



THE FUTURE OF COACHING

PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES FOR LIFE COACHING

Notes:

This paper draws on material from a chapter in our new book, *21st Century Coaching: Challenges and Prospects* (Peter Barclay and Grant Ledgerwood), to be electronically published in March 2003 by College House Press, The UK College of Life Coaching. We appreciate any comments and critical observations.

Life coaching, while an ancient and honoured part of human life, has only recently identified itself as a professional community. Its prospects in coming years will depend on widening public acceptance in a period of globalisation and change.

Indemnity and liability insurance will become a compulsory component of practice. Trading standards enforcement will confront unqualified or mal-practising coaches with limits to their ability to deliver substandard services.

Coaching communities will move towards regulation, registration and systematic organisation. Such changes have come to, for instance, career counselling, psychotherapy, osteopathy and nutritionist-dieticians. In order to establish a recognised profession with secure fee scales, this process must be seen as necessary and legitimating. Every professional coach will want to be involved.

The professionalisation of the discipline means extended networking in the formation of a recognised profession. University courses will become increasingly common, most at post-graduate level. University regulations require that such courses will require an academic research underpinning. Research so far on coaching topics is scattered across a number of important contributing disciplines, including among others:

- Human resources development
- Small enterprise development
- Developmental gerontology
- Educational development
- Behavioural neuro-physiology
- Small group dynamics
- Social psychology
- Cognitive psychotherapy

To form a coherent disciplinary platform, contributions from these various sources need to be brought into an organising framework.

The growth in professions and links to coaching

The continued increase in chartered professions in the UK reflects the drive towards certification and registration; Table 1 has some recent statistics for a few of the one hundred-plus chartered professional bodies. Two points arise.

First, professions have found it important to seek official recognition of their members' efforts and their own contribution to maintaining quality. Professional coaching needs to address this reality by progressing towards official recognition.

Second, every profession has components of its work which involve coaching relationships, whether between professionals and clients or between experienced professionals and the newly qualified. Systematic training in coaching may be seen to be a qualification appropriate for senior professional mentors and for the highest levels of every profession. At the top level of every profession, mature professionals aim to enhance their communication and marketing skills and to have an impact beyond their immediate workplaces. Training in coaching will increasingly be seen as one of the most effective methods of so doing.

Table 1. Some UK chartered professional bodies and their memberships, 2003.

Source: United Kingdom College of Life Coaching Research Team

Professional body	Total membership	Living outside UK	Recent growth rate
Institute of Chartered Accountants – England and Wales	122,000	15,000	
Institute of Directors	55,000		About 10% per annum over 5 years
The Law Society (solicitors)	85,000		
Royal College of Surgeons -- UK	15,000	5,000	
Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development	116,000		About 10% per annum

Coaching and the emergence of paradigm shifts in contemporary culture

Over recent decades, a wide range of key changes has been put in motion within long-standing professions. Doctors increasingly negotiate with, rather than dictate to, their patients in order to raise their awareness and invite ownership of their own health. Accountants and business managers work together in assuring accurate financial statement in companies. Lawyers move increasingly to put in place methods of consensual resolution of disputes in marital splits, corporate contests and other potentially fraught legal minefields.

To illustrate these and their relationship to the emergence of life coaching, three areas of professional work have been chosen:

- Development of high productivity coaching-based management team building;
- non-adversarial dispute resolution (legal, diplomacy, and justice systems);
- cultural industries and urban renaissance strategies (public policy)

High-productivity coaching-based management team building

Productivity measures in business aim to increase the volume of output per employee and per hour of work. The American economy, even in recent years, has had continuing increases in productivity. By contrast UK and European economies have been stuck at the same productivity levels for the period 1991-2001. This is widely seen in government as a major problem area and challenge.

Coaches and management development professionals know that productivity is about motivation of workers and employees. Motivation is a complex process which has received enormous research attention since the 1920s, not only in western economies but also in Japan which has had a high productivity economy. In brief, the essence of high motivation is releasing the hidden potential of employees.

The means of so doing are thus similar to the tools which coaches use. Effective coaches facilitate empowerment with their clients and great managers empower their employees. The responsibility for success, the expectation of outcomes exceeding expectations, and a share of the rewards are shifted to the people doing the work -- the operatives. Operatives are organised in supportive and egalitarian teams which form strong problem-

solving groups and jointly share in the success and public recognition of the team's efforts.

