introspective and choosier about when and with whom they socialise. Consistent with this, a recent study examined how coaches experienced their work given the high levels of stress during the pandemic.^{iv} Those interviewed reported an increased emphasis on self-care and reflection, both core competencies of introversion. This was necessary for their own wellbeing and for their efficacy as coaches dealing with heightened emotions in workplace environments. Finally, the opportunity for more reflection sparked both innovation and a renewed focus on core coaching practices, on listening, reflecting back, and summarising the experience of those they coach.

This emphasis on reflective practice and a return to basics is interesting. As any experienced coach is aware, rapport, trust and intimacy are essential to a productive coaching relationship. In fact, an extensive body of brain research illustrates how these practices give us a sense of safety.^v Skilled and empathetic listening is important for everyone, but we would argue even more so for introverts, who prefer to process their thoughts and feelings internally. For these individuals, being asked to share their feelings — especially in the moment — may feel less natural and possibly riskier.

THE ZOOM PARADOX

Leatrice: I'll miss Zoom when it's no longer our default. As a meeting facilitator, I see facial reactions close up and anticipate questions based on them. What I won't miss is seeing myself on camera: I learned late in quarantine to turn off self-view.

Martha: I love Zoom because it connected me to my loved ones during the long months of lockdown. But Zoom makes me tired. And it often feels like everyone is so busy looking at themselves and (mis) interpreting facial expressions that they've stopped listening.

Paradoxically, in the midst of solitude, Zoom arrived, and in a matter of weeks, video-conferencing took over our work lives — and sometimes our home lives. How have these virtual technologies affected the coaching experience, particularly from the perspective of the introvert?

On the plus side, video-conferencing is a game-changing tool that facilitated the rapid shift to virtual work, study and socialisation. Remote work, forced by the pandemic, taught many place-based teams and leaders to innovate and achieve new efficiencies. Arguably, Zoom also plays to the introvert's innate powers of listening and observation. Whereas staring at one another might have seemed intrusive in the past, introverts could now abandon all pretence and happily examine every aspect of their colleagues' words and expressions.

But Zoom is a mixed bag, and it wasn't long before the phrase 'Zoom fatigue' was coined. Why? One reason is that attending to nonverbal cues can be tiring, overloading us with close-up eye contact and extraneous visual information.^{vi} Brain researchers also tell us that people can feel foggy and burned out after long Zoom days because the brain is trying to do its job interpreting visual cues while digitisation messes with our ability to understand facial expressions and to mirror — a capability essential for creating empathy and connection.^{vii} Video conferencing can also feel taxing when dealing with strong emotions. One of our colleagues described feeling 'consumed by emotion belonging to a room that was no longer real'.

Examining the pros and cons of Zoom brings us to a longstanding debate about coaching. For many coaches, the default assumption has been that nonverbal cues like eye contact and body language are essential for establishing trust, privileging face-to-face coaching and visual technologies. Others call this a myth, arguing that choice of words, speech patterns and other verbal cues ('hmm', 'mmm' and the like) may be more useful in creating safe and effective coaching environments.^{viii}

Related to this is a useful body of research on ‘virtual intimacy’ conducted before the pandemic by Ghislaine Caulat at Ashridge Business School. For many, Caulat found, the phone is more intimate than face-to-face because it ‘feels like whispering into someone’s ear’, amplifying listening skills and forcing the senses to ‘slow down and focus solely on the voice.’^{ix} In addition, the audio-only environment frees the listener to stand, pace, and become more physically involved in the conversation. At the very least, her findings should provoke thinking about how and when coaching by phone might benefit introverted coaches and the people they coach.

KEEP IT SIMPLE. LISTEN!

Leatrice: My introversion is inseparable from my identity. It is who I am, and how I am. It was only when I was able to fully perceive and communicate my own way of being in the world that my career took off.

Martha: For many years, I lacked the language to explain my inward focus. Learning to express and honour my introversion has made my life more fulfilling.

So what conclusions can we draw from this inquiry into introversion? There are a number to explore.

First, coaches should check their biases, preferences and default assumptions. They also should discuss the pros and cons of technology tools with coaching clients, remembering that most have been so firmly indoctrinated by Zoom that they may need support in considering other options.

And experiment: try shutting off the camera, or working by phone, or encouraging clients to stand, pace, snack or even stare out the window to engage their other senses and enrich their experience. Coaching, at its best, should feel freeing, offering new ways of thinking and being.

In the end, whatever modality, coaches must try to honour and optimise both their own and their clients’ introverted superpowers. Only by listening and observing can coaches and clients experience the thoughtful silence, careful attention and deep reflection that are the gift of the introvert.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Martha Freymann Miser PhD and Leatrice Oram PhD are US-based scholar-practitioners, educators, fellow introverts, and graduates of Antioch University’s doctorate in leadership and change. Leatrice focused her doctoral studies on introversion and leadership^x and has been a leader in higher education for over 30 years. She has devoted years to lifting up emergent leaders and correcting career-limiting misperceptions of introverts. She is currently chief of staff to the president of Keene State College in New Hampshire.

Martha’s understanding of introversion comes from decades as a coach and consultant, and includes 12 years teaching leadership and personality type to hundreds of leaders from over 35 nations. Martha is president of Aduro Consulting, a coaching and consulting company specialising in leadership and change for purpose-driven companies. She is also a member of the editorial board of *Coaching Perspectives*.

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Just gazing

“I like to lie

On the grass

Looking at the sky

In the evening”

Lying on the grass

Gazing upwards

I love that

You told me

But more...

Regenerative

“Regenerative focus”

Courageous, beyond.

We will witness

The returning

You helped -

So gratefully

“Sometimes

With my daughter

Sometimes reading

Sometimes chatting!”

Your spirit

So attuned

To the wonders...

Just gazing is enough

Poetic

All of it

Such a joy

Flowing

And gaze

With awe amongst

The wondrous web.

Just gazing.

“Not so much

Star gazing”

You said

“Just gazing”

Your purpose

“Bringing people

And planet

Into focus”

Through you

Like whale waters

This precious life

So easy to share

Alister Scott
11 February 2022

Written for Dr Alison Whybrow – an incredible woman, coach, gentle friend, co-founder of the Climate Coaching Alliance – on hearing of her diagnosis of terminal cancer, on the same day that I also read in Positive News that Iceland has announced that it is to cease whale hunting, leaving just two countries still doing so. You are part of that web, dear Alison; you have helped to make that happen, maybe indirectly, but you are part of that inspiring web.

GOING ANALOGUE

We're all swamped in ones and zeroes! Going for a walk, journaling or responding to a writing prompt by hand are antidotes to digital overwhelm says [Jackee Holder](#).

Recently I caught myself frowning in the middle of my day. I paused, and traced the contorting of the skin across my forehead to a sinking feeling about the number of emails in my inbox – that I was avoiding engaging with.

It felt like finding yourself stuck in a traffic jam, going nowhere. That feeling of knowing that you are either going to be really late or miss an important event – and there's nothing much you can do about it. That's how I feel about the online world right now. If I see yet another diary invite twinkling in my inbox I am liable to let out a mighty long scream like a wolf in the night!

SO HOW DID WE GET HERE, AND WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?

The digital takeover crept up on us over the last 20 or so years, slowly at first, and then suddenly we were hooked in. We've become distracted. I feel it whenever I sit down to write. Often it is only after

several attempts that I make it to my 'writing space' because of all the incoming data from my laptop or my phone that keeps me constantly in the distraction mode. Reacting to the constant barrage of distractions on our screens has become an automated reflex. We do it almost unconsciously, without thinking – as if in our sleep. This continual distraction keeps us lodged in the shallows: our work stays mainly on the surface as we hurtle from one meeting to another, with no space to recover in between.

I believe there's a price to pay for our digital overload and overwhelm. The digital world has interfered with, and disrupted, the body's own internal clock. Our bodies' natural circadian rhythms rise and fall like the tides over the course of a day, following the pull of Earth's rotation. The internal body clock has an hourly impact on blood pressure, levels of iron in the body, blood sugar levels, hormones, pulse rate and mental alertness. Our constantly wired relationship with the online world and our absorption of artificial light is wreaking havoc with our bodies' natural intelligence and

alignment. It has an impact on sleep, mood and energy levels.ⁱ

I've noticed how the online world has facilitated a faster pace of moving through the day, which has spilled into other areas of life. When I'm out and about the city I'm increasingly aware of people approaching from behind and speeding past, leaving behind in the air an unspoken message: 'Get out of the way slowcoach, I'm way faster than you.' I see this repeated in learning spaces, where learners find it hard to stay focused, lured by the many distractions on their computer screens. Or in the upfront praise I often get when on the odd occasion I do manage to reply promptly to an email. 'Fast' in our society is recognised and valued, 'slow' is not. I can think of so many wonderful things we do in any given day that go unrecognised and that does not include a fast response to an email.

On one coaching call I noticed my client's eyes flick down and stay downwards for a couple of seconds. Our relationship was well established so I offered up an enquiry: 'What just happened then, when your eyes flickered away?' 'Oh nothing,' came the reply, 'I was only closing the pop-ups on my screen.' On another call, just as we were deepening into our conversation about the coachee's struggles with managing their time and workload, an alert popped up that the coachee signalled to me he needed to take. Two minutes later the he was gone - called into an unscheduled, urgent meeting with his line manager that he felt pressurised to accept.

We have become creatures of multitasking; but when you switch from one task to another it does not mean the full quality of your attention follows – more often than not, the opposite happens. Author Cal Newport argues that a residue of your attention is left behind, among the after-effects of the previous task. A part of the thinking mind remains caught up in the workings of the previous task, message, meeting or conversation. Even if you finish off one task and then go straight onto the next, your attention's still divided. Newport references a paper by Sophie Leroy that showed how the quality of your attention and thinking is much lower when we repeatedly switch between tasks.ⁱⁱ

Consider your working day: how many back-to-back meetings? Phrases I very often hear on my video calls are: 'Sorry I'm going to be a few minutes late as I am coming straight from another meeting,' or 'Sorry I have to dash, I have another call I need to jump onto.' Sorry... Sorry...

A long series of consecutive, relentless meetings would not work if we were working in person. Even doing this online puts considerable strain and stress on the body and the mind. The rise of the digital world can be connected to the 'grind culture' that consumes the world globally. Where the Industrial Revolution relied on the machine, nowadays we in return are operating as if we are machines.

I encourage coachees to take time away from their desks: to head outside armed with a notebook and pen.

What does this do to your own thought leadership, the wisdom of your own inner thoughts, ideas and opinions? Newport argues that our increasingly digital lives are playing havoc with our creativity and ability to produce what he calls 'deep work': 'work that requires space and solitude to allow your thoughts to percolate and incubate.'ⁱⁱⁱ He outlines this hypothesis: 'the ability to perform deep work is becoming increasingly rare at exactly the same time it is becoming increasingly valuable in our economy. As a consequence, the few who cultivate this skill, and then make it the core of their working life will thrive.' Our organisations, family systems and networks require what I call fertile thinkers: thought leaders who protect and fill up their creative intelligences through deliberate practices like walking and writing.

Creativity is an intelligence – an intelligence that requires attention and investment. It requires intention and determination to carve out time in your day and in your work for doing more 'deep work'. We can make strides by creating a space – whether it's inside your home, or outside in nature, or in a public space – where you can engage in deep work that is your own. Ask yourself: where is that room or space, physical or psychological, that you can call your own?

Even short bursts of focused, concentrated work can allow us to experience deep work. I encourage coachees to take time away from their desks: to head outside armed with a notebook and pen. To combine walking with thinking, then writing. It's having a remarkable impact for many of my clients. One recently announced at the start of a coaching call: 'I'm finding it so helpful, all this reflection. I am more organised for all my meetings. I find having my notebook' – which she proudly held up to the screen so I could see – 'is a real game-changer.'

Way before the internet was really 'a thing', in my 40s, I started walking. No one told me to start walking. I listened to the inner voice of my own body whispering. I began with early morning walks criss-crossing across south London, navigating through the suburban back streets away from the toxic fumes of the main roads. I would leave home just after sunrise and giving myself a goal of walking from one green space to another. I enjoyed the way walking for long periods of time made me feel. It cleared my thoughts, seemed to empty my mind, then making way for my creativity to emerge and my mind to flood with ideas.

For over 20 years I have been walking, for at least an hour or more, several times a week. Such is the practice that I am programmed to walk through all kinds of weather and seasons without so much as a second thought. Whatever is going on in my life – the good, the difficult and the indifferent – walking and journaling remain core habits. I am recovering from a challenging divorce that took much longer to settle than expected; with work demands that seem never-ending I increasingly find myself more tired and depleted. I'm in frequent need of what I call my 'green prescriptions to counteract the build-up of overwhelm' – a long walk on my own.

Recent research studies indicate that walking out and amongst nature is good for eye health and since lockdown the nation's eye health has taken a big hit. Scanning and looking ahead breaks the hold of focused vision we get locked into when we are sat for hours in front of the computer screen.^{iv} Take yourself off to new locations and the tiny cells at the back of your retina become stimulated and engaged, gaining new and wider perspectives as a result of you absorbing a new scene.

With thousands of thoughts a day streaming through the mind it can feel like a real challenge to see the wood for the trees. Trying out new locations engages your vision in different ways. Walking and getting away from the screen also offer additional health and emotional benefits. Researchers from the University of Stanford (2014) found that a person's creative output increased by an average 60% after going for a walk.

As we talk about different ways to counter the stress many of my coachees face, walking always comes out on top as a tool that is immediate, requires very little set-up and can be completed in varying degrees of time. Solo walks are a great way of connecting and finding focus as you absorb the nature around you. Walking alone gives space for your mind to unwind and relax. No need to be bored: give your walks a theme. One walk could be a 'savouring walk', another day a 'colour walk' or another day, focus solely on thinking about a person or relationship. Use your notebook and a moment to write by hand, to capture reflections and observations that may have emerged. Work doesn't have to happen just at your desk. Use solo walks to work on projects: bring a question that needs some thinking time and use your voice notes on your mobile phone to capture ideas as they emerge.

For coaches, try walk-and-talks with clients. I have found that walking side-by-side with a coachee creates a different kind of psychological safety than sitting directly in front of each other. The lack of eye contact fosters the openness that many coaches have reported feeling when working outdoors.

Work doesn't have to happen just at your desk. Use solo walks to work on projects.

I once encountered an acquaintance I had not seen for some time, on my regular walk around the river at Chelsea, here in London. They joined me as we walked side-by-side, chatting away. They opened up to me about some significant life events I think we would never have covered had we been sat face-to-face over tea or coffee. When our walk ended some two hours later we stopped in a local cafe for something to eat. There was a noticeable absence of the shared intimacy that formed part of our walk and talk.

There's no need to escape to the country to benefit from a dose of nature. The National Health Service in the UK is prescribing regular time spent out in nature and it is estimated that UK parks and green spaces (including those in urban spaces) save the NHS over £111m a year.¹ I find that both I and my clients fare well when we self-prescribe ourselves a green fix. I have watched clients move from feeling overwhelmed and on the verge of burnout to becoming engaged and happier when they started walking and engaging with nature on a regular basis. The same goes for journaling: turning to pen and paper carries many of the same benefits as walking – the two go hand-in-hand. Going analogue, switching from the digital to

the page, is the equivalent of taking a digital detox. Our increased time in front of the screen needs to be balanced with more time outside, away from the screen.

I hope this article has motivated you to consider ways to make walking and writing become acts of deliberate practice. Walking and writing provide fertile space for your brain cells to make new connections and recover from mental fatigue. Attention that is drained by digital overload can be refuelled. As Albert Einstein reminds us: 'Look deep into nature and then you will understand everything better.'

Your deep work is only a matter of a pen, a notebook and a walk away. Begin now: one foot in front of the other is all it takes.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Jackee is the author of four non-fiction titles, *49 Ways To Write Yourself Well*, *Be Your Own Best Life Coach*, *Soul Purpose* and a unique illustrated writing map, *Writing With Fabulous Tree Writing Map: A Writing Map For Parks, Gardens and Other Green Spaces* (2016). Jackee works as a leadership coach and facilitator and was ordained as an interfaith minister in 2001. Her first and second loves include daily city walks and journaling.

