The Value of Artificial Intelligence Coaching Standards

v0.02

ICF International Coaching Federation

The future is here. Artificial Intelligence (AI) coaching has been constructed and are now in early deployment phases. It is likely that AI coaching will be used in conjunction with, as an adjunct to human-to-human coaching. This blended approach can provide the best of both worlds where coaches can offload low value coaching activities such as brief questions, assessment, and journaling—and keep the high value work of complex, transformational coaching in the human-to-human domain.

The technology will allow coaches to find ways to move deeper into organizations such as working with managers and leaders to enhance their coaching skills, provide additional learning modalities for students and trainees, or assisting organizations in building a coaching culture. The advent of AI coaching could make coaching accessible to more people across the globe, enhancing the societal impact of coaching. As coaching becomes accessible to more people, awareness grows and potentially increases the size of the market dramatically.

The development of a set of AI coaching proficiency standards may provide significant benefit to coaching consumers, knowing that the particular AI coaching technology has passed one or more levels of proficiency and ethical evaluation. The standards could test elements such as fluent use of language, fluidity of conversation, capability of promoting or enhancing change in the client, and ability to successfully navigate ethical dilemmas. Certification on the use of client and coach data may also be protected.

AI coaching standards can benefit developers since they know what will be expected of them. They can understand the gamut of elements to be considered, providing a framework within which to develop. The standards can also sensitize them to the need for safeguards in aspects such as control of client and coach data, minimization of bias, synthesis and conclusions drawn from captured data, and distinctions between coaching and therapy.

The International Coaching Federation (ICF) has collaborated with a group of experienced coaches and AI coaching developers to form the Artificial Intelligence Coaching Standards Work Group. The group has several purposes:

- To guide the confluence of AI technology and coaching,
- To provide a set of principles, capabilities, and requirements to enhance the quality of AI coaching, and
- To ensure that AI coaching is applied in helpful and ethical ways.

The AI coaching standards are being developed for a broad audience:

- Coaches who want to use technology responsibly
- Coaching clients
- Organizations purchasing coaching
- Coaching supervisors
- Software developers
- Coach training organizations
- Broader public

The group plans to have an outline for the standard by the end of 2021, followed by draft versions in 2022. Comments on these materials and further input will be sought from additional Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) at appropriate milestones. The AI Coaching Standards Work Group members include:

- Matt Barney (LeaderAmp)
- Joel DiGirolamo (International Coaching Federation)
- David Drake (The Moment Institute)
- Harry Novic (Rocky.ai)
- Olivier Malafronte (PocketConfidant AI)
- Jonathan Reitz (FLUXIFY)
- Nicky Terblanche (University of Stellenbosch Business School), (coachvici.com)

Additional information will be forthcoming as the work progresses. Inquiries may be addressed to ICF Director of Coaching Science Joel DiGirolamo (joel.digirolamo@coachingfederation.org).

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