It all sounds simple enough. However, classical management systems – typically those operating throughout industry and most public services in the UK – emphasise, not empowerment of employees, but control. High trust is the essence of a coaching relationship. Classic management systems, in the form of bureaucracy, hinges instead on distrust and surveillance in hierarchical structures. Distrust means that employees are seen as seeking to minimise effort and work outputs. Managers and senior executives have the expectation that employees will under-perform.

Psychologists have long established that expectations in a social relationship condition outcomes. Where excellence is the shared expectation and the outcome most often perceived, then excellence of all kinds usually is produced. We see this in some of the most successful businesses over many decades. It can also be typical of great universities, excellent military units, religious orders, public schools, media corporations, and manufacturing operations.

But the majority of management units, public or private, are managed by professionals not trained in total quality management – a recent and successful form of management coaching. They do not share an expectation of continued improvement and progressively accelerating levels of excellence. These units will fall in their productivity. Continuous constant improvement has been engineered out of them, either consciously or unconsciously.

Thus, to instil a widespread culture of productivity and quality improvement throughout industry, a national institutional system of instilled managerial coaching must be built up. Managers must be fully enabled to acknowledge achievement and recognise strong improvements through rewards, praise and delegated empowerment. In the UK, this culture, while it has progressed in recent decades, has yet to form the dominant management reality for most employees. In the UK in 2001, some 67% of all employees said they were unhappy in their jobs. The number of UK managers with post-secondary qualifications of any kind went from 20% in 1985 to over 50% in 2000.

Coaching in operation - Technology and international enterprises

Coaching in technology enterprises and international corporations is already well established. The new executive benefit can be, instead of a Porsche, a corporate coach paid for by the employer. With the present economic recession, a new generation of innovators and entrepreneurs will need to be cultivated and coached, able to “surf” the next wave of new technology. We see coaching as a core contributor in this process.

Government as an enabling coaching led employer

Government itself can through its management of public agencies – some 44% of the UK economy – develop coaching cultures which empower employees to higher productivity. In a number of discrete fields, this is occurring – in arts programmes, in prison coaching programmes, in youth training, amongst social housing professionals. There are also many programmes which reward good performance (“Value for Money”) in public agencies.

Yet the various professional bodies which dominate UK public management – accountancy and engineering for instance – are in general more focused on control and therefore distrust. With the emergence of strong human development professions, there are indications that future developments may alter this process.

What is also clear is that productivity increases in the overall economy, where each employee works more effectively to increase measurable outputs of enterprise, will depend on the continuing spread of a culture of coaching and worker empowerment, as is now increasingly common in American settings.

Non-adversarial dispute resolution (NADR) and coaching

In North America and the UK, the legal profession has been confronted by a steep rise in civil litigation in recent decades. The capacities of the civil courts are overwhelmed and perceptions of predatory lawyers and unfair judgements are widespread. In the UK, Lord Justice Woolf, in his important Government-sponsored report of the late Nineties, signalled the intent of the British judiciary to reverse the rise of courtroom-driven dispute resolution.

With the costs of going to court increasing, litigation liabilities far exceed the benefits eventually reaching litigants. In a famous case, a North American law firm successfully sued the Roman Catholic Church on behalf of a group of adults abused as children at boarding schools operated by a Roman Catholic monastic order. The various law firms were able to collect the whole of the settlement – some tens of millions of dollars – as their legal fees, with no final payout to the abuse victims.

This case reflects the experience of courts in many jurisdictions. Non-adversarial dispute resolution is offered as a mediation-based service by both courts and law firms. It functions as follows. Once there is an acceptance of joint responsibility in a situation of legal recourse, claimants and litigants must apportion liability in a manner which all parties accept as fair. A procedure for calculating appropriate damages is then agreed which does not require court trial of evidence and relative levels of responsibility and financial culpability.

Such procedures, which take many forms, require a range of positive and mutually supportive behaviours from professionals and claimants. These can be said to be solution-focused and looking to the future development of all parties – the values of high-impact coaching. For these reasons some legal professionals are seeking qualifications as life coaches, in order to optimise their ability to contribute to NADR-defined dispute procedures. The coaching profession can align itself to such joint solution-building procedures.