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May

Wednesday 11 May
16.00 HKT - Greater China - Virtual
Virtual Café

Wednesday 11 May
10.00 BST / 11.00 CEST - Virtual
The Tavistock Approach to Coaching at Board Level - Dr Robyn Vesey

Thursday 12 May
16.30 GST - Fairmont Bab Al Bahr, Abu Dhabi, UAE - Face to face
Abu Dhabi Launch Event - Khalifa K. Al Hemeiri and Katherine Tulpa

Thursday 12 May
12.00 EST - Canada - Virtual
Virtual Café

Tuesday 17 May
08.30 BST / 09.30 CET / 19.00 AEST
Ireland - Virtual
AC20 International Group Supervision Discovery Series 1

Tuesday 17 May
13.30 BST / 08.30 EDT / 14.30 CET
Ireland - Virtual
AC20 International Group Supervision Discovery Series 2

Thursday 19 May
18.00 BST - Ireland - Virtual
Celebrating the Discomfort of Co-coaching

Thursday 20 May
7.00 PST / 10.00 EST / 15.00 BST / 16.00 CET / 18.00 GST
PROPHET Practitioner Accreditation Training - UK/Europe/Middle East

Tuesday 24 May
09.00-10.00 BST - Ireland - Virtual
Virtual Café

Wednesday 25 May
08.00 AEST - Australia - Virtual
Corporate Roundtable - Corporate only Event - Nicole Bartholomeusz

June

Thursday 2 June
19.00 CET / 18.00 BST
Nordics- Virtual
Virtual Café

Friday 3 June
10.00 CET / 09.00 BST
DACH (Germany, Austria & Switzerland) - Virtual
Community Cafe

Tuesday 7 June
09.00 BST - Ireland - Virtual
Virtual Café

Tuesday 7 June
18.30 AEST
Australia NSW/ACT - Virtual
Finding what works and doing more of it? What is Solution Focus Coaching?
Annette Gray

Thursday 9 June
12.00 EST - Canada - Virtual
Virtual Café

Tuesday 21 June
09.00 BST - Ireland - Virtual
Virtual Café

Wednesday 22 June
19.00 CET / 18.00 BST
DACH (Germany, Austria & Switzerland) - Virtual
Engaging with Supervision as a self-authoring Practice
Ian Mitchell

Thursday 23 June
7.00 PST / 9.00 CST / 10.00 EST
PROPHET Practitioner Accreditation Training - USA/Canada/South America

Wednesday 29 June
18:15 BST / 19:15 CEST / 13:15 EDT
- Virtual
Dying, Death, Grief – How to Help
Jane Duncan Rogers

July

Thursday 7 July
19.00 CET / 18.00 BST
Nordics - Virtual
Virtual Café

Wednesday 20 July
12.00 EST
USA - Virtual
Advancing the Practice of Internal Coaching
Dena Paris and Paula McFadin

Thursday 21 July
09.00 AEST
APAC Discovery Series – Virtual
What Are Coaches Afraid Of? An Exploration of Courage and the Path to Mastery
Joshua Steinfeldt

August

Thursday 4 August
19.00 CET / 18.00 BST
Nordics - Virtual
Virtual Café

Tuesday 23rd August
17.30 AEST
Australia NSW/ACT – Sydney
The Intersection of Development & Play in Experiential Learning
Greg Lourey

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COACHING AS THOUGH THE FUTURE MATTERS

How can we really do anything effective about climate change? By changing the system that drives it, says **Andrew Gaines**. He suggests some helpful tools that can make that change happen.

We have an industrial-economic system that is devouring the planet. If we look at the big picture, we see that now it is undermining our ecological life support systems. In addition to climate change, we have species loss, topsoil loss, falling fresh-water tables and more.

When we're trying to change something so vast and complex it is helpful to have a positive goal. One way to frame such a goal is: the challenge of our time is to evolve a life-affirming culture, rather than continuing on our present course of ecological self-destruction. A life-affirming culture is an umbrella term that includes the aspirations and practical actions of most, if not all, of the environmental-progressive movement. It stands in contrast to economic growth as a defining goal for our time.

So how do we try to bring that goal about? It involves inspiring thoughtful mainstream commitment to doing everything required to pull out of our ecological nosedive.

This in itself combines two novel ideas. The first is inspiring mainstream commitment. Those of us who care about environmental and social wellbeing mostly 'preach to the converted'. Yet in order to reduce the coming troubles, a critical mass of people needs to grasp not only that we are in an ecological emergency, but also the profound changes needed to slow the decline. I want to suggest a way we can go beyond this, and engage people who may not have thought deeply about environmental trends and their implications.

Second, doing everything required. This is a bit of a mind shift, because in reality people mainly work pieces of the puzzle, and do not look at the whole system. That's entirely understandable because the system that drives climate change and other environmental destruction is massive and complex. Again, I want to suggest a way to think about this that makes it mentally manageable and useful.

INNOVATIVE COMMUNICATION TOOLS

In order to reach a critical mass of people, we need both innovative communication tools and a delivery system.

I developed an innovative communication tool, Kitchen Table Conversations.¹ It uses labels on beer coasters to help people keep track of conversations about systemic change. (The idea was stimulated by a former stage magician, who remarked that people like to have physical objects to hang ideas on.)

Through Kitchen Table Conversations we explore the question: What factors in the way our society operates tend to increase CO₂ emissions and other environmental damage?

We start by laying out these circles, and noting that as stuff increases, so do CO₂ emissions and other environmental damage (stuff is everything that we manufacture, from cooking pots to space stations).

Our question then becomes: What factors in the way our society operates tend to increase the amount of stuff we produce and consume (as a proxy for environmental damage)?

The first thing that comes to mind for most people is advertising. In addition, if we look a little more broadly it is clear that, whatever the benefits, both economic growth and population increase environmental damage.

There are psychological factors as well. Sometimes people buy excess stuff to compensate for emotional disturbance: perhaps unresolved trauma or emptiness.

Plus, there is the simple fact that people like stuff.

These drivers cover the main points; there are a few more drivers, but you get the idea. Most people are already familiar with them but the point is to see them as part of a larger pattern. This prepares people to support leadership for large-scale transformative change.

Conclusion: we need local actions plus political will to change the big-picture drivers that make global warming worse.

THE DELIVERY SYSTEM

Changing views one person at a time is time-consuming. But this is perhaps our most effective way of enabling people to expand their thinking. So, our challenge is: how to mass-produce the conversations?

The good news is that we are not without resources. The Association for Coaching is one of the 11 major coaching, mentoring and supervision bodies that signed the Joint Global Statement on Climate Change in 2020. They are committed to offering a collective voice and collaborative action on the climate and ecological crisis. In addition, there are millions of groups that care about environmental and social wellbeing. My idea is to inspire the members of as many groups as possible to talk with people they know – friends and business colleagues – about the reality of our ecological emergency.

To the extent that we can inspire people to act as citizen-educators, we can catalyse a new kind of social change movement.² I would be pleased if you would consider lending your influence to this. We are in an ecological emergency; to pull out is essential to influence mainstream thinking.

I have set up Inspiring Transition as a robust support platform for citizen-educators. It is not an organisation in the usual sense: the participants act as autonomous agents aligned to a common purpose. We provide tools to make transformative conversations effective, including a slide deck and demonstration conversation, which are helpful in communicating the overall vision.

PERHAPS YOU HAVE RESERVATIONS

I recognise that becoming this kind of activist can be a stretch for many coaches. We may coach visionary leaders, but we are usually not the carriers of vision of ourselves. In addition, the ethos of coaching includes 'not being imposing', and this is appropriate. However, if we have valuable ideas and ways of thinking that our clients do not, it can be a service to introduce them. Of course, this must be done tactfully. Coaches can inquire if the people they are coaching are open to a conversation about climate change, and perhaps have the conversation after hours pro bono.

Understandably, some people might feel that they do not know enough. But actually, we do not have to be experts. Much of what we are talking about is stuff that people already know. It is a matter of helping them connect the dots to see a bigger pattern. As well, you may want to avoid creating controversy. Kitchen Table Conversations give us a way to conduct conversations without immediately plunging into controversy.

Some people hope that if each of us does what we are moved to do, this will make a significant difference. It is true that our local initiatives are a contribution to the evolution of a life-affirming

culture. However, I see no reason to believe that this will be sufficient, given the power of the economic-industrial machine. Without public will for transformative change, business as usual will take us where it is already taking us. Likewise, there are many people who hope that technological solutions, such as shifting to 100% renewable energy, will enable business as usual. If so, that would be a disaster. It would merely mean that we have the power to continue other forms of ecological destruction.

Understandably, we may wish that our lives will not be uncomfortably disrupted. But given massive fires and floods, interruptions of supply chains, the war in Ukraine (with the threat of escalation), the reality is that like it or not our lives are being disrupted, and things will get worse. We do well to accept the reality of disruption, and work together to inspire public commitment to stop making things worse, and indeed evolve a life-affirming culture.

GOING BEYOND OUR COMFORT ZONE

To put it plainly, it does not serve us to play small. Our times call for us to stretch beyond what we might have ever imagined. The leverage point is affecting people's worldviews; behaviour follows from our worldviews. I urge you to consider lending your influence to this initiative. A natural place to start is to review the Inspiring Transition core documents, followed by conducting Kitchen Table Conversations with a friend.

The bottom line is this: Greta Thunberg will have reason to hope when she sees that mainstream society is committed to turning things around. Let's make it happen!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Andrew Gaines is the climate change and corporate social responsibility lead for Synergy Global. He is on the board of Be The Change Australia and is the instigator of Inspiring Transition. Andrew is a Feldenkrais practitioner, psychotherapist and creativity trainer. He is trained in The Natural Step, a way of working out whether a company or a country is ecologically sustainable or not. His TEDx talk is Transitioning to a life-affirming culture.

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1. Visit inspiringtransition.net/resources to access the Kitchen Table Conversations and the other Inspiring Transition resources outlined in the article.
2. The Inspiring Transition Catalysing mass commitment to transformational change resource spells this out in detail.



COACHING AND TECHNOLOGY: THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE

Technology and innovation in coaching was the theme of a recent AC podcast series. Host **Claudia Day** shares the key themes of these enlightening and inspiring conversations with experts in the field.

The introduction of technology to the coaching industry had already started before the pandemic, with an increasing number of coaches working online. Covid-19 accelerated this process, forcing almost all coaches to move to digital coaching as there was no other option. The Future Trends in Coaching report (2021) found that almost half of coaches were planning to do more than 80% of their coaching online from now on: this way of working is here to stay.

So, what is this future of coaching going to look like?

TECHNOLOGY IS HERE TO STAY

Jonathan Passmore, former director at Henley Business School and senior vice president at CoachHub, believes there are several important considerations when coaching remotely.

First, the welcome: when it's face-to-face, a handshake can be crucial, while in a video call, other factors play a part in welcoming the client. The background needs to be pleasant to the eye without being distracting, the setting needs to avoid background noise (a good set of headphones can help), and the lighting needs to be favourable – with minimal shade.

Online, it's crucial that the coach and client understand what type of data is being stored and where, and who controls this data. Furthermore, all technologies fail, so coaches should have a backup plan if that happens: will the session be held over the phone, or postponed? Contracting can be our best friend since anything that is said in this space helps the relationship. Make sure to include technology in your contracting.

BEFORE CONTRACTING, LOOK INWARD FIRST

The coach needs to reflect on their preferences. Reflect on what you were doing in face-to-face sessions and translate this to existing technologies. If you used to employ pen and paper to conduct a constellation exercise, try an online whiteboard tool to do so online.

Use the support of supervisors and peer coaches to better understand how you feel, and what your preferences are in terms of adopting new technologies. In reflecting on how you use your video-conferencing platform with a supervisor, you can explore how and why you chose that platform, how you felt about it prior to Covid and how you feel about it now. If this has changed in any way, what does that mean for you, and could this approach be applied to how you adopt other technologies?

Coaches can use triads to experiment and practise the use of technologies for online coaching with peers. In learning, coaches regularly use triads to practise tools and coaching approaches, where coach, client and observer reflect on the experience afterwards. This same process can be used to evaluate the use of new technologies.

Carol Braddick, a leadership coach and consultant for the FCC, believes there are benefits to working together with other coaches on learning about a technology. She argues that, when asking for demos as a group, there's a greater diversity of thought, and technology companies will be more likely to take the time to work with a group of coaches.

NEXT, LOOK OUTWARD, CONSIDERING EACH CLIENT'S PREFERENCE

As coaches we are trained to treat each client uniquely. How does this fit with the use of technology? All clients are different, so we need to understand those differences to know which technologies are best for the session. If a client struggles to imagine beyond the factual, we might want to introduce a tool that helps build a metaphor.

Once you've picked a technology, how comfortable is the client with it and what support might they need from you? Computing expert and coach Nicky Terblanche has developed criteria to help, based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM):

1. perceived performance (will it do what it is supposed to do and how well will it do this?).
2. effort expectancy (how much effort is required?).
3. social influence (what do others think of the technology?).

For example, the coach might say: 'You mentioned you wanted to think of X in a different way – there is an exercise we can try.' If they are keen, then the coach can introduce the social component, the ease of use and the effectiveness on the conversation: 'I have used [Y technology] with other clients in the past and they have found it easy and useful. The way it works is... Would you like to try it?'

CHOOSING THE RIGHT TECHNOLOGY

A broad range of technologies exist today that can be used during coaching engagements.

Technologies enhancing creativity

These technologies allow the engagement to move outside linear conversation, find new thinking and allow brainstorming. Sam Isaacson, author and global director of consulting at CoachHub, shared some of his favourites: ProReal, to create a visual representation; magneticpoetry.com, to find new thinking; and Soundscape, to introduce a mindful minute to change energy within the session. Numerous apps exist to help with metaphor creation.

Generic technologies

These technologies are sometimes taken for granted, but if the client is using them, acceptance is already there and in some cases the data is readily available with no additional effort. Sensor-based technology such as iWatch or Fitbit may provide data about amount of sleep, screen time and so on. Braddick described how MyAnalytics in Outlook may help a client analyse their productivity. In transition coaching, she uses Outlook and LinkedIn to help clients to better understand their network and reflect on how to engage with it.

Technologies on the rise

Coaches may also want to start getting familiar with virtual reality: there is a lot of investment in this area. Isaacson described it as an enjoyable experience. Some benefits can be avoiding distraction (from notifications, or emails pinging your computer) since the sound and visual components take you to a new world. You can test or practise new behaviours and do visualisations. There are some free trial options out there.

Coaching-specific technologies

Other technologies can help coaches by increasing efficiency, increasing the contact frequency, enriching the coaching process, stimulating behaviour change and monitoring progress. Tools are out there to help with scheduling sessions, gathering feedback more easily, messaging between sessions in a secure way, tracking progress towards objectives and self-guided learning in between sessions.

As host of the podcast series, I tried a couple for myself. I found the video recording and AI-enabled analytics app Ovida [see pages 36-37] especially useful for my reflections as a coach: at the start of a session, I challenged and felt the rapport break. I then used Time to Think for the rest of the session and by the end the client challenged themselves, reaching the desired outcome. This in itself gave me lots of learning, and going through this with my supervisor was very helpful: without this technology, I would not have been able to remember clearly or understand what I did at specific moments.

I also tried the coaching chatbot evoach: one evening I was struggling to fall asleep, so I did one of the modules. It helped me stop ruminating and instead reflect about the issue at hand. This experience helped me to see how a client could use this in between sessions [see pages 56-57].

Technologies for teamwork

- Collaborative work. Virtual collaborative platforms, such as Google Jam-board, Miro or Mural, provide a space for multistep collaborative activities online.
- Relationship building. Alexander Caillet and Kimberley Lewis Parsons from Georgetown University gave me two examples:

VideoAsk for the team to learn more about each other, and Miro boards, where each team member brings three pictures and describe their personal significance.

- Assisting equity and inclusion. Video-conferencing has normalised inclusive behaviours such as raising hands, people taking turns, asking those who have been more silent for their thoughts, using the chat function, using gender tail to gauge gender differences. Technologies such as Owl Labs can help everyone feel in the same place.
- Systemic coaching. Peter Hawkins, the co-founder of the Global Team Coaching Institute, and Tom Marsden of Saberr reminded us of the importance of thinking big – taking into account the entire system. They explained how platforms can help teams apply best practices such as regular feedback, reflection and wellbeing habits, which help coaches focus on several teams more effectively with the help of individual managers.

Now the choice exists whether to meet online or in person, the coach can work with the client on the design of an engagement.

THINK BIG: THE DEMOCRATISATION OF COACHING

Jonathan Passmore in a paper with Rossie Evans-Krimme, compares coaching to the clothing industry. They explain how the introduction of remote working, Covid, investor interest and research might mean that the industry will move from a professional service delivered by a limited number of high-cost specialists to low-cost coaching for the many, with higher standards in product (service) consistency. We see some companies offering coaching to the masses and hiring coaches as associates such as CoachHub and Better Up, and others helping coaches-in-training such as Growing Coaches. This may help to bring coaching to many that had no access to coaching before. We will see easier access, and shorter and more frequent conversations. In moments of need it will be easier to bring additional learning by combining synchronous and asynchronous approaches; there is more convenience all round.

Some technologies automate coaching steps either based upon pre-defined scripts or artificial intelligence. They are very narrow and specific in what they are there to achieve, but they can master one task very well. Nicky Terblanche, an academic, AI researcher and coach, spoke to us about some of his research. His platform, coachVici, works on goal attainment, and it has been shown to be as effective as process-based coaching using GROW. Nicky is using chatbots in his work to embed coaching theory and approaches.

Now the choice exists whether to meet online or in person, the coach can work with the client on the design of an engagement and decide when it makes sense to be virtual, and when it will be more helpful to be face-to-face. When working with teams

face-to-face, consider whether actual physical breakout rooms could be beneficial.

WHAT RESPONSIBILITY DO WE HAVE AS COACHES?