Cultural industries and urban renaissance strategies (public policy)

Traditionally the renewal of derelict cities and neighbourhoods has been seen as requiring a combination of economic and physical interventions. While these remain as core methods, a further area of development is now seen as critical to the renewal of devalued regions and locations. As well, the cultural and social identities of such areas need to be regenerated. In many different formats, cultural industries are promoted.

When they are effective, cultural industries are managed as motivating and inclusive social development agencies. They include most saliently:

- university campuses and buildings with strong local and regional programmes;
- museums, both art and history-focused;
- heritage and historic districts;
- concert halls; and
- performance and art colleges and schools.

Coaching can also benefit cultural industries such as:

- craft shops
- local retail specialty shops
- art and craft training centres
- street markets
- covered markets
- religious and church centres
- group residential centres
- work-live residential quarters
- small enterprise incubators
- small enterprise subsidised complexes
- enterprise support bureaux.

These changes align well with the life coaching philosophy. Life coaching, often conducted on line and by telephone, can embrace all aspects of personal and community development. A key relationship involves often two people; but many coaching settings are about teams, workplaces and organisations.

The priority of reflective practice in developing a coaching profession

What is needed is a concerted effort to develop reflective practice as a core constituent of professional training. This has several components.

Affiliation and contributions to voluntary Registries and professional associations:

Coaches need to sign up and support national and international registers for coaches, in order to provide clients with quality assurance and also to reward themselves and other coaches for continuing to improve their knowledge and skills.

Continuous professional development: Coaches need to continuously improve their professional and evidence-based knowledge and skills.

Professional self marketing: Coaches need to become highly visible in their local communities and organisations.

Due diligence: Comprehensive record keeping for practitioners, both for their own learning and in case of subsequent disagreements or legal proceedings, is essential for all professionals. Life coaches have a requirement of due diligence both to society and to their clients, which involves responsibilities in liability and risk management.

Towards evidence-based coaching: The need for a research community

It is essential that research to the doctoral level and beyond becomes a component of the movement towards professionalism within the coaching community. Dr Elaine Cox of Oxford Brookes University, founder of the first European MA degree in Coaching and Mentoring, says, “Coaching research links positively with university departments of education, social science and business.” Based in education training, she is well aware of the process of multidisciplinary development which the profession is undergoing.

Table 1 indicates a range of research issues and questions relating to the chapters in this book.

Table 1. Research objectives by topic

(see end note on this paper for book reference)

	Theme	Research areas and issues for empirical investigation and critical analysis.
1	General theory	<p>What are the definitive and distinctive characteristics of life coaching, in contrast to: counselling, mentoring, teaching, facilitating, managing, advocating, leading?</p> <p>In what contexts can coaching be demonstrated to be “strategic” – highly leveraged and cost-effective – relative to its impacts?</p>
2	History	<p>Do cultures of coaching change under different political, economic and technological systems?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ authoritarian political cultures ■ libertarian ■ liberal ■ theocratic ■ multi-cultural <p>Evolution of coaching modalities and discourses specific to techno-economic system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ hunting/gathering ■ agrarian ■ industrial ■ bio-electronic
3	Neuro-biological bases of coaching	<p>Is coaching behavior a shared pattern among primate species?</p> <p>Is there a biological basis for coaching?</p> <p>Is there evidence that natural selection would prefer primate brains which can exchange coaching-related communications more efficiently?</p>
4	Teams	<p>Can the NASA research on team leadership styles and coaching supportive behaviours be replicated?</p> <p>Are teams stronger in the presence or absence of dominant leaders?</p>