- The coach must consider themselves first: understand their own anxieties, educate themselves and collaborate in the process of introducing technology to the profession. Each member of this profession has a role to play.
- Acknowledge that biases exist and be on the lookout for how they can occur in technology: platforms built by humans are likely to contain human biases. Terblanche believes we can use biases to help us improve as a society, by identifying them and working on them with clients. Documentaries like *Coded Bias* show the risks that come with the introduction of technology in certain processes.
- When in doubt, follow industry standards and apply the ethics of coaching to the technology. If the coaching process must maintain the autonomy of the client at all times, what does this look like with the introduction of technology?
- Coaches need to take responsibility as we start using these technologies, we need to understand the intention of the founders, benefits for the coach and/or client, transparency of the company, mitigation of risks, what is done with data and what is collected: a good starting point is the privacy policy.

The coaching industry is changing at a fast pace. All the major coaching bodies are working on understanding the implications of these changes: reach out to them if you have any concerns, have made new or exciting discoveries or simply to share your experience.

All episodes of the Technology and Innovation podcast series are available on the AC website: [associationforcoaching.com/page/technology_and_innovation_podcast_series](https://www.associationforcoaching.com/page/technology_and_innovation_podcast_series).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Claudia Day is a coach and entrepreneur, and host of the Association for Coaching's Technology and Innovation in Coaching podcast series.

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MOVING ONLINE HAS OPENED UP THE WORLD

Two tumultuous years of Covid have brought forward some hefty changes in the coaching profession. **George Warren** sees many positives in this move, both personally and for the industry.

Two years ago I was based in Putney, in south-west London. Keen to move to a greener space, I was calculating where I could be near forests and the sea while still able to commute to London for coaching work. At the time, some of my coaching was taking place outdoors as walking coaching, in Richmond Park and on Wimbledon Common.

I now live in Snowdonia in north Wales, and in a globalised 2022 I can wake up one morning and coach a client in India over my morning coffee, work with clients in Italy, Switzerland and the UK during the day and finish my day with a coaching session with a client across the Atlantic who is just starting their day. With a pair of headphones and a decent phone signal I continue to coach my clients outdoors too.

What has changed from coaching outdoors in person to coaching outdoors via technology? Because this is being conducted by phone rather than video call, there is no visual data to read. For me, this invites a greater curiosity as to what my client is seeing, noticing and feeling. It also allows me to pay even more attention to their breath, their tone, their speed or words. The passion and energy – or lack of it – in what they are saying.

As we're not walking side by side, I'm also seeking the data that my clients pick up from their footsteps: whether they speed up, slow down, soften or harden at different times in the session.

Nature has always been and will always be an endless source of inspiration to many of us. I've found that creative techniques that

I've learnt 'in the classroom' can be very successfully applied to outdoor, walking coaching.

There is abundance in metaphor too. As one client and I were both walking together for a session – he in a London park and me on a forest trail here in Wales – we explored a work topic related to his role within his organisation. I invited him to look around for something he saw that spoke to how he was feeling.

He noticed a blackbird trying to get into a birdfeeder, but was restricted because it was too big, kept out by a wire mesh. The image formed the crux of the session and helped him make sense of how he was really feeling about this topic, and what he might do about it.

THE BENEFITS OF ONLINE

The most prominent benefit of the last two years is that we've seen coaching become more democratised and more greatly accessible to a larger and more diverse pool of coachees. For too long, quality coaching was a privilege that has been enjoyed only by top-tier executives or high-potential individuals.

The move online cuts out the travel time and expense, thus allowing the coach to do more coaching. It also allows the coach to offer their services at a more accessible and competitive rate. This in turn makes coaching more affordable for the people buying it, meaning that a broader number and diversity of employees can benefit from it.

Another benefit is that it makes pro bono coaching an easier offer for coaches. Some of my proudest moments and most inspiring stories as a coach have been around coaching people that traditionally couldn't access it – be they those on furlough or unemployed, teachers and frontline workers, or climate change activists.

I also share some of the global benefits of this shift. It wasn't so long ago that coaches were flying out to work with clients in different countries. Now, in 2022 this seems a rather problematic, inefficient and resource-intensive way to operate.

The most obvious is the carbon cost of such an engagement. I've been inspired by the growing number of coaches and members of the Climate Coaching Alliance who have committed to turning down any coaching work that involves flying.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The greater global accessibility coaching now enjoys must be met with some ethical considerations. I believe coaching is most effective when the coach is stepping into the client's world. Seeing, hearing, understanding from their perspective. This is doubly important when working with a client in a different culture. It can be a challenge to make these switches, and I've found the decompression and preparation time between sessions to be doubly valuable when working across time zones.

Firstly, I encourage any coach working within a different country or culture to thoroughly and sensitively contract. One example is the use of scaling. Western readers and coaches might assume on a scale of 0-10 that 10 is great and 0 is bad; in some cultures it is the opposite.

There are many, many more grave and important ways in which we might miss nuances when coaching across culture or in how we might inadvertently offend or upset with our verbal or non-verbal language. I'm grateful to my mentor-coach, Clare Norman, for providing some helpful suggestions to bring into my contracting: 'Please correct me or challenge me if I step on any cultural norms'; 'This may be informed by my own culture or context, so please tell me if that is not applicable'.

Coaches operating across cultures ought to be aware that people in many parts of the world have had white, often male, Westerners telling them the 'right' way of doing something for quite a while now. A high level of self-awareness and humility is needed: something that works within the Western business cultural context might not work when transplanted to a different culture.

In much the same way that we as a coach might ask: 'Is coaching the right intervention for this client – and am I the best coach to help them?'; when coaching internationally the latter question morphs into, 'Would the client ultimately be better served by a coach based locally?'

COACH TRAINING

Almost overnight in early 2020, coach training and other development courses moved from in-person or residential to online.

In my role providing coach training with the AoEC, shifting the course online has opened it up to a global pool of participants. Previously the majority of courses were London-based, with participants travelling for each module.

While learning on Zoom and Teams, and more broadly 'learning from home', has its drawbacks, it has been a privilege to work with participants based in locations ranging from Portugal to Myanmar to Switzerland to the USA to Hong Kong. An important benefit here is that this virtual way of working provides the group with a valuable cultural diversity which, I believe, makes us even better coaches.

The use of breakout rooms, pioneered early by Zoom, has been integral to the success of the switch online. Long days in large groups are tiring and stressful for us all, especially those of us who are more introverted. Some of the magic of in-person learning is the smaller, more conversational interactions that take place while getting a coffee. Breakout rooms go some way towards this, allowing for a more fun, relaxed and intimate getting to know each other than a plenary discussion.

I see the future of coach training, echoing the broader trends of working, as blended. Catering to those who seek the mercurial magic of in-person learning, but also opening arms wide to a global audience of those who cannot or will not travel for it.

That freedom to travel has been snatched away from many of us these last couple of years. We as coaches like people, we're generous and curious and keen to learn more. I hope we are self-aware and humble enough to know we're not always right and what works for us doesn't always work for our client. One of the sweetest benefits of travel is the opportunity to learn about other cultures and to expand our awareness and experience, thus growing.

We all now have the means to coach globally and across cultures, and with care it can provide that same sweetness, learning and satisfaction – that sense of connection that many of us have had taken away.

Follow more of George's writing by subscribing to his newsletter at www.georgewarrencoaching.com.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



George is an ICF-accredited leadership and executive coach. He is deeply committed to helping people explore their identity and values, and in his practice coaches the modern leadership topics of EQ, purpose, values, wellness and wellbeing. A faculty member at the Academy of Executive Coaching, he delivers their triple-accredited coach training practitioner diploma. He is part of the AC's UK leadership team, responsible for social conscience.

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EMBRACING TECHNOLOGY AS A COMPASSIONATE FRIEND

Through the lens of life coaching, **Priya Tandon** explores the theme of connection and how this is helped and hindered by technology.

In 1921, in his Nobel prize acceptance speech, Norwegian historian Christian Lous Lange, said: 'Technology is a useful servant but a dangerous master.' His words forewarned humanity of what lay ahead. But is technology today really a dangerous master or even a useful servant? Can we embrace it with grace and compassion?

My first tryst with technology was in college, earning my graduation in Psychology. I remember the lab where I entered numerous test results and calculated conclusions in the 'computer' in the late 1990s. Later on, I entered the field of IT, working for a global firm. Over a decade my experience started in Chicago and ended in Silicon Valley. From my humble beginning on a lab computer, I became a global citizen working on complex IT projects with international teams. Besides the excitement of being part of an innovative solution that would directly impact the work and efficiency of our customers, one of the biggest takeaways for me was

the thinning of boundaries between the team members spread across diverse time zones. The camaraderie and laughter we shared on late-night or early morning calls because someone's child entered the room in pyjamas or someone wanted coffee before saying hello are still memorable and go beyond the LinkedIn connections. I attribute my status as a digital global citizen to technology.

Today, as a life coach, technology usage may hold a different purpose, but the essence remains the same as when I was working at the core of IT: connecting everyone everywhere. Life coaches are changing lives everywhere, and no other time has seen this fact become as absolute as during the pandemic of the last two years.

Let's look at some of the ways technology has transformed the life coaching industry.

1. THE POSSIBILITIES OF ONLINE COACHING

As a child, many of us read Dr Suess's *Oh, the Places You'll Go!*. Peculiarly, digital/online/remote coaching reminds me of that book in wonder and amusement about the places we all will go because of technology use in our daily lives. The possibilities are endless, and some ways we have already adopted technology in our life coaching are:

- Coach-coachee sessions
- Digital learning and course development
- Apps to manage life coaching as a business and track and set goals resulting in a reduction of operational costs.
- Data-driven reports to evaluate performance
- Ongoing support through emails, texts, or audio/video calls

2. EFFECTIVENESS OF VIRTUAL COACHING

Two studies appeared in 2011, in *The Consulting Psychology Journal* and *The New England Journal of Medicine*. The studies concluded no significant differences in the effectiveness of coaching by phone or videoconference compared to in-person coaching. As we get back to normal, we continue to hold coaching space virtually and in person.

3. ONE SMALL WORLD

Technology has undoubtedly brought the world closer by breaking down geographical barriers and widening reach through social media. Never have we been able to reach out to hundreds if not thousands of people with one single post on a platform. We used to meet in local organisations and hand out our business cards to network. Now our business card is our LinkedIn profile or any other medium that spreads a message far beyond the physical boundaries of nations. Technology has helped coaches reach clients globally in their business development. Clients have easy access to coaches regardless of where they are, what their schedule is or if they are travelling.

As life coaches, we are close to irreplaceable: only humans can form human connections.

4. USE OF AUGMENTED REALITY

I was first introduced to augmented reality by way of Google Glass, the company's headware technology, as a part of a study at Stanford University for children on the autism spectrum, in which my son participated. The study recorded my son's responses to some daily tasks by offering him visual and audio clues via the glasses. Data collected corroborated that there was an improvement in actions as a result of the cues. Working with the neurodivergent population as a life coach, I am open to exploring and introducing augmented reality in my coaching sessions.

5. ALEXA, CAN YOU LIFE COACH?

Especially when we are learning to be a coach, we are also training our minds to offer non-judgemental space and coaching to our clients. However, sometimes we relate to or judge a situation or issue brought to the table. So is it possible to coach being 100% non-judgemental? The answer may be yes if the coach is a robot or an AI – perhaps, like Amazon's Alexa, equipped with pre-driven data to ask open questions. However, there are human qualities that a robot cannot replace.

6. AI

We fear the future because it is unknown, and we fear AI, because we fear it will replace us. I would like to think that as life coaches, we are close to irreplaceable: only humans can form human connections! There are nascent benefits of AI that, as a coach, we would greatly benefit from: automating our administrative tasks, sending a motivating nudge to a client, or focusing on a client's growth patterns or even struggles to guide an adjustment for the next session. It is my belief that AI will never replace empathy, connections, a holistic approach nor never-ending faith in the client's ability to find solutions. Technology has had a phenomenal transformational impact, and it will continue as new technologies emerge in the future. A fundamental need of humans is connection, and in times of struggles and challenges a life coach may be the only bridge to a safe connection. I suggest that technology at its best is neither a useful servant nor a dangerous master. Technology is an enabler and what makes it a master or a servant is the person who enables it. If we are conscious and know when to choose technology and when to discard it, technology will never be an issue for humankind.

If we use technology gracefully and don't let technology use us, the opportunities will always outweigh the challenges.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Priya Tandon is a life vision and enhancement coach emphasising self-actualisation, authentic human connections, and personal and professional transformative, sustainable success. Her clientele comes from varied backgrounds, from the business world to individuals looking to build and enhance relationships with selves and others. She has a Bachelor of Psychology (Honours), is a certified yoga teacher and is also a life coach from Jay Shetty Coaching School.

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HOW TECH PLATFORMS ARE CHANGING THE CORPORATE COACHING LANDSCAPE

Margaret Clarkson explores the emerging market in coaching platforms, which could change the way coaching is delivered on a mass scale within organisations.

You may have noticed some adverts popping up while you've searched the internet for 'coaching platforms' for your business. Or, possibly you heard the news in March 2021 that a company called BetterUp had hired Prince Harry, the Duke of Sussex and member of the British royal family, as its chief impact officer.

One way or another, you may have discovered that there are now technology platforms that offer coaching to many people in an organisation: for instance, Bravely, BetterUp, Ezra and LeggUp. Many of these companies are based in the US, but some have grown by acquiring firms in Europe, for instance. So, if you haven't heard of this concept yet, you will probably be gaining exposure to them in your country soon.

Let me explain how they generally work, though the details will vary from firm to firm.

For example, a company that is a coaching provider forms a contract with a retailer of 70,000 people. The coaching company has built an app that all the retailer's employees can access. Using that app, individuals can select a coach to meet with for six or more sessions. The individual and the coach work on whatever issue the individual chooses. The individual gets the benefit of coaching and does not have to pay out of pocket because the employer is offering it as a company benefit or perk.

Some companies' apps use AI (artificial intelligence) to select a smaller group of coaches for an individual to choose from. Other

platforms allow the employee to select a coach the old-fashioned way, by reading the coach's details and seeing whether they think their personalities or approaches would help them grow their strengths or overcome their challenges.

When I first found out about these innovative coaching providers, I had many questions swirling around in my head:

- What does this mean for the future of coaching?
- How might coaches be reacting to it?
- How do employees benefit from this?
- How might this influence company culture or diversity, equity and inclusion within a company?
- How about mental health? Employee wellness?

As you can imagine, there are many pros and cons. Here are some thoughts from a variety of perspectives.

PERSPECTIVE OF COACHES

I've spoken with several independent coaches of varying degrees of experience. Some are in favour of these firms, others less so. Some coaches worry that these firms might undercut their business. This is because these technology-driven coaching providers pay their human coaches a lot less per hour than the rate coaches can charge when they have their own business. Some wonder if the coaching providers' pricing could drive down pricing within the whole coaching industry.

On the other hand, some independent coaches are joining the coaching providers' pool of coaches to have a steady pace of engagements and fill in some gaps in their schedule and income. Being part of the pool alleviates some of the marketing hassles of independent coaches and gives them peace of mind that they are making a living without having to work as hard on the non-coaching elements.

There's also a thought that these platforms could whet some employees' appetites for coaching and that, once their allotted hours or sessions are used up, the employees could hire an independent coach to dig deeper or continue the work. Not replacement, but enhancement. This exposes a potential untapped market to coaches.

PERSPECTIVE OF EMPLOYEES

When their companies engage one of these coaching providers, employees benefit tremendously because, suddenly, coaching becomes so accessible. Instead of coaching being reserved for the C-suite or senior managers in corporate environments, everyone gets access to a coach. Coaching becomes democratised rather than a cost they may not be able to afford or prioritise. Diversity, equity and inclusion have been hot topics in companies, particularly for the past two years, and making a coach available to everyone contributes to the idea of inclusion and equity that employees can experience in the best workplaces.

In addition, we have seen mental health become a more visible issue recently as sports stars like Naomi Osaka and Simone Biles have withdrawn from major global events to show that their mental health needs to be nurtured along with their physical health.

Furthermore, during the Covid-19 pandemic, we have all had to adjust our lives to try to stay healthy and make the world a safe place. This has taken a huge toll on our psyches and the opportunity to meet with a coach now can only help.

Instead of coaching being reserved for the C-suite or senior managers in corporate environments, everyone gets access to a coach.

PERSPECTIVE OF COMPANIES

Companies believe that providing coaching for their employees can help reduce stress and burnout and contribute to more positive corporate cultures. Companies who can afford to contract with these coaching providers are providing a great service to their employees if they are allowing them to take advantage of the coaching during working hours (or when the employees want to).

Another way that coaching providers help companies is through talent acquisition. If a company advertises this access to coaching to prospective employees, this may well help it attract the best talent.

PERSPECTIVE OF COACH TRAINING ORGANISATIONS

Most coaching providers have minimum standards for the coaches they hire, and coach training organisations help coaches meet those standards. Therefore, it's likely that the coach training organisations will continue to train and certify coaches and may even grow because of the growth in demand for coaching services created by the coaching providers.

PERSPECTIVE OF TRADITIONAL COACHING PROVIDERS

One might think that traditional coaching providers may have the most to lose with the presence of the newer technology-driven coaching organisations. The traditional providers have a cadre of coaches that they supply in contracts to larger companies, but they are usually focused on providing coaching to executives and senior leaders. So, their market is not the masses of employees working in corporate jobs, but rather a small subset of leaders in firms.

PERSPECTIVE OF INNOVATIVE COACHING PROVIDERS

Naturally, coaching providers tout the benefits of their new platforms as ways for companies to improve their cultures, develop their people, and create more inclusive and mentally healthier workplaces, all at a fraction of the cost it would take to supply an equivalent number of employees with a coach in independent practice. Some already have coaches in their pool who come from all over the world, and may allow users to work with coaches from wherever they choose.

Spreading the benefits of coaching to more people globally – who can argue with that?

Well, it's important to note that many of these providers aggregate the data about what employees are talking about in their confidential coaching conversations and share that information with the companies who hired them. In this way, the companies can keep their pulse on what issues are important to workers, what their experience is at work, and what may be driving employee behaviour. Employees are notified about this by the coaching providers before coaching conversations begin, but that doesn't mean employees are fully accepting of this policy. Of course, informed employees can choose what to discuss in their coaching conversations.

In sum, while there are many benefits to the newer technology-driven platforms, they may depend on your perspective. As time passes, it will be interesting to see how the market evolves around these companies and the extent to which traditional coaching is disrupted.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Margaret Clarkson MBA, CPC, PMP has deep experience leading talent, learning and diversity initiatives within Fortune 500 companies and has been coaching leaders in organisations since 2003. Currently president of her own coaching and consulting firm, Margaret is also a long-time board member of the Association for Talent Development (ATD) and recently served as president of ATD's New York City chapter. Margaret earned her MBA from The Wharton School, at the University of Pennsylvania, and a BA from the University of Notre Dame. A lifelong learner, she has recently completed an intensive coaching certification with the Institute for Professional Excellence in Coaching.

BLENDING AI WITH COACHING CONVERSATIONS

Alex Haitoglou is a founder of Ovida, a software platform that uses artificial intelligence to help coaches and clients better understand their video coaching sessions. How does this work?

A few years ago, my co-founder Bryan and I attended an AI tech conference in San Francisco. It was a very intellectually stimulating week, with so many incredible applications of technology and AI. The whole room was excited by the possibilities. Then, the final keynote speaker stood up and concluded that all this technology will make us infinitely more powerful – but less connected, less kind; worse humans.

That was a wake-up call, and a deflating conclusion. We shared the concern of the speaker and his arguments were convincing. But, we thought, it does not have to be this way. We need to find a different way of turning this on its head: how can we use technology to be better humans? Specifically, how can we use AI to help humans connect better, rather than trying to replace them or standardise things?

We chose to focus on coaching almost immediately. Coaching has had a profound positive impact on both our lives and we have also seen the effect it has had on people within organisations. The coaching relationship is founded on trust, rapport and core communication skills – and coach training and development is yet to be transformed by data and technology. We want to help coaches grow, and train faster and better, to help clients achieve positive change.

HOW AI CAN HELP COACHES DEVELOP

The fundamental start for any positive change is self-awareness. This is true for the experienced or even trainee coach, as well as for the client. That's why recording and video review of training sessions is key in many courses, and increasingly also used for accreditation.

Consider the world of sport, where coaching finds its roots: there is no professional athlete, or coach, that does not do regular video reviews.

It is becoming increasingly common in business, as well as medicine, education and of course anything that has to do with media.

As far as we know, everyone who does this during coach training learns a lot about themselves and improves fast, but very few continue beyond training. One reason is simple: it is extremely time consuming.

Technology can save us a lot of time: we can record the session and produce transcripts, identify language patterns that might be interesting – like open questions, interruptions or opening and closing statements. Going further, we can combine facial-expression analysis with other measures like speed and pace, and interactions between coach and client, and start to form some very interesting insights.

We can pick up key moments from a session, based on observing these parameters, and allow coaches to review short clips that tell the story of the session in only a fraction of the time. The coach can spend a few minutes reviewing the full session, without needing to take notes during the session, and self-reflect. They can share some key moments and observations with the client – such as a moment of awareness, or a moment of commitment.

Clients can then maximise their ROI from coaching – by having a few one-minute videos to review from their previous coaching sessions, they can recall better where they were, what they were trying to achieve, and also how their relationship with the coach is evolving. There is something extremely powerful about watching yourself committing to something, or coming to a new awareness, or even noticing your own emotions as you are talking about specific events.

We've had very experienced coaches tell us that they picked up bad habits over the years that they were not aware of, and how could

they be? It is extremely difficult to get objective feedback without video, even within supervision, as our memory is not a great tool for remembering a one-hour discussion.

This is an opportunity for new coaches to train better and faster, with the help of experienced trainers and supervisors that can give video-based feedback, but also for very experienced coaches to continue growing and learning.

We are learning fast that there are patterns emerging in terms of how more experienced coaches behave, regardless of the coaching model they choose to implement. The way of asking questions, or how they interrupt (or not) the client, or something as simple as what percentage of time they spend talking during a session.

We don't believe there will be a 'perfect coaching formula' or 'standard'; but certainly there are identifiably helpful and unhelpful patterns with regards to building trust and rapport fast, and we want to learn from the best coaches how they do it so we can help everyone else. We are still at the beginning of our analysis. We are in the process of doing a lot of research and getting a lot more feedback from coaches and clients to understand these patterns, answer key questions and train the algorithms.

MACHINE LEARNING, BIASES AND ETHICS

There is an ongoing danger that, because of the types of coaches and clients that we have, their backgrounds, language, coaching model and many other factors, we end up with a lot of bias in our system. Observations can be 100% objective, like when someone increases the speed they talk compared to the rest of their session; and subjective, like judgement on what a particular reaction might mean. We are building most insights based on observable changes, rather than interpretation and adding any subjective labelling of this on top. We want to avoid where possible anything that has to do with judgement or criticism, and rather present areas of possible interest and let the coach choose what to do with the insights. We are very conscious of constantly needing to increase the diversity of the people we have in our platform, diversity of race, sex, gender, age, location, background, coaching methods and more.

Our goal is to understand what insights will help the coach and the client build an even better relationship, and remain on a continuous growth path. And that's also how communication in human beings improves. We learn how to connect first from our family, then from our school as we grow up. But then what? With small, incremental changes, together we can make a massive change by becoming more aware of what we're doing. This is true for coaches, clients and humans in general: we want to use technology to assist that.

Ethics and privacy are the most important aspects of the work we are doing with AI. It is very easy to get it wrong. We believe that we should not be making decisions on ethics internally: we need external experts, panels and ongoing discussion. Some decisions will be easier than others: for example, we only analyse data for helping coaches and clients, and we will never advertise nor share the data. Users of our platform have full rights to withdraw their consent. But there are much more complex questions: if we have insights from a session that are not personally identifiable, could the coach keep these insights even if the client wants to delete the session, for example. What if the client wants to download the video and the coach does not?

THE HUMAN-MACHINE PARTNERSHIP

I am convinced that there will be a lot of good coaching bots in the future. There are already some that demonstrate in studies that they can be as effective as a coach, in a specific context. They democratise and normalise coaching, and also psychological treatments like CBT. Even a kid in Yemen can access that through their phone, while they might never be able to pay for an actual coach.

But at the same time, I don't think there is any chance in the near future of the coach/client relationship being replaced by AI. There's something very special, complex and intricate in the relationship between humans and specifically between coach and client, that is very hard to replicate. We fully believe that technology can make coaches better at building that relationship, but I think we are decades away, if not longer, from having a machine that can replicate that. Even then, I wonder if knowing that you are speaking with a machine would have a diminishing effect in the relationship; we won't find out for many years to come.

Across professions, the biggest need in upskilling over the next few decades will be in soft skills. We are likely to need more coaches, assisted by technology, to help fill the gap that is being created by the way we are using technology today.

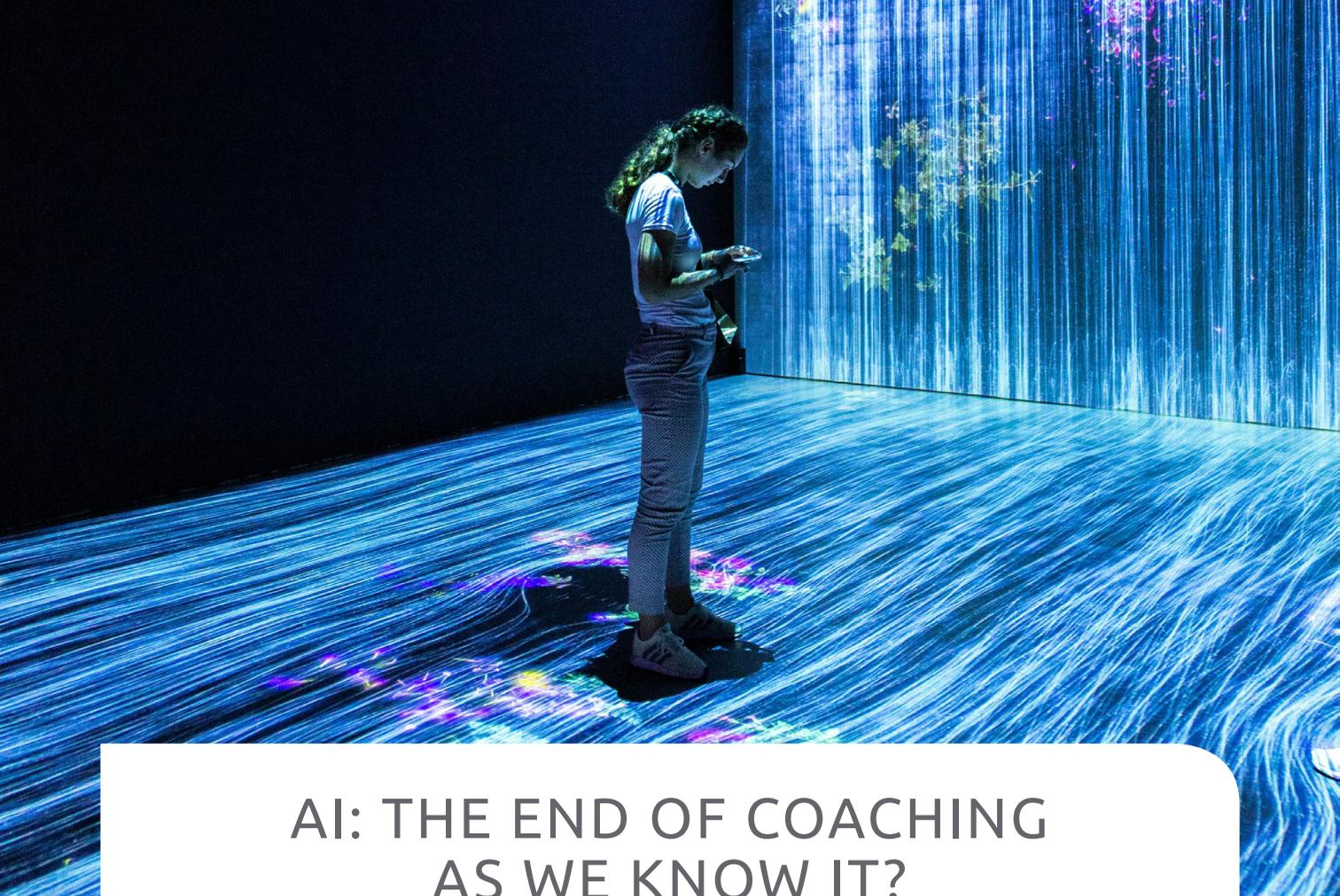
I think there are quite a few coaches that are a little afraid of technology. Before the Covid pandemic, so many people told us that video-coaching doesn't work. We're now seeing that video-coaching can be very effective and, although most will end up in a hybrid model, it looks like 60-70% of coaching will continue via video. After the initial trepidation, a very fast adjustment to the new reality: people are now using it as an advantage to have more clients, allocate better times for meetings, coach teams in different locations and more. That makes me think that some initial fears regarding AI will probably dissipate once coaches see the benefits for themselves and their clients.

Our fundamental belief and driving force for Ovida is that if we could teach all humans who want to communicate better how to do it, the world would be a much brighter, better place for everyone. Most human challenges today stem from poor communication. Coaching is a great way of helping people to learn how to connect better and improve their communication skills. My hope is that, by using technology to spread the coaching approach and skills to a far greater part of the world, we can connect better, and deeper, as humans.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Alex Haitoglou is a tech entrepreneur, business leader and coach. He is a co-founder of Ovida, a start-up whose mission is to use AI in the service of coaching, to train and develop coaches, to assist mentoring and supervision, and to help clients grow.



AI: THE END OF COACHING AS WE KNOW IT?

What will happen to the trusted relationship between coach and client as artificial intelligence advances into the field of coaching? Peter Duffell and Natalia de Estevan-Ubeda explore current research.

There have been many pronouncements about the potential impacts artificial intelligence (AI) will have on professional coaches. At one end of the spectrum, the doomsday scenario is that AI will replace coaches completely. More realistically, it seems likely that at the very least some sort of augmented practice with coaches and AI working together is the minimum we can anticipate.^{i,ii} So what does this mean, and which of the four broad areas of coaching (skills, performance, developmental, existential)ⁱⁱⁱ are most likely to be most affected?

WHAT IS AI?

From a coaching perspective, developers emphasise that AI focuses on automating aspects such as the ability to observe, reason about, learn from and predict human behaviour. In the context that occupies us, AI is broadly based upon neural networks, algorithms often 'trained' in a process known as machine learning based on

huge datasets. This is an imperfect process and there is a general awareness that skewed training data creates an impact on diversity and inclusion. As a result there is already a healthy debate and a degree of concern about the implications of coaching AIs.

We know that at the moment AIs like AlphaGo are good at addressing single-point problems, yet we are a long way from artificial general intelligence machines that are able to conceptualise and transfer knowledge on a par with or better than a human. It is also clear there are still many unknowns about how the human brain works. Therefore, what makes us think we can replicate human thinking, feeling and sensing accurately in a machine without this knowledge?

Whilst all of these considerations may not be immediate concerns, we believe that the push towards coaching AI highlights potential issues within current coaching practices that need to be addressed and ultimately resolved.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO HAVE A COACHING RELATIONSHIP WITH AI?

Research supports the conclusion that the most important element of the work between coach and client is the quality of the relationship that is established between them. Consider the following quote: 'the real value of coaching is its ability to challenge clients in order to encourage them to reflect deeply and critically about what they are doing.'^{iv} It would seem likely that a trusted relationship has to be established in order for this deep practice to occur.

We note there are already attempts within counselling to develop AI that can help with therapeutic interventions. These have highlighted some significant issues, particularly around the concept of AI having a 'professional relationship'. There are questions concerning what this means for responsibilities and protections for both parties.^v We already see this issue with autonomous vehicles, where liability for accidents that may have been caused by the vehicle are disputed by manufacturers. This is only the tip of the iceberg of the sort of ethical issues that are being highlighted through the use of these technologies.

We should also note that the vast majority of coaching literature highlights the positives of coaching as a helping intervention, but that there is a darker side where negative outcomes are often overlooked.^{vi} As authors ourselves, we have highlighted that coaching clients are increasingly either presenting with mental health issues or disclosing mental health issues within the bounds of the coach-client relationship, where the coach doesn't have any mental health training yet appears happy to work with such clients.^{vii} What does AI do when a client either has an obvious mental health issue or discloses that they are suffering from anxiety, depression or unhelpful beliefs such as impostor syndrome? Is the technology sufficiently advanced to be trusted with diagnostics, either implicit (hints, behaviours, key words) or explicit (confirmed diagnostics), such that a coach could safely work alongside an AI in a neuro-diverse landscape of clients?

Taking these considerations into account, we question what AI-related 'trusted relationships' might look like in coaching and whether it is even possible to establish one.

We have to distinguish between AI acting as a coach (for example, bots and avatars) and AI being used to support the work of a human coach; for example, the use of databases to support trend analysis, or video analytics examining client movements and behaviours.

TECHNOLOGY DOES HAVE A ROLE

There are a quite a number of coaching chatbots in development and their goal focus seems particularly suited to good outcomes for their users – for example the trial of AI-based coaching interventions showing promise as something that could help cancer patients to improve their physical activity.^{viii} However, currently, chatbots do not literally think, with suggestions they merely give the illusion of intelligent conversation by imitating it.^{ix}

At this time it is not clear how an augmented-reality coaching intervention would work, with AI and a human coach working together to support a client. Across all AI-based solutions there are clear ethical issues that would need to be resolved such as confidentiality and access to AI-related data and boundary management. However, with the potential of AI to support the coach it seems that there are also potential benefits, especially in analysing

client conversations, video recordings, content and so on. Beyond the ethical considerations of AI in coaching, we are faced with a pressing need to start debating the scope and limits in which AI can be applicable in a coaching context. For instance, how might working with AI affect a person seeking human connection because they feel unheard or unseen in their everyday life? What are the boundaries and limitations of the use and applicability of AI in coaching and, crucially, who is regulating these type of developments?