5	Careers	<p>Is career coaching a more satisfactory model of professional intervention than classic career counselling?</p> <p>Can damaged adult careers be repaired with coaching interventions? E.g., probation services (note move toward victim reparations in the case of UK); women professionals in severe role conflict settings (e.g., women general practitioner physicians).</p>
6	Child	<p>How can adolescents trapped in sociopathic cultures be coached into adopting more positive lifestyles?</p>
7	Seniors	<p>Can coaching interventions improve the perceived quality of life among very old persons with impaired health?</p> <p>Can coaching interventions improve the subjective experience of dying?</p>
8	Health	<p>Can long-term health maintenance patterns for individuals be sustained more efficiently through coaching facilitation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ fitness ■ nutrition ■ weight control
9	Wealth	<p>Can prosperity-directed coaching clinics produce improved financial positioning for individuals and households over comparable ones not so supported?</p>
10	Leaders	<p>Are coaching-directed managers more effective in achieving change in organisations than change managers using other modes of persuasion and communication?</p> <p>Links between brain functioning and leadership discourses.</p>
11	Futures	<p>What relationship does coaching have with paradigmatic changes in other professional areas: e.g.,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ non-adversarial dispute resolution (legal, diplomacy, and justice systems); ■ preventive healthcare (medicine); ■ cultural industries and urban renaissance strategies(public policy)

Research in coaching: Some criteria for good coaching projects

A programme of evidence-based coaching research needs guidelines. Here are some:

1. Precise identification of target groups is important.
2. The use of psychometric tests is to be debated
3. Where dual field research communities are identified for contrast and comparison, there must be measures to prevent migration of members of one group to the other. E.g, non-recipients of coaching may seek coaching from other sources, either professionally or informally. What will we do if in field work we discover that, having heard of the concept independently, they are attracted and go out and get it on their own?
4. For these reasons and others, the concept of a "control" model is particularly difficult in field-based action research. Ethical issues always need to be considered in any coaching research carried out.

Developing and configuring a coaching research initiative

Objectives

The continuing globalisation of the world economy will generate a growing need for an international network of coach training enterprises, through branch operations, franchises or other forms of affiliation. A European and global span of operations in the mid- to longer- term must focus on needs of both developed and emerging societies.

An international coach organisation will invest intensively in establishing national and international professional accreditation and registration standards, giving clients and government clear methods of professional qualification and peer review and control.

Registration

Coaching-focused trainers, operators and institutions in the UK and Europe should aim to establish an International registration and professional training certification.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) facilities are an essential component of all professions. CPD modules offered in distance learning formats can reach life coaches in every location through development of its website platform, its training offerings and its print-based media.

Enterprises in coaching need to contribute to cross-sectoral groups and professional associations agreeing theoretical, legal, professional and practical objective testing and measuring of the life coaching profession and its responsibilities.

Each organisation can draw on the experience, expertise and collegial support of other recognised and self-regulating professions in establishing its academic, professional, training and communications strategies.

Research and publication objectives

Out of this context, therefore, some objectives which can be identified in research and publication include the following:

A Research and Publication Strategy must provide a sustainable method of articulating development of the life coaching profession. Publication should create a validated reputation as an objective, ethically driven and innovation-focused profession.

Publishing must enhance marketing and sales for the training programmes. It must conform to established models of publication, in order to gain academic and professional recognition for the profession. These may include:

- academic journals appearing periodically
- research monographs
- textbooks
- dedicated websites supporting courses and textbooks
- CD roms
- VCR recordings
- Narrowcast and broadcast presentations

A research programme

This should have three interdependent components:

Doctoral programme

Development of doctoral level coaching teachers and practitioners is essential in bringing coaching into an acknowledged professional approach. This may be done through part-time registration in a planned team based programme with a UK university with staff able to support this work.

Best practice research programme

This will aim at establishing through workshops and interactive web conferences best practice case studies and procedures.

Production of titles

The international production of books with coaching-related themes is now high. However, as yet there is no established serial title for such books, as in, e.g., “International Monograph Series in Executive Coaching.” Such serial titles are an essential component of established management and social sciences and professions, as in the case of psychotherapy, sports science, and business management.

Educational corporations should take a leadership role in establishing such a series. Announcement of a succession of well-written titles in the series will serve as a proof of the seriousness and competence of contribution to the development of the profession. At a suitable time, coaching organisations need to form a professional not-for-profit entity to underwrite jointly some forms of research, joint problem solving e.g., professional standards, and publication. Joint ventures among coach-focused organisations, aimed at co-marketed publications, are also important.

Some training organisations record via telephone tapes coaching sessions. These may form in edited versions text exchanges of benefit to coaches in training and in continuing professional development (CPD) programmes. By extending modules in their printed formats, an initial series of Training Manuals can be developed.