DOES AI DEVELOPMENT OVERLOOK THE HUMAN?

Whilst AI is being developed from a perspective of emulating human-like intelligence, it should be acknowledged that we do not really understand the workings of the human brain nearly enough to facilitate artificial replication. There is also the assumption that humans can be 'codified', noting that the work of some respected researchers^x shows that we are in fact highly unpredictable. Other research suggests that we also take complex yet fundamental parts of the human condition, such as emotion, for granted.^{xi}

Indeed, could our individual worldviews – which are shaped by our individual life experiences, thoughts and emotions – be approximated in an AI? Despite advances in neuroscience and associated research, we continue to fail to answer unanimously some fundamental questions about how the brain works, and the answer to questions such as what consciousness is. Recent developments in neuroscience have discovered that emotions are constructed and are not anchored to specific brain regions.^{xii} This seems to suggest that the aspiration of technologies to identify things like human emotions may never be realised. We also have to ask why AI researchers focus so heavily on cognitive attributes, noting that interoception, our awareness of what is going on in our bodies, is a fundamental part of how humans think, feel and behave.

Currently, very little research has been undertaken into the psychological dimensions of how humans interact with technology. We already know about the Uncanny Valley – best described as the sense of unease people feel when a robot is too human in appearance. There now appears to be an Uncanny Mind effect too, where people feel unease if an AI is too human in its 'intellectual' capability.^{xiii}

What makes us think we can replicate human thinking, feeling, sensing, accurately in a machine?

THE WAY FORWARD

Current thinking is that AI is most likely to be used in the domains of skills and performance coaching. However, practising coaches will attest to the fact that, whilst the client may present a skill or performance issue within a trusted relationship, they may start exploring other issues; some can bring personal relationships, feelings

and emotions and the impact on their performance, and some may bring stress, anxiety or depression issues. How could we expect AI to properly support a coaching client in these cases?

We have advocated that supervision should be mandatory when a coach encounters a potential mental health related issue. This is important because recent research found that over 10% of coaches attributed a negative event in their practice as occurring because they had no supervision, and 18.1% of clients attributed a negative event in coaching because they were already experiencing mental health issues before their coaching started.^{xiv} How would you supervise an AI? Indeed, with so few coaches receiving regular supervision, why should we insist that there should be any oversight of AI?

So: is this the end of coaching as we know it? The answer is that there will be some impact, but it is too soon to be definitive about what this will be. In looking at this question it does suggest that the current debate shouldn't just be about AI; instead, it should be about coaching as a profession as a whole, including supervision, including regulation and reviewing the role of the professional bodies in a much wider and deeper sense. There are some fundamental themes, such as supervision and mental health, that need to be addressed before we venture into enhancing our practice with AI. If we fail to address these, we risk simply building fault lines into future practice. Perhaps, putting faster engines on the plane often simply means you hit the mountain faster if you don't know how to fly in a storm.

Maybe an alternative answer is we should accelerate the development of coaching AIs given there are some clear benefits to the different perspectives an AI might afford a coach through analysis of their coaching sessions.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Peter Duffell is an experienced coach and supervisor, holding a master's degree in Coaching and Mentoring Practice from Oxford Brookes University. He is an accredited master practitioner with the EMCC. Before becoming a professional coach, Peter had a 30-year career in IT, where he held executive positions in a number of large global organisations. He has published award-winning research on emotion in coaching/supervision, generational differences and mental health. He now works with a diverse range of clients.

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Natalia de Estevan-Ubeda is a coach and coach supervisor. She holds a master's degree in Coaching from Oxford Brookes University where she researched extensively the development of supervisors. Since then, Natalia has continued to publish on supervision, generational differences and mental health in coaching. Natalia combines her coaching practice with her consulting business where she works internationally with venture capital firms and start-ups on innovation. She is a former EMCC UK board director and a fellow member of the CIPD in the UK.

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USING DIGITAL TOOLS IN COACHING

Bringing positive psychology into the digital world – **Martin Galpin** and **Michele Deeks** share how digital tools can be integrated appropriately into the coaching process.

Like many *Coaching Perspectives* readers, our occupational psychology consultancy and product business faced significant challenges at the onset of the pandemic. While this caused a fair amount of worry (and maybe a tiny bit of panic!), it quickly became evident that opportunities could emerge from this turbulence. One such possibility was the chance to evolve our existing coaching tools, so they could continue to benefit coaches and clients who had quickly pivoted to working in an online environment.

FROM TANGIBLE TO DIGITAL

As occupational psychologists who focus on applying positive psychology in the workplace, we've long appreciated the natural synergy between coaching and positive psychology. Both domains have a central focus on enabling people to optimise their wellbeing and performance; so, in many ways, it has always seemed sensible to us that coaches would utilise proven positive psychology interventions (PPIs) in their work with clients.

While many PPIs have been shown to be effective at improving wellbeing, they have often been rather prescriptive in nature, putting them somehow at odds with the facilitative, non-directive mode that underpins good coaching. Nowhere has this been more apparent than in the world of strengths assessments, where online

questionnaires have become the tool of choice for many (tens of millions have completed the most popular surveys such as VIA and StrengthsFinder).

Ten years ago, we developed the At My Best® Strengths Cards with the aim of encouraging a more facilitative, narrative-driven approach to exploring and understanding strengths. Over that time, we've seen just how effective a simple deck of cards can be, particularly in a coaching context. Coaches would often tell us how much more effective and flexible they found tangible tools like this to be, while we would frequently highlight our concerns with online surveys.

So we were initially a little resistant to the idea of creating a digital version. As it became apparent that most coaching would be conducted remotely for some time to come, we recognised there was a genuine need to create an online tool that would offer an alternative to strengths surveys and be an appropriate fit with the coaching ethos.

What started as a rapid prototype of a digital edition of our strengths cards has now evolved into Deckhive, a platform with a growing library of digital card decks that can be used in one-to-one or group coaching, or many other scenarios. As we've experimented, tested

and reflected throughout the development process, we've done our best to avoid some of the risks of moving these kinds of activities online, while preserving as many of the benefits of the tangible resources as possible.

There will undoubtedly be further learning and evolution to come, but here we share some of the lessons we've learned in the hope that it might be useful as you consider how you might use digital PPIs (or other tools) in your practice. We don't claim to have expertise in, or even awareness of, all such tools, so are merely sharing our own perspective based on our experience. The points we've highlighted will apply more to some tools than others.

1. Be clear about your aims (data is not always king)

One of our biggest concerns around the use of strengths-based questionnaires is that they can, directly or indirectly, put too much emphasis on measurement. Although it can sometimes be valuable to have a valid assessment of strengths, or to make quantitative comparisons between people, typically that's not the primary objective in a coaching context.

Although there's a certain intrigue that comes with the reports produced by the algorithms behind these tools, it can risk being a distraction if your primary aims are to facilitate clients to greater self-awareness. In our experience, reports can risk undermining much of the value of focusing on strengths because they encourage a rational focus on data. We often hear people talking about working on their 'weaker' or 'lowest' strengths, because they believe that is where they should focus their effort. But a hugely important part of strengths-based activities is the emotional component that comes from reflecting on when you're at your best. If we lose that, we're missing the magic ingredient.

The late Chris Peterson, who developed the VIA strengths assessment, was clear that surveys are not the only, or necessarily the best, way of helping someone discover their strengths. Researchers need survey data in order to analyse themes and generalities, but for individual clients it is more important to understand themselves. For some clients, outputs from a validated measure might be a useful part of the picture, but for many it risks being an unhelpful distraction.

The key is to be clear about exactly why you want to introduce a tool to your coaching process, and then choose one that fits with those objectives and the nature of the relationship you are trying to establish with the client.

2. Empower the client (not yourself)

It's all too easy for a digital tool to reduce a client's sense of engagement and ownership, particularly when outputs or 'results' are produced.

When you invite a client to complete a questionnaire, does it change the dynamic of your relationship? Once they've answered all the questions, it would be perfectly natural for them to defer to you when it comes to understanding the outputs. After all, you've used this tool many times and understand the idiosyncrasies of the language used in the outputs; they've never seen it before.

Given the non-directive and empowering nature of coaching, we would argue that it's important that the client maintains their position of being the 'expert' in themselves. We know that the fit between the individual and the activity has a bearing on its effectiveness¹, so it makes sense that we should adapt our approach to suit the client. The flexibility that is inherent in many card-based exercises aligns well with this principle, helping to make them an effective tool. Similarly, enabling a client to choose their own

intervention from a range of options, rather than having the expert coach pick the activity they believe will be most beneficial, may enable more favourable outcomes.ⁱⁱ

Control and choice are important. It might be helpful to keep this in mind as you're considering what tools or exercise to share with a client, and how you will introduce them.

We always see it as a positive sign when the tools we are using seem almost invisible, where the client is fully immersed in the coaching discussion and isn't distracted by the tool they're using. How might you ensure that any digital tools you use are seen as supporting cast members rather than the lead actor?

3. Get comfortable

In order to blend into the background, a digital tool needs to be easy to use – both for you and your client. Particularly when it comes to real-time interactive technology, if you're not comfortable using it yourself, don't try to use it with a client.

As we've found during testing of Deckhive, there's significant variability in how confident and capable coaches (and their clients) are when it comes to IT! We've seen first-hand how disruptive it can be when a coach or facilitator tries to use technology that they're not sufficiently familiar with, so we'd always suggest investing time getting to know your tools, practising using it and working out how best to communicate simply and concisely what your client needs to do.

4. Design matters

One of the things that makes PPIs so effective is that they typically engage people at both the affective and cognitive level. It is precisely because of the emotional impact of, for example, reflecting on when you've been at your best that these activities can be so transformative. The positive emotions evoked help to stimulate a different way of thinking where people are more open-minded, more creative and more hopeful.

It's interesting to consider how the design of a tool reinforces, or otherwise, the principles that underpin the activity. In the digital space there is significant opportunity to use design thinking in both wording and aesthetics, to complement and reinforce the intentions of the tool and evoke an appropriate emotional response. It is perhaps surprising how often this opportunity is overlooked by developers of digital tools, with poor UX sometimes creating frustration – the opposite of what we're often trying to achieve with PPIs!

5. Consider the context

Especially when using digital tools in remote coaching, it can be all too easy to overlook the context in which the client is engaging in the activity. Are they in a psychologically safe space? Do they have privacy? Are there unhelpful distractions? Do they have the appropriate technology to complete the activity?

With PPIs there is often an assumption that they can only do good, but that's not necessarily the case. For example, asking someone with very low self-esteem to reflect on their strengths can serve to reinforce their perspective that they don't possess any positive qualities. While that won't be true, the exercise could be damaging if we do not introduce it appropriately and pay close attention to the way the client responds.

As we emerge from the challenges of the last two years it's becoming clear that much coaching will continue in a remote or hybrid form. Even if many coaching professionals are desperate to return to face-to-face meetings, it seems that some clients are less keen.

Coupled with the increased accessibility of virtual coaching, this means the use of digital coaching tools is here to stay.

As the choice of positive psychology inspired digital tools continues to grow, it will become ever more important to be discerning in the choices we make. Even the best tools will fail to add value if we use them in the wrong way or at the wrong time.

The evidence suggests that coaching adds incremental value when it comes to the outcomes of positive psychology interventions. To get the best from the blend of coaching and digital PPIs, we need to ensure that good quality coaching is at the heart of the process. We need tools that are a good fit with the facilitative and generative nature of coaching, where the technology supports and enables the coach, the client and the relationship between them. For the developers of digital tools, it can be tempting to let the possibilities of technology lead the way. But just because we can do something, it doesn't mean we should.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Martin Galpin and Michele Deeks are chartered psychologists and directors of Work Positive, a UK-based consultancy specialising in wellbeing, strengths and positive leadership. They are also the creators of the At My Best range of tools, which is popular with coaches and facilitators around the world, and recently co-founded Deckhive, a new platform for using digital card decks in real-time interactive meetings.

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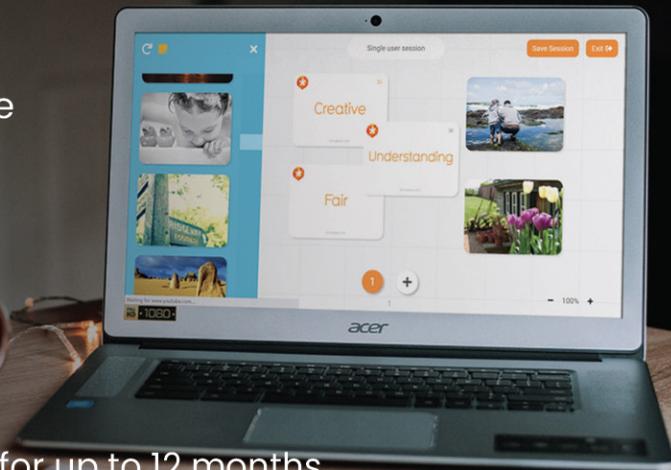
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DEVELOPING LEADERS AND ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Leveraging the link between leadership and performance – to the benefit of client, coach and the organisation. **Gordon Mackenzie**, CEO of Performance Climate Systems Limited, explains how.

Performance is what every CEO or shareholder wants. They want the best return on their investment (ROI) and from their people (ROE). It is always a surprise to me, therefore, when I speak to executive teams and realise just how little they really understand about performance and leadership – and how they are linked!

Take a moment to ask yourself: 'Why do we run a satisfaction or engagement survey? What do we do with the results? And how does it impact the bottom line?'

Performance has been studied extensively by academics over the last century. Yet outside high-performance sport, little of it is really understood by those whose responsibility it is, and they employ very little of the robust research on the topic.

For example: why run a satisfaction survey when there is no direct correlation with performance? Someone may be satisfied but also overpaid, under-employed and delivering very little. Alternatively, they may produce high engagement scores, but ones that are driven by fear as a result of a toxic leader. Engagement is not directly linked to long-term sustainable performance – so what is?

1. The link between performance and climate

For 20 years my teams have been able to deliver high performance across a range of organisations. This has been based on the simple foundation of robust research (McClellandⁱ, Litwin and Stringerⁱⁱ, and Burkeⁱⁱⁱ to name a few) that focused on the link between motivation, the role of a leader, the climate in which people work and the performance of the team.

The conclusions of the research, carried out over many years, identified that team performance is significantly influenced by the climate or culture in which it operates.

It is worth emphasising here the important difference between culture and climate. Culture is the personality of the organisation: hard-wired over time and difficult to change. Climate can best be defined as the mood of the organisation and is localised.

In their research, Litwin and Stringer assert that leadership accounts for up to 70% of the variation in climate – and climate is one of the biggest single factors in driving team performance. This research has been corroborated by subsequent research findings and my own experience across diverse organisations globally.

Just like the weather, the climate of a team changes over time. Whereas some teams exist in a happy and productive climate much of the time, other times are more challenging. The climates that do not 'feel right' can be stressful and unhappy places to be. In the worst cases, these 'toxic' climates are characterised by high levels of sickness, absenteeism, staff turnover and stress-related illness.

In teams where the climate is positive and productive, a much higher level of performance is observed. An organisation's overall culture is

made up of the sum of its component parts, creating an aggregate combination of the individual team, department and/or functional climates prevalent within the entity.

2. The link between leadership and climate

Team climate is predominantly the result of the team leader's behaviour towards their team. Think about a national culture or climate for a moment. Does it feel different when the president, prime minister or ruling party changes? Likewise, the culture and climate of a company or team is easiest to observe when leadership changes. Less obvious, but just as important, is their impact on performance.

Bass and Avolio suggest that an organisation's culture develops in large part from its leadership, while the culture of an organisation can also affect the development of its leadership.^{iv} You may recognise this yourself: think back to your performance at school.

How much of your performance in one subject versus another was the result of your innate intelligence, and how much was the result of the relationship you had with the teacher?

Great teachers bring out the best in us, just as great leaders or great coaches do in the workplace, on the sports field and beyond. Not surprisingly, poor teachers, leaders and coaches do the opposite.

3. Leadership and motivation

When we consider our own motivation, about 70% is intrinsic motivation; the motivations that come from within us, such as purpose, love, family, fulfilment, achievement, contribution, legacy and so on. The other 30% is extrinsic motivation: that which comes from outside us and is directly affecting our situation: the culture, rewards, job security, earning potential, recognition and so on.

According to McClelland, effective leadership maximises the impact of the extrinsic, but also taps into the intrinsic by providing meaning and context for each person's personal motivators. When intrinsic motivators are enabled, discretionary effort begins to drive performance. In this case you can access the whole 100% if the leader is effective enough.

4. The implication for organisations

If organisations ditched their expensive pulse surveys and focused on climate, they would be able to map every leader in the organisation and their direct impact on performance. When you map the factors impacting climate and the research into high performance you get a model of high performance and climate that is simple for teams to understand and use and provides a process map for leaders and coaches to follow.

Combining the research into organisation climate, high performance and the impact of leaders, and focusing on the elements they have in common, led to the creation of the Performance Climate System® (PCS) six-segment model (see Figure 1).

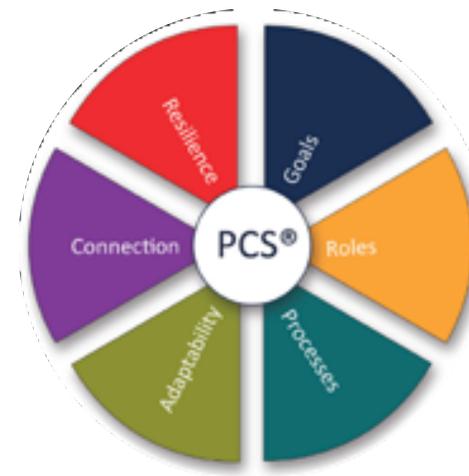


Figure 1: The Performance Climate System® six-segment model

A simple online survey completed by team members provides a snapshot in time of the climate of the team. The report is interactive and allows the coach and team to unlock additional information, learning resources and workshop ideas on each element. It provides both quantitative and qualitative data to inform coaching sessions with the leader and to support team coaching sessions. By measuring every team in the organisation you can also provide analysis via an Organisation Performance Dashboard®. Combining the outputs allows you to track overall organisation performance and culture over time. The OPD also informs development, succession planning and wider systemic performance issues and how they are affecting areas of the business.

5. A roadmap for leaders

Leadership is not a dark art or something limited to the few. It is a simple process that if followed will deliver a productive climate and improved performance.

In the PCS model, one begins in the transactional hemisphere. Starting at 12 o'clock, the first three segments are factors that can enable high performance in a team. If a team leader is skilled in these areas, they will be capable at managing or 'doing the right things' and thus enable performance.

- Goals: the vision and targets that the team aims its activity towards.
- Roles: the right internal organisation of team strengths and capabilities.
- Processes: the replicable activity that leads to sustainable and consistent performance.

Coaching around these three lead indicators of performance will positively improve climate and performance.

From 6 o'clock clockwise to 12 o'clock, segments four, five and six are in the transformational hemisphere, and define how a team and the leader maintain and sustain high performance over time.

Transformational leaders inspire loyalty and encourage performance even when they're not present physically. They inspire and sustain performance over time. It comes after the transactional, because leaders must establish clarity in that area first. The three segments here are:

- Adaptability: the ability to address effectively the need for change, and to innovate in order to maintain performance and success.

- Connection: the team's approach to its network of relationships. This is the glue that keeps the team together.
- Resilience: the team's working practices and sustainable leadership behaviours that maintain the team over time, providing endurance.

In one company, the customer service director insisted all team climate data was published and displayed outside the staff canteen. The various CS teams' climate scores ranged from 46%-63% at the start. Another 18 months on, the overall department climate was at 78%, with only a 5% gap between the top and bottom team.

We discovered that nobody liked being exposed as underperforming and staff rapidly set about working out what the best teams were doing. This was further embedded by basing team leaders' annual objectives partly on their PCS score. The director had created a high-performing customer service culture internally and the model was successfully adopted across the whole organisation.

By embracing the right tools, coaches can not only leverage the client's performance but also their own. In my coaching interventions I always start and finish with a measurement of climate as by default it is a measure of leadership effect. Not only does it prove to the coachee they have changed but it informs the client of a return on investment on coaching and leads to future work.

To conclude, we know we get what we measure. Every client wants performance improvement, as does every coach. We need to measure the right things if we want to deliver coaching success.

I believe our priority must be to focus on climate, not culture and on leaders, not people. It is the leaders that create the climate that delivers the performance. It is leaders that unlock the discretionary effort and motivation of the team and individual. Great leaders deliver great performance at every level.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Gordon Mackenzie is an executive and performance coach and the author of the Performance Climate Survey. Starting his career in the Royal Marines, he became fascinated by the differences in the climate and performance of similar fighting units. He went on to senior roles in HR and management consultancy. Gordon is a chartered fellow of the CIPD and holds an MBA from Warwick Business School. Gordon is the author of the Performance Climate System, Leadership360 and The Virtual Coach. When not coaching he is a passionate diver and humanitarian with the React Disaster Response charity.

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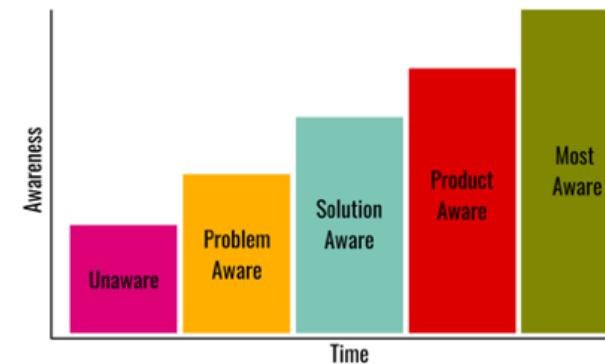
THE JOURNEY OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Marketing should build curiosity, tension and the urge to know more. Forget the heavy lifting and begin a journey of awareness with marketing experts [Frances Khalastchi](#) and [Simon Batchelar](#).

Most coaches start with the hardest bit of marketing.

If it seems that you're always talking to people who don't understand what coaching is, let alone realise that they would benefit from it, then you too are engaged in that 'hardest bit'. It can feel like a lot of work and effort with limited engagement in return... because these people are unaware of their situation or that coaching might help.

Marketing is most effective when you get back to basics. There's a journey people take when considering coaching. We call it the 'Journey of Consciousness'.



Unaware: doesn't know they have a problem, or can't yet see the opportunity for change, and it can take a lot of time, energy and effort to move them to the next level.

Problem aware: knows they have a problem, or can see an opportunity for change but doesn't know there are solutions to the outcome they have identified.

Solution aware: discovers that there are solutions, but hasn't chosen one, and is still deciding if they're ready to do the work.

Product aware: is ready to do the work and is looking for a product that matches their perceived solution. They're trying to work out if your product can help them solve their problem or support them in the change they want to make.

Most aware: has decided they're ready to work with you. They're on the cusp of buying but need to feel supported in taking the first step.

Most people think, and most marketing advice will tell you, to focus on those in the unaware level, as that is what the big brands do. But for a considered purchase like coaching, and without an advertising budget of millions, this is often highly ineffective. What's more, if you try to take people through these five levels too fast, they get overwhelmed and feel like they're being sold to – nobody likes that.

It's far better to build curiosity – create a little tension, an itch to know more. People love to explore and learn about new things, so a better approach would be to take the client on a journey that they can explore at their own pace.

When the solution is so clear to you, it's tempting to jump straight in with a solution. However, a premature solution can be overwhelming for the potential client. Too much, too soon and they stop the journey, go on a detour, get lost or look for another coach.

It can be tempting to try to use apps and tech tools to boost or push your messages, but these frequently push people away rather than invite them in. It's often better to keep it simple.

Coaching is a significant – and hopefully life-changing – investment. It's not an impulse buy... it really is a journey of consciousness. You can make the journey feel more natural for people, and more manageable for you, by breaking it down into levels. After that, you can create a variety of marketing content to guide them as they travel at their own pace.

Not everyone will complete the journey and become a client but, for those that do, the learning that took place along the way will support the coaching process when it starts.

And the bonus benefit? You have an organic marketing process with content for all, regardless of their level of awareness. When you're not trying to convert a person into a client with every post or podcast, your marketing will feel a lot less like marketing – to you and to them.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Frances Khalastchi has 20 years of experience in corporate, third sector, start-up and government communications. She has created brand partnerships, launched products, designed websites and trained many people along the way. She now helps coaches improve their relationship with marketing. Her clients face the feelings that marketing brings up and then capitalise on self-awareness to feel more confident about putting themselves out there.

Simon has run an online marketing agency for over 18 years, and in that time has transformed the marketing of over 400 small businesses. Their longest-standing client tripled their turnover to over £5m, and they have taken another client from starting their blog in a coffee shop to talking on the TED stage. Simon is writing a book on marketing for coaches, based on the Better Bolder Braver teaching method

Frances and Simon are hosting a signature course until 9 June 2022. They also provide AC CPD hours accredited training. Both will allow AC members to take a deeper dive into the contents of this article, gaining insights, ideas and tools for moving forward with a more intentional, purposeful, enjoyable marketing practice.



WHAT WE DO BEST IS INHERENTLY HUMAN...

In her latest column, **Marie Faire** reflects on the holy grails of coaching, which are being sought after by AI developers yet overlooked by some training providers.

In a conversation last week, a supervisee told me that they had been offered the opportunity to attend an 'advanced' coaching course. Thinking this was good CPD, she agreed to go. The course trainer asked them: 'What are the qualities of a great coach?'. Her contribution was 'empathy'. The reply? 'Oh no,' said the trainer, 'empathy is dangerous.' She said she laughed, thinking he was joking, but he wasn't.

Little wonder the world is in the state it is in, when empathy is seen as not only an undesirable quality but positively to be avoided. I fear that the trainer could have also dismissed compassion and trust.

Of course, I accept that we can over-empathise, and that may lead to overwhelm and burnout. Empathy is not, however, all or nothing.

In fact, empathy (and emotion, compassion and trust) is one of the holy grails being sought by many researchers in the field of artificial intelligence (AI), because it is recognised by them as a 'given' that empathy is crucial to human interaction.

David Clutterbuck tells the following story of a coach whose client interrupted them to say: 'Actually, my real issue is that I don't feel I have a purpose in my life anymore.' The coach nodded sympathetically. 'That's really interesting. I wish we had time to explore that. But let's park it and focus on the issue we started with ...' In his reflection notes, the coach was blissfully unaware that this might not have been an appropriate response – he had followed the model! No empathy, just sympathy and a model.

I am thinking that the brand of coaching that is being proffered by the training above produces coaches of the kind that Clutterbuck describes. These coaches could be replaced by AI right now. In fact, a robot with the right programming would probably do a better job. AI is at least capable of recognising human emotions and responding 'appropriately', even though they are some way off having mirror-neuron functionality as effective as those already installed in us.

How ironic that we hope to find ways to make machines more human, while some coach trainings are endeavouring to turn humans into robots.

Little wonder the world is in the state it is in, when empathy is seen as not only an undesirable quality but positively to be avoided.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marie is an AC-accredited master executive coach and coaching supervisor, and co-founder of the Beyond Partnership. She runs AC-accredited coach and coaching supervisor programmes. www.thebeyondpartnership.co.uk
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AC at 20

Celebrating the Association for Coaching's 20th Anniversary #AC20



Join us throughout the year as we celebrate the Association for Coaching's 20th anniversary year with a series of special events, podcasts, publications and new membership services.

Hear from our associates, members, contributors, and founders as we reflect upon our organization's journey and the global coaching profession over the last two decades.

Learn about our vision for the future as we strive to champion coaching excellence.

We warmly welcome you to attend a series of special events, podcasts, and webinars we will be hosting throughout the year.

Here's a taste of what's coming up!

AC20 UAE Inaugural Launch Event - Abu Dhabi



AC20 UAE Inaugural Launch

12 May 2022 - Abu Dhabi

The Association for Coaching (AC) UAE are delighted to invite you to join us at our inaugural launch event in Abu Dhabi.

This interactive event will be hosted by our Global CEO Katherine Tulpa and our UAE team to share, connect, and engage with your fellow coaching community in the region. This event is free to attend.

Learn more at: associationforcoaching.com/events

Ireland AC20 – International Group Supervision Discovery Series



17 May 2022 - Online

The Association for Coaching (AC) Ireland is excited to invite you to our exclusive AC20 International Group Supervision Discovery Series. Two full-length Group Supervision events on 17 May to celebrate our 20th anniversary year and International Coaching Week, May 2022.

Learn more at: associationforcoaching.com/events

AC at 20: Journey, Stories, Legacy



AC Podcast Channel

Join our podcast host, Rob Lawrence, as he speaks to coaching leaders and professionals. Hear stories from associates, members, contributors and founders, and learn of our vision and aspirations for the future of coaching.

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TECHNOLOGY HELPS AND IT HURTS

Transformational coach **Keith Merron** muses on technology and its effect on coaching, for good and for ill – the pros and cons of videoconferencing, the efficiency of a well-oiled calendar app and the use of text messaging.

ON VIDEOCONFERENCING

1. Personally, I mostly use Zoom, but almost all videoconferencing systems that we tend to use as coaches have the same features. I have a personal Zoom account and a personal Zoom room that is my recurring, go-to place to invite clients to join me. I have the Zoom connected to my Google calendar and to my scheduling system so that when a client wants to meet with me, they go to my calendar link, sign up, and are automatically given an invite that includes the link to my Zoom room. Very snappy and very useful. This is the 'I love technology' part.
 2. I used to hate videoconferencing because I believed that so much gets communicated face-to-face that is missing in videos. What's missing is the human touch (literally) as well as the ways we touch each other when in each other's presence, such as offering a cup of coffee or a drink, inviting the person to sit down, shaking hands, hugging and so on. These cultural norms are missing in a video, and I feel them missing. I still don't like that I can't use these easy ways of connecting to my clients. That said...
 3. I now love videoconferencing, for it means I can do my work with anyone, anywhere and I don't have to waste time travelling. If you like to travel a lot in your car, or on an airplane, you might feel differently. I enjoy the sweetness of time efficiency and am grateful that videoconferencing improves this.
 4. All of my thoughts in the past few years have gone towards figuring out how to make the best of videoconferencing and minimise the loss, so that it is as connective as possible. Having started working with clients on Zoom about 10 years ago, I've gotten into a good rhythm. I stopped fighting videoconferencing and embraced it. This helped me figure out how to work with it. Here are some of my strategies.
- I ask the client to avoid all distractions from their meeting, including blocking notifications, turning their phones off and eliminating distractions from other people. This way, we can replicate the experience of being in an office with just each other. Most clients see the wisdom of this and join me in this practice. They build this habit with me, so I don't need to ask for it each time. A couple of times is enough.
 - If, when I look at the client on screen, it appears they are not looking at me directly, much like we do when in front of each other, I help explain to the client how to move the picture of me up to the top of the screen such that their eyes are as close as possible to the camera, which sits on the top of the monitor. I have my system set up this way myself so that it looks like I'm looking into their eyes, and I want the same. Few people have thought of this, and they have this feeling of not connecting when using videoconferencing. It is this odd sensation of not looking at each other as we normally do when face to face. I solved that problem years ago and it is easy to solve with this strategy. I highly recommend you do it. This way, it looks like we are looking into each other's eyes – so crucial in human interaction.
 - I give myself absolute permission to be completely human. Crying, laughing, wondering and sighing are all welcome – so much so that, through Zoom, we are able to make human contact. I let my client know that when we are together, whether in person or on Zoom, this is a sacred time. I expect that of myself, and I expect it of my client.
 - I see the client's body language and often refer to what I'm seeing, no different than if we were together. My eyes still tell me a lot. I know there are some people who prefer a phone call to a Zoom call, but I don't. I want to see, and I want to use what I see as part of the process.
 - In the end, it is still not perfect. It's about 95% good enough. Whatever energy that gets transmitted when two people are together (hard to measure but perhaps not hard to feel) is lost to me. But I'm not an energy worker, so whatever I'm missing, I can live without. I know I'm still missing information, but it's

small, so I can live with it. The 5% loss is counterbalanced by the greater (more than 5%) convenience, so I'm happy with the video conference as my primary medium of exploration.

ON CALENDARING

1. Many people, including myself, use some system of calendaring to make it easy to schedule with clients. In the past, it used to be that I'd use my assistant to schedule. When I've got a lot of one-on-one meetings, each one needs to be calendared, so a system of calendaring is quite welcome. I personally use ScheduleOnce, but there are many others on the market. They all seem pretty good.
2. It feels quite impersonal to ask my client to go into my calendar system and choose a time. If the client has an assistant, they use that assistant to do it. No harm, no foul. If the client does not, then they are used to taking the time to go to my calendar link, and no one has complained. That said, it still feels impersonal, even though it is incredibly convenient.
3. For those folks that I sense care about the personal touch, I comply and bypass my calendar system. Most people don't mind browsing my schedule to find a time convenient for us both.
4. In all cases, I acknowledge it is impersonal and ask if they are okay with it. No one has said they are not, and I'm guessing everyone has appreciated me asking and acknowledging the impersonal nature of the use of a calendaring system.

ON EMAILS AND TEXT MESSAGING

1. These are now common in coaching.
2. I often have a thought between sessions about a client and give myself permission to reach out to them via text message or email to share that thought.
3. I personally prefer email as I don't like the immediate interruption of text messaging. To deal with my own preference, I turn off text notifications so that I don't get interrupted in my daily flow. I do check texts and emails now and then throughout the day and pick and choose whether and when to respond.
4. Although I prefer email, I'm flexible and go with my client's preference or what they are more comfortable using. I let them know that I don't always respond to text messages immediately and everyone seems okay with that (except my daughter, but that's another story, not to be discussed here).