IN SUMMARY

The coaching profession is rapidly evolving towards internationally validated training and registration standards. Well organised enterprises will become driving forces in this process, if they are inaugurated with a clear aim of delivering long-term competitive advantage in leading the development of the profession. Specific training organisations, by placing publication and research strategies, will see an expansion of their reputations outside coaching circles.

Research and publication form essential components of an internationally recognised human resources development profession. It is important to have these business lines configured early in the strategic planning cycle. Every new cohort of newly qualifying

coaches produces important data. Analyses of these databanks can be used to develop a model of the new profession – typical age, qualification, location patterns. The resulting publications aid in the development of knowledge about life coaching and its legitimisation within the world of established institutions and professions.

The Future of Life Coaching: Professionalisation

From earlier discussions, life coaching is both a movement and a community of committed practitioners. It is moving towards prominence in many areas essential to the services-based economies of modern society – business, personal and social services, education, to name three.

But its models of client motivation and life-long learning are important in every segment of social development. Thus, the influence of this way of honing professional development will see great expansion in coming years.

Figure 2 shows some of the key elements in the process of professionalisation.

Figure 2. Seven likely changes in life coaching, 2003–2013.

		Benefit to profession	Implication for coaches	Case or parallel example; indicative research programmes
1	Registration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Voluntary and informal ■ Compulsory and formal 	Quality assurance for clients and qualified practitioners	Membership fees and participation.	Psychotherapeutic counselling; Everett Hughes’ research on American nursing profession 1940-60.
2	Peer review and training enterprise registration.	Methods of supporting competence in practitioners and training enterprises.	Acceptance of disciplinary codes of conduct.	Law Society governance of legal training institutions and recognition and validation of programmes.

3	Quality assurance systems; Legal oversight and liability	Acquisition of indemnity insurance.	Will require practitioners to maintain high standard of records to prove due diligence and probity.	Nursing; Personnel Management and Development
4	Specialization by subject		Additional training to respond to client preferences.	Accountancy – multiplicity of specialist arms of profession (e.g., Public Finance, Management Accounting, Financial Information Systems, Audit)
5	Public recognition	Acknowledgment of professional status by other professions. Community acceptance and acknowledgement of legitimacy of professional identity	<i>pro bono</i> involvement in public service responsibilities.	Psychotherapeutic counselling
6	Most programmes for qualifications that will achieve public acceptance will be validated through or operated from an institution of higher education.	Systematic improvement in the skill and knowledge base of successive generations of younger professionals	Ensure that professional qualification programmes are externally validated or certified within a recognised system.	Architecture, nursing, osteopathy.
7	Research – What works best in coaching techniques for specific types of clients?	Professional status, recognition and credibility	Continuous Professional Development – CPD	Medicine; Richard Boyatzis (Case Western Reserve University) research on MBAs and emotional. Intelligence 1990-2000.

But will it be as much fun as it is now? A number of “downsides” to professionalization can be articulated

Entrepreneurial opportunities will be substantially increased through validation and public acceptance. We will see a gradual disappearance of non-certified and non-validated coach trainers. New programmes and developments will face a series of quality assurance hurdles. Innovation will have to be interfaced with institutionalisation.

It is the “closing of the frontier,” a nostalgic term used by Americans in the western USA a hundred years ago. However, the end of frontier days means the start of substantial

settled professional development and growth. The great opportunities for professional life coaches and their educational enterprises lie ahead.

Emerging economies

Coaching in emerging economies – China, south Asia, sub Saharan Africa – will see a huge expansion of individuated and coaching-inspired creative learning.

Public sector agencies and enterprises

Coaching in UK public sector agencies striving to achieve higher levels of success will move forward strongly in the next decade:

- schools
- hospitals
- universities
- social work agencies
- justice, police, and penal corrections systems
- environmental management and planning systems

The professions

Coaching in established professions will be expanded. In medicine there is a crisis of younger women physicians facing challenges in work/life balancing. Parallel challenges hover in teaching, social work, nursing, and banking.

In conclusion, many challenges but unrivalled opportunities for life coaching professionals lie ahead.

With the loss of religious identity, many have replaced it with an intense psychological commitment to personal physical emotional and spiritual development and environmental conservation.

Every human being is special and life coaching supports and encourages each individual to acknowledge their own uniqueness.