In the end, as a transformational coach, I am committed to that emotional linkage that is crucial for the deeper journey that transformation requires. So, I continue to figure out ways to use technology and not fight it. Technology is wonderful. Technology is awful. Technology serves. Technology separates. Thankfully, I've stopped resisting and embraced it. Do what works for you (I'm sure you will), but please don't send me a text. I'm already overloaded.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Keith is the founder and managing partner of Leadership Pathways, a consulting and leadership development firm dedicated to helping organisations achieve high performance and industry leadership. He has more than 37 years of experience of assisting executives and managers. He received his doctorate from Harvard University, where his studies spanned human and organisational development. He has published numerous professional journal articles and is the author of six books on human and organisational change, including *The Art of Transformational Coaching*. Twice yearly he offers a workshop to coaches on the subject. Learn more at artoftransformationalcoaching.com.



VIRTUAL OR IN-PERSON TRAINING: WHAT CAME TOP?

Lise Lewis shares lessons learned from her experience of delivering virtual coach and supervisor training programmes on a global scale.

I started delivering accredited coach/mentor supervision training in 2009. At that time training was very much in-person and the nearest we came to technology was using a slide deck to enhance programme learning. Today, technology is much more to the fore, and quite probably the facilitator is sitting in front of their own monitor. Progress in so many ways – or is it?

In the years since I started supervision training, the concept has gained considerable traction in response to the realisation that quality assurance for both coach and mentor practice is both ethical and professional. The challenge with a global training offer has been about how to respond to requests from different regions of the world at the same time! A re-engineered business model was forced upon us – it had to be virtual.

In February 2019 we started delivering our first virtual coach/mentor supervisor training. We were a small group willing to take a chance and attracted by the opportunity to test the possibilities of more accessible training.

The design of the programme was modular, offering a combination of knowledge input, learning in practice, group dialogue, feedback on practice, supervision on supervision and guest speakers – together with a reflective practice log to evaluate capability over the course of the programme. Originally the session lasted two hours. We also used social media to engage delegates and programme supervisor facilitators throughout the programme. Delegates on this first pilot programme were geographically dispersed, to say the least – from Toronto to Hong Kong. In response, we aimed to mirror this diversity with a range of speakers who were at least geographically, if not culturally, diverse.

WHAT LEARNINGS EMERGED FROM EMBRACING TECHNOLOGY?

- Time zone coordination was a challenge. With such an open programme, we did not know the delegates' location in advance.

It was (and remains) important to select a timing that worked for as many people as possible.

- Reliability of technology came a close second. This wasn't so much about the equipment used, but the availability of a consistent signal.
- Choice of virtual platform and cloud repositories for storing programme resources clashed with organisational preferences and firewalls.
- Although 'screen stare' as a condition of increased virtual working was recognised, we had no idea what the actual impact might be.
- Breakout rooms, typically standard now, were the new and only way for delegates to 'e-network'. Exploratory questions immersed peer trainee supervisors in reflective dialogue, encouraging integrating programme knowledge with experiential practice scenarios. Breakout rooms also featured as functional spaces, enabling the customary triad approach to practice sessions. The session facilitator was able to 'pop in' to each room and to offer affirmation and developmental observations on practice.

WHAT WAS LEARNED?

- Our first and enduring reaction to the pilot was to admire the flexibility and willingness of delegates to accommodate time zones – joining sometimes before dawn still sleepy-eyed and with breakfast in hand, or at the other end of the day at dinner time after a full day's work.
- Reliability of bandwidth improved as people became more familiar with online working and the need for good internet provision.
- Choice of platform and cloud repositories continues to create tensions for standardising access to programme delivery.
- 'Screen stare' remains a constant health check warning, causing dry eyes and eye strain leading to exhausting the eyes' ability to focus.

Those first willing pioneers experiencing the virtual challenges of online learning paved the way to a programme nearing its ninth cohort in delivery.

Continuous evaluation and review have resulted in regular adjustments to the programme. Now, in 2022, the number of modules has doubled, and so has the length of the session, which now includes a midway break for everyone's comfort and wellbeing. The sessions are recorded, so that any learners who have to take unplanned breaks can catch up, and all participants can reflect on and refresh their knowledge later too.

We continue to use breakout rooms:

- Small groups of delegates are able to practise supervision skills using the familiar triad approach or in pairs – this helps people apply their learning into practice and enables supervisor facilitators to 'drop in' and observe practice either for feedback in the moment and/or feedback in the plenary, offering general observations to the whole group.
- Confidentiality is protected within the group, since no recordings are made.
- Delegates also discuss scenarios that occur in supervision such as ethical dilemmas and boundary management, which enhances group learning.
- The interactive whiteboard can test artistic skills, which brings fun moments and always encourages creativity using stamps, text, drawing and the useful eraser.
- Slides decks and videos can be shared all enhancing the learning experience and sustaining interest in screen working.

Social media such as LinkedIn, Facebook and WhatsApp have all been trialled as an aid to continuous learning engagement, including posting articles, academic references, videos, questions and answers and a sharing space for those fun moments. Each platform has its own specific merits.

To complement reflections on the virtual journey I invited graduates and current delegates to respond to a short survey. Here are the questions relating to respondents' perceptions of using technology as a learning medium.

Did you find the virtual experience preferential to an in-person workshop?

How was the virtual learning experience for you?

Would the experience of attending this programme encourage you to attend another virtual programme

How much did using technology enhance your learning experience

How much did using technology distract learning?

IN SUMMARY

Briefly, the short survey with a sample of 29 shows a preference for virtual working and the majority are very likely to attend a future virtual programme.

The world of work has moved on considerably; there are too many changes to expand on here, except to mention one that is critical about the way we work. We are now conscious that we have to

change to save life on Earth and this means significantly reducing carbon emissions. The impact of Covid lockdowns forced the office into the home. Both determine our future use of technology, which is supported by the survey results and reflective observations over three years of virtual delivery.

All our trainings for coaches and supervisors are adapted for virtual delivery. Trainee coaches usually need more time, more presence and more direct connection, which can mean less time for breakout opportunities. Trainee supervisors appear to adapt more quickly to the virtual process and want more time in breakout dialogue with peers, and use the chat facility more frequently. Use of the poll function is also beneficial for coaching knowledge quizzes, whereas supervisors value the power of deeper dives into breakout topics.

HOT TIPS FOR VIRTUAL DELIVERY

1. Use minimal slides
2. Be engaging and avoid 'screen stare'
3. Encourage regular interaction in plenaries
4. Request chat responses and questions to attract dialogue
5. Introduce fun activities by injecting creativity
6. Keep sessions short and energetic
7. Have an exercise break
8. Use music to bring a different energy
9. Encourage storytelling from practice
10. And remember body breaks!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr Lise Lewis CFCIPD MBA is an executive coach, mentor and supervisor. A past president of EMCC Global (2011-2017) and an EMCC global special ambassador since 2017, she is the founder of Bluesky International, which provides EMCC-accredited coach, mentor and supervisor training. Lisa is the author of *Relational Feedback: Why Feedback Fails and How to Make it More Meaningful*, published in 2020. She is a global keynote speaker, researcher and masterclass presenter.

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LET'S TALK ABOUT ETHICS: COACHING, CHATBOTS AND AI

For most people, coaching is a very human encounter shaped by empathy. Technology feels a little 'off' in this context, but we've all had to stretch our mindset and adapt to the world of remote-coaching – whether we liked it or not. [Rebecca Rutschmann](#) explores this new world.

Many of us have levelled-up to become Zoom masters, website creators and online video-course ninjas, and some even fell for the world of apps. In 2019 it was a common experience for us at evoach (our startup company that enables coaches to digitise their coaching programmes) to encounter coaches who didn't believe coaching chatbots would have any relevance any time soon. Now in 2022, we haven't heard that criticism for a long time: we encounter rather the opposite perspective. The tech boost within the coaching industry has been enormous, but the learning phase on how to use technology responsibly and ethically has just begun – and is lagging behind.

CHATBOTS IN COACHING

A chatbot is a very specific type of software programme imitating human conversations in an interactive way. Chatbots are a great way to lead clients through a fully standardised digital coaching process. They can be used as a kind of coaching companion or coach assistant before, after and in between coaching sessions. They can also offer a great way of solo self-reflection for the coachee.

Systemic and solution-oriented coaching follows standardised process steps through which a smart and well-designed coaching chatbot can guide the coachee step-by-step along a decision tree structure. The coaching chatbot only needs to be equipped with the right question sets for the respective process steps, as well as visualised and gamified coaching methods and tools. The Wheel of Life, constellation boards, non-violent communication techniques or scale questions – depending on the coachee's topic – can be integrated into the coaching process. It makes the solo digital session much more fun and lighter to use.

As in personal coaching, the coachee is responsible for the content, the coach-avatar for leading the process of the coaching session. The challenge here is the careful and professional design of such digital, intelligent chatbot flows and the creation of meaningful algorithms. The expertise of experienced coaches must be incorporated, and coaching associations should review the quality of the applications for ethical and content standards. Research institutes can then explore their effectiveness and impact on the whole coaching process.

Dr Nicky Terblanche of Stellenbosch University discovered in a study with his goal-achievement chatbot, Vici, that a chatbot created purely on a decision-tree structure was able to support coachees just as successfully as a human coach after only 10 months.

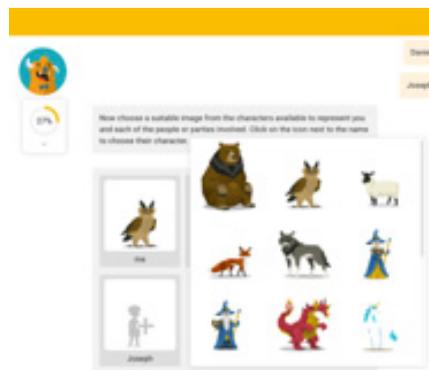


Figure 1. evoach conflict constellation board choosing characters representing people involved in a conflict situation

HOW WILL AI CHANGE THE COACHING INDUSTRY?

The rapid growth of the use of artificial intelligence (AI) has been called the most significant event in recent human history, with the potential to change virtually all aspects of human life. However, the capabilities of AI are mostly still far from becoming reality.

All existing AI applications – such as autonomous driving, spam filtering or conversational AIs like Alexa and Siri – are based on the first development stage of AI, which is called 'weak artificial intelligence'. AI in these instances is fused for one specific, predefined task. Weak artificial intelligence takes the required information from specific data sets and is thus bound to them. In their respective fields, however, the applications already act in real-time and often surpass human efficiency in their specific work.

So how could this impact the coaching industry in the future? In my opinion, AI coaching companions (speech or text assistants) will take over standardisable non-complex coaching models such as the GROW model, analyse the data within that specific framework and even be able to identify beliefs, values and biases, and even suggest possible coaching topics based on input data that further guide the client through the AI session.

AI algorithms will surpass any traditional approaches in client/coach matching as well as transcribing and analysing of video sessions to improve coach training. This supports coaches in analysing the session afterwards and in summarising its core essence, assisting coaches in finding the right approach and identifying biases. What AI will never be able to do in our lifetimes is to understand the full complexity of coaching in combination with the human mind.

High-end coaching will continue to be in demand and hybrid coaching will become normal (like video calls today). The identification of coaching topics and onboarding sessions can be done by virtual assistants that then pass over to a human coach for in-depth personal coaching. The power of human interaction in the forms of listening, understanding and showing empathy is something that should never be underestimated and cannot be replaced by human-machine interaction. For countries and areas where people simply cannot afford or don't have access to coaching, an AI coach will be able to provide help and support using standard coaching techniques and models.

HOW TO USE TECHNOLOGY ETHICALLY AND RESPONSIBLY

Big data analytics, machine learning, AI and all such data-dependent digital transformation solutions enable businesses to gain meaningful insights that can open the door to a world of new business opportunities, with data being the currency.

Coaches are responsible for clients' coaching process and what happens with the data generated within this process. An important saying to always keep in mind: 'If you do not pay for a product, you are the product.' Even if we do not have to pay with money, we do so with data. Here's an example: a big coaching platform offers a great tool like automatic transcripts of your video session with your client. You can get this tool for free with your consent to their newly updated data policy... I guess you see where I am heading. As a responsible coach, of course you read through the updated version of their data policy. If it did not highlight or summarise the changes made, I would get a tiny bit suspicious and read it in even more detail until I fully understood the consequences of my consent for my, and my coachee's, data.

If the benefit and value of a technology is worth the price of providing your data you can do this in a responsible and ethical way. We always use the following guideline in coaching: make the client aware of the facts and ask for the consent of your coachee. If we are realistic, we already send our data to big tech companies many times a day when using our smartphones, search engines and spam filters. The question in my opinion is simple: are you aware how the data is used and are you ok with that? Here are some things to look out for when choosing to use a technology:

- Is the tech provider GDPR compliant? This is a must for all EU coaches but also helpful for international coaches, as GDPR is the highest standard when it comes to data protection.
- Does the technology provider follow a 'data can be controlled by the user' approach? Does the client always have full control of their data and are they able to delete it at anytime?
- Transparent and open communication from the provider on new, data relevant features and tools, meaning that the provider communicates proactively when introducing new features and tools that do use your or your clients' data.

BIAS IN COACHING AND TECHNOLOGY

Unconscious bias in coaching is a big topic and, as coaches, our unconscious biases impact how we hear, interpret and are

ultimately able to hold space for our clients. In order to do our job effectively, it's important to understand what our biases as coaches are. Data can also be biased. If our bias as a coach leads us to work only with data sets from white, young women, say, then when we run an analysis of our data sets and come to conclusions about coaching topics we may find that certain topics are considered as important when they are less so to a wider demographic.

So, whenever we use technology with our coaching clients where we rely on data analysis or even AI algorithms, we need to think about what data sets the results are based upon. Human beings are gifted with an amazing intelligence, which can guide us in double-checking what we see with our logic and common-sense. It usually sets off an internal alarm about any strange outcomes. It is great to use technology as a guidance system and we can learn so much more when using it, but we should never rely on data and algorithms alone.

THE WINDS OF CHANGE

When using different technologies as a coach we need to always keep the benefit and value for our coach-coachee relationship in mind, and be aware especially of what is happening with our and our clients' data. Looking at the next couple of years, I am excited to see a greater adoption of different technologies such as chatbots and AI within the actual coaching process, while new technologies and channels such as VR and more interactive video calls for personal remote coaching sessions will be used more broadly.

What we coaches can do now is to be open-minded, trying out and playing around with different tools and technologies, learning about our own biases while being aware of the biases that arise with new technologies. Further developing our ability to transfer and design coaching programmes and processes for these new digital environments will be crucial to our future success as coaches, especially for those coaches who are not retiring within the next five to ten years. But don't forget: as coaches, we will always need to add the human factor to a more and more technical world. We will grow with our coachees, step-by-step, into this new and exciting area.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Rebecca Rutschmann is a tech entrepreneur and the co-founder of the coaching tech startup evoach, which offers a domain-specific chatbot creator for coaches. A communications specialist, certified business coach and an expert in creating outstanding digital and intelligent user experiences, she has been involved in working with different online coaching formats since 2009 and wrote her business coaching thesis on online self-coaching. Her mission is to fully liberalise coaching by creating an intelligent, digital and gamified chatbot application for hybrid coaching.

i. Terblanche, N. (2020). A design framework to create Artificial Intelligence Coaches. *International journal of evidence based coaching and mentoring*, 18, 152-165.

TECHNOLOGY IN SUPERVISION

By way of introducing [Günay](#) and [Liz](#), the newest members of the Coaching Perspectives supervision contributor team, they join [Benita](#) and [Michelle](#) in reflecting on their experiences of using technology – as always, taking both supervisor and supervisee perspectives.

BENITA AS SUPERVISOR

I enjoy working virtually because it offers new avenues and endless opportunities to connect and work with coaches and supervisors from diverse backgrounds, cultures and continents.

I feel privileged and energised in the way I have been able to develop my 'virtual' supervision practice, transcending barriers and embracing the wider world we all inhabit. This approach is fundamental in opening up to the infinite ways and challenges of seeing things differently.

Initially I recall a reticence about working online. As the process became more familiar, I was able to be more courageous and open, leading to a more trusting approach. It was as if technological glitches necessitated opportunities to work out new ways of working together.

I am further strengthened and confident in what's possible through learning in a virtual world. In my experience, we find ways of being together, of shaping our human connection for the greater good of the whole.

BENITA AS SUPERVISEE

Having met with my supervisor in person for many years, the introduction of technology engendered a very different approach and experience. Gone were the established physical and caring rituals of arriving and leaving, alongside noticing the body cues we had become accustomed to.

While the essence and focus of our work remained the same, we spent time navigating our way with the technology. In the early days we revealed a 'messiness' in our ways of problem-solving technical issues. Overall, it required me to become more curious and mindful of our relationship now being on the other side of a screen. Our circumstances had changed and it was important to recognise what significance this had in order to recover our flow.

Alongside, there were the practical freedoms and benefits to be gained: using less of the planet's resource, a convenience of working from my home office, avoiding the hassle and expense of traveling, managing time differently.

Two years on we have embraced the use of technology. Our learning partnership continues to sustain, deepen and flourish in service of my client work. We are now finding ways of bringing in new rituals while working online.

GUNAY AS SUPERVISOR

In 2017, a change of countries pushed me to seek technology that would allow me to work with my supervisees online. Zoom was a way to almost teleport myself to sessions. Unfortunately this teleportation consisted of only half of me: head and shoulders! At first, I felt as if I was only providing half a service as a supervisor because my eyes could not see the whole body and its language. After a while, I discovered new questions that brought me the details that my eyes were looking for.

During the Covid-19 era, the technology that I learned in my spare time suddenly became a necessity. My own supervisor's mind-blowing questions about how I expected my future job to be was a prompt to increase the speed of my technical learning. I was glad that I didn't have to start from scratch, and learnt lots about different virtual platforms and collaborative whiteboards by participating in online events facilitated by others. My supervisees were so patient and understanding about the difficulties I experienced while resolving technological problems! I am eternally grateful to all of them.

GUNAY AS SUPERVISEE

I was able to have more regular sessions with my supervisor via technology during the pandemic. Luckily, she was good at tech and helped me to discover how to provide the best angle of the half-body view from my camera. She also helped me discover which online tools were best for me, the working details of the virtual platform I chose and the unlimited features of the internet.

We have also worked on my emotional reactions to working online. Technology evoked fear, anger and sadness, especially when it wasn't working properly. These feelings affected my 'being in the moment' with my clients. I also had difficulty trusting the reliability of technology to perform as expected, and this could trigger anxiety. My approach is to discover my work and then give myself to it wholeheartedly, and this was difficult amongst such strong emotions.

My supervisor helped me to understand these feelings and to identify what I could do to manage them. She believed in my ability to overcome challenges, and my self-efficacy improved day by day.

LIZ AS SUPERVISOR

When the pandemic moved all of my work online, I was already familiar with the technology but realised a few months in that my creative spark had been dampened. Through reflection and discussion with my own supervisor, I was reminded of the impact of place and space on my work. Pre-pandemic I had a dedicated coaching/supervision space within my home with large windows and a beautiful view into the garden. When this needed to be transformed into a dance studio for my daughter's continued online musical theatre studies, my considered, prepared and inspiring workspace became a small, cluttered office in a house full of other people also working online.

To renew my creativity, I knew I needed to take ownership of my office, considering what I wanted and didn't want around me to

help me do my best work. This prompted me to encourage my supervisees to do the same: to notice their online workspace and make small changes that would positively impact themselves and their work. Some chose to light candles, others added flowers or plants to their coaching space and chose virtual backgrounds that added something different. This in turn encouraged their clients to consider where they accessed coaching from, to reignite choice.

LIZ AS SUPERVISEE

I have had online supervision for many years because I live in Yorkshire and my supervisor is in London. Despite the distance between us, we have a great connection and I like being able to join from whichever space feels right for me on the day. This might be my admin space, my supervision space or even the garden. I think this ability to choose my space increases my sense of comfort and psychological safety and sets my intention for the work.

As I reflect on how else technology has worked for us, I see it as an open window. It allows us to see each other and frames the work we do but doesn't get in the way or inhibit us in our ways of working creatively; indeed it fades into the background. It's a silent facilitator, enabling but not prescribing, and that's what my supervisor is too. She gives me space to explore, think, try things out and create my way of working. Of course she isn't void of challenge, questions or support, and like a 'healthy' Zoom connection she weaves her subtle magic skillfully and delicately.

MICHELLE AS SUPERVISOR

On the whole I've enjoyed the virtual ways of working that became the norm in the pandemic. Perhaps my introversion preference contributed to me missing less the informal and social elements that accompany in-person working. I always seek to bring freshness and creativity into my work – and increasingly found ways of using technology to replace what I did in person. So digital whiteboards, digital imagery, playlists, and YouTube videos have all been ways of engaging creatively while online. In the main I feel this has added an extra dimension to the work. I've loved the challenge of creating a sense of connection and shared experience even when we are not physically in the same room. I've noticed that when emotions are evoked in the work and we are online it has the impact of slowing things down. With the client in their own space there seems to be a greater sense of safety – and for me, as with different cues to work with I become more tentative. This feels helpful and more spacious, and seems to help the client sit more gently with their exploration.

MICHELLE AS SUPERVISEE

Interestingly, despite my own comfort with technology, I notice that I use technology less as a supervisee than I do as a supervisor. When someone else is facilitating, I seem to follow their lead, grateful for once not to be responsible for holding the space! There is only one of my regular supervision sessions where the facilitator offers a digital whiteboard. He uses it for group contracting and we add our individual thoughts on virtual notes on the board. This is useful as a reference point that we can return to each session and is similar to re-using the original flip chart each session! I also like the chat

function; as sometimes more of a reflector, I can be slow to speak up... so I pop a quick comment in the chat when it occurs to me. Sometimes others in the group respond, other times not. I notice that giving my thoughts a voice is more important than whether it provokes further debate. But with a good facilitator, it can work a bit like putting a coin on the pool table: it marks my request to go next. Neat!

GROUP SUPERVISION EXPERIENCE CALLS

The Association for Coaching provides a group supervision experience on the third Thursday of every month. This service is free to members. Calls are held via video link or low-cost teleconference line and are facilitated by experienced AC coaches, who donate their time to support AC members. The calls last for up to an hour and have a maximum of five participants. AC group supervision calls are designed to offer members a taste of what supervision is like and what can be gained from participating in it. The calls are available to AC members regardless of location across the world. For more information, visit associationforcoaching.com/page/EventsGroupSupervi.

WHY NOT GET INVOLVED?

We are looking to welcome new volunteers who would like to join the team guiding this column forwards. We are particularly interested in expanding the diversity of the team and invite interest from all over the world – whether you're an AC member or not. New members would work in collaboration with the existing team and Clare Manning, lead on excellence for the magazine. If you are interested please contact Benita at benitatreanor@btinternet.com and or Michelle at michelle@greenfieldsconsultancy.co.uk for an informal exploratory chat.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Benita Treanor is an executive coach, coach supervisor, author, lead contributor on supervision and a founding member of the Association for Coaching. Benita is an AC-, CSA- and BACP-accredited supervisor, coach and psychotherapist. Benita founded her own coaching and organisational development business in 1998 and works with not-for-profit organisations, private and public, both locally and globally.



Günay Ozarin is founder of Göz Danışmanlık ve Koçluk in Turkey. She is AC-accredited as both a professional coach and a coaching supervisor. She is one of the founders of AC Turkey and is the lead for group supervision experience calls there as a head of talent and engagement.



Liz Ford is an accredited master executive coach and an accredited coaching supervisor. Prior to setting up Ford Consulting in 2001, she worked in both the NHS and private healthcare industry in nursing, management and learning and development. She loves working creatively and often uses the outdoors with her clients.



Michelle Lucas's first interest was psychology, leading to a career in HR. Having supported many executives who were dealing with transition, coaching was an obvious next career. She set up Greenfields in 2003, where she works as an accredited master executive coach as well as an accredited coach supervisor.

BOOK REVIEWS

COACHING TOOLS: WE COACH! VOLUME 1

Clare Manning recommends an overview of coaching tools that will enhance any practitioner's collection.

When I was training as a coach, I distinctly remember the late, great professor David Megginson inviting us to embrace an 'eclectic mix' within our coaching practice and consider creating a varied toolkit that would support this approach. That was certainly a green light moment for me, and I have been collecting tools ever since.

Coaching Tools will certainly help anyone who is new to coaching and looking to create their own toolkit from scratch, as well as more experienced coaches hoping to extend their repertoire. The team has gathered a selection of their favourite tried and tested tools: from well-known ones such as the 'Wheel of Life' to many that will be new to you. For instance, 'Fly like a bird' invites the client to see their landscape through the eyes of an eagle soaring high above its territory; 'Nudging from the wings' outlines 11 different kinds of nudges a team coach can make while working systemically with a team; and 'Walk it Out' offers a walk in nature with five segments and a focused question for each to encourage silent reflection.

As with any compendium, you will be drawn to some tools more than others, based on your background, preferences and the type of coaching work you do. The metaphor of a child on a beach collecting shells comes to mind – ignoring some, throwing back others and pocketing the best ones with a sense of satisfaction. The invitation here is to pick and mix as suits you and to pull out the ones you would like to road test.

In terms of finding the tools that you're interested in, there isn't much structure to the volume, which some readers might find a bit frustrating. There is, however, a 'presenting issue' list at the back which is useful. Personally, I would also have welcomed more categorisation throughout, perhaps by schools of coaching psychology, or to have each tool marked up by situational application, or a distinction between core coaching skills and tools with specific purpose. That said, if you're happy to roam then you will find plenty to catch your interest.

I particularly like the section on the danger of using tools, which reminds us that the relationship between coach and coachee and the key skills of listening and questioning are all paramount. Tools are the cherries on the cake, not the core ingredients of a session. At the same time, an expansive toolkit of well-rehearsed tools means we are more likely to be able to put our hands on the right tool, in a helpful way, for the presenting issue at hand.

TITLE: *Coaching Tools: 101 coaching tools and techniques for executive coaches, team coaches, mentors and supervisors*

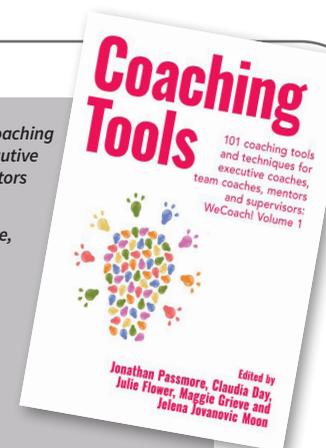
EDITORS: Jonathan Passmore, Claudia Day, Julia Flower, Maggie Grieve and Jelena Jovanovic Moon

PUBLISHER: Libri Publishing

PUBLICATION DATE: 2021

PAPERBACK PRICE: £30

ISBN: 978-1911450856



Throughout the book there are beautiful images, which can also serve as visual aids if you want to work creatively with clients. There are lots of somatic tools in here too. As we emerge from our enforced virtual world and start to meet again in ways that offer more options for our coaching, perhaps these are the tools that will bring additional enrichment for our clients, offering ways to reflect that may have been missing for some time?

I invite you to explore at your leisure...

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Clare Manning is an experienced coach, supervisor, mediator, trainer and facilitator. She has been working in the field for over a decade and specialises in leadership development, intercultural communication and wellbeing.

[linkedin.com/in/claremanning](https://www.linkedin.com/in/claremanning)

ARE YOU LISTENING?

Martin Vogel enjoys Jenny Rogers' honesty as she shares her coaching successes and failures and reflects on how her own life experiences have been at play throughout..

Are You Listening? by Jenny Rogers is a collection of stories from her 30 years as a coaching professional. It occupies a similar place in relation to coaching as Stephen Grosz's *The Examined Life* or Irvin Yalom's *Love's Executioner* do to psychotherapy.

Given that Rogers is a doyenne of the profession, you might expect this book to be a catalogue of triumphant interventions. There are successes, but it's more nuanced than that. She shares the compromises and failings that are inevitable companions on a coaching journey.

The most striking failure is an assessment to inform a recruitment decision she conducts for a centre. The process is gamed by a psychopath, which Rogers realises perilously late in the day. The chapter would make an interesting case study in how coaches can be drawn into compromising interventions. Among the successes are creative applications of coaching. A terminally ill client turns to Rogers to coach him to have a good death.

Rogers takes understandable care to anonymise the settings and individuals. Unfortunately, this makes for a certain blandness. We meet a succession of corporate environments that, already uniform by the nature of modern working life, are stripped of whatever traits would make them distinctive.

There is, of course, a risk of exploitation in using the material of coachees for the purposes of writing. Rogers tells us that the people described are amalgams of clients she encountered over the years. There is no blandness here, though. As well as the aforementioned psychopath, there is a woman with alopecia, another whose father had been a Stasi informant in Communist East Germany, and a doctor who ultimately takes his own life. Coaching can stray quite far from the quotidian concerns of executive life. She often explores her clients' early-life experiences and what hold these still have on them in the present. She seems less attentive to the socio-economic conditions that might be shaping them.

The greatest strength of the book is Rogers' self-disclosure. She maps the stories onto vulnerabilities and bereavements she was experiencing in her own life. She is candid about when her practice is thrown off course. In contrast to the conceit that coaching is an objective process that happens to the client, Rogers situates herself in her stories as a fully complex human being. Her impact on her clients is contingent on what's

TITLE: *Are You Listening?: Stories from a Coaching Life*
AUTHOR: Jenny Rogers
PUBLISHER: Penguin Business
PUBLICATION DATE: 2021
HARDBACK PRICE: £15
ISBN: 978-0241474648



happening in her life. Some of her most effective coaching moments come when she acknowledges her frailties to her client and allows herself to be cared for.

Coaching succeeds when a client is prepared to be vulnerable. Rogers shows that they are more able to do so if the coach can show vulnerability too. The idea of the neutral professional is something of a fantasy.

Are You Listening? reads as a coaching book addressed to a general audience. This makes it an unusual beast in the coaching literature and the better for it. It is a book about life, and how to navigate its vicissitudes.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Martin Vogel is an executive coach and supervisor. A former BBC journalist, he's a founder-director of Vogel Wakefield, the counter-consultancy, which works with leaders that want to return business to being part of the solution to society's problems. With Hetty Einzig he runs eco-systems supervision groups – a values-based approach which explores coaching practice within the context of wider societal and environmental considerations. He blogs at vogelwakefield.com.

WHAT WORKS IN EXECUTIVE COACHING

Erik de Haan's latest contribution to coaching is a comprehensive review of the coaching efficacy literature. Not a bedtime read, says Rob Kemp, but worth the challenge!

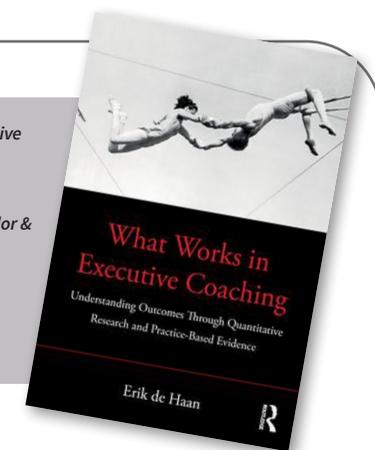
This book is a scholarly and detailed examination of hundreds of published studies and the most comprehensive look at the question to date, far beyond some well-known meta-analyses of coaching effects. For those who are theoretical physicists by training (like the author), the quantitative approach to determining coaching efficacy will be second nature; most coaches, though, will need a strong stomach to engage fully with the 'quants'. Even to get through the first 35 randomised controlled trials (RCTs) will challenge some, but there will be rewards for doing so. Of course, a reader could skip to the summaries of each section and 'get the point' more or less, but to do so would be to miss the contexts, subjects, methods and outcomes of each individual study. These RCTs were chosen as exemplars of quantitative research, or at least the best quality we have in the coaching literature to date.

Coaches will be relieved to read De Haan's summary that we can be 'relatively sure' that coaching is effective, even though there are only a 'handful' of large scale RCTs on which to base this determination. Having established this through the scientific method, this work goes on to examine what makes coaching worthwhile – its 'active ingredients'.

Relying on what De Haan describes as a lower standard of research (which would create some debate, naturally, in qualitative research circles!), many studies are examined to mine for those elements that make coaching work. There are some surprising findings through this review, which will challenge coaches to examine their own practice, beyond our implicit knowing or biases. This healthy challenge to the profession should prompt us to question our deeply held beliefs about coaching, in the light of what the research seems to be saying. As a brief example, De Haan finds that the 'working alliance', which is often held as the best predictor of coaching outcomes, is not really related to outcomes at all and that we need to reconsider what else might be at play in the relationship that predicts successful coaching?

Overall, I very much valued the opportunity to read this book, which is challenging in both style and content; it is not a 'bedtime' read but one for which you may have to bring an alert mind, and your best self, in all probability.

TITLE: *What Works in Executive Coaching*
AUTHOR: Erik de Haan
PUBLISHER: Routledge, Taylor & Francis
PUBLICATION DATE: 2021
PAPERBACK PRICE: £22.50
ISBN: 978-0367649432



De Haan has certainly done an impressive job with where we are now – but I can't help feeling that today will be superseded both in the quantity of research available, and in time by the nature of quantitative research itself. What was held as the pinnacle of science a century ago is no longer considered such and, when we take this long view, it softens the boundaries between quantitative and qualitative research somewhat, in my mind at least.

That is not to diminish the book, though, which I found well worth the time and effort. So, does executive coaching work? Most probably, yes. What works then? Probably not what you thought... which is a great challenge to thinking and practice.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Rob Kemp is a practising coach of over 15 years' experience. Having started the coaching educational journey in 2001 through the ILM at the Oxford School of Coaching & Mentoring, he completed an MSc in Coaching & Mentoring at Sheffield Hallam (2013), and latterly a professional doctorate in Coaching & Mentoring (DCM) at Oxford Brookes (2021). Currently he is studying on the Coaching Supervision programme at Oxford Brookes University.

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