VOICE

SEPTEMBER 2025

NEWSLETTER OF THE
ICF MUMBAI CHARTER CHAPTER

COVER POINT

Presence – The Cornerstone of Mastery

By Subramani Balakrishnan

Maintains Presence -- an ICF core competency, is not just a coaching skill. It is the cornerstone of a coaching mindset and of leadership mastery. All of us slip in and out of presence every single day. True mastery is not about choosing to be present only when it suits us. It is about being present as a way of being, until presence becomes second nature.

Presence is more than focus. It is the integration of mind, senses, and emotions into *this moment, this place, this person, this conversation.* Coaches practice this in sessions; leaders, from all spaces, experience it when deeply engaged in meaningful work. Over time, presence evolves from effortful attention to unconscious competence - a way of living and leading. You are no longer trying to "do presence". You are simply present.

Three elements can help cultivate this muscle

- **Observation without evaluation** – Noticing what is, without judgment or analysis.
- **Experiencing with awareness** – Paying attention to what we see, hear, feel, and sense, while building compassion and resilience.
- **Detached-Attachment** – Choosing deliberately what matters in the moment and letting the rest drift away.

The Rope Bridge Metaphor

Imagine crossing a swinging rope bridge. You cannot cling to the rope behind you. You must release it and hold what lies ahead. The bridge sways, and the more uneasy you are, the more it moves. Fear and distraction amplify the swing. Stillness steadies it. Step by step, holding firmly, you cross with trust in yourself and the bridge. That is presence.

Practical ways to expand presence

- Practice slow, deep breathing.
- Use all senses consciously, even in simple acts like eating.
- Be deliberate in everyday actions such as driving, walking, or speaking.
- Observe surroundings without judgment.
- Withdraw within by pausing, breathing, and centering, even in chaos.

Presence is not a lofty ideal reserved for coaching sessions or leadership retreats. It can be practiced in the middle of an ordinary day - while waiting for a meeting to start, sipping tea, or walking to your car. The more we invite presence into simple moments, the more it becomes who we are. Ultimately, presence is less about perfection and more about practice. And the journey begins gently, right where you are ∎

CORPORATE

How a Coaching Mindset Helps a Corporate Leader

By Subhayu Bagchi

As we grow in our careers, our job roles evolve.

The Situation

This development in our job roles is manifested across multiple dimensions. Some of the key ones are given below:

1. **Complexity** - The number of variables in any situation before us increases dramatically as we take on bigger and broader roles. This numerical complexity is compounded by interactivity, inter-dependance and causality among the variables; this makes for a potent mix that needs untangling and simplification.

2. **People** – Our decisions progressively impact more and more people. In most cases the people do not form a cohesive group. Each person is an individual with unique characteristics. Each person behaves as per their own internal triggers and value systems. It behooves leaders to be sensitive and empathetic.

3. **Time Horizon** – "Managing for Today", is replaced by "Creating the Future". Our roles become direction setting and strategic versus being mostly operational. The expectation is that we will navigate the unknown and guide the people, and the business, to prosperity. We need to seek within ourselves for clarity and guidance to supplement help that we may (or may not) get from the external environment.

4. **Leading Change** – People and businesses thrive when they adapt; maintaining status quo is a slippery slope to irrelevance. Leading rather than falling victim to change is what separates success from failure and becomes core to what we need to do

The Solution

The dimensions above need to be tackled first in our mind. How do we tackle complexity, ambiguity, people issues, uncertainty about the future, and myriad other variables simultaneously? It requires an anchored mind. It necessitates a learning mindset, and it requires us to be self-aware.

Coaching provides us with several tools to do this, and while the intent of the tools is to help a client, we can immensely benefit from turning them on ourselves! Given below, are 2 very simple approaches that are foundational to coaching and supremely useful for corporate leaders to adopt in their journey of expanding their unconscious competences and becoming effective leaders.

1. **Listening and acknowledging** – as leaders, the more time we spend listening to people, deeply and actively without prejudice, the clearer the way forward becomes. If we allow our mind to stay in the present rather than get into solutioning or defensive modes, the easier it gets to detangle the variables in a given situation.

2. **Goals and paths** – our primary role as corporate leaders is to set the pace and direction for the organisations we work for. If we don't provide clarity, it will be naive to expect it to come from an external source. If we stay centered, and allow our mind to generate options, it allows us to make more thought-through decisions.

Conclusion

For a corporate leader, having a coaching mindset is not just a hack, it is a fundamental shift in their effectiveness. Once the muscle is built and it becomes an unconscious competence, we get a leader who operates at a very different level ∎

Why Human Coaches will Remain Irreplaceable

By Naval Dey

As artificial intelligence continues to transform industries, coaching is often projected as the next frontier of automation. With AI platforms capable of analysing behaviour, offering personalized nudges, and delivering scalable interventions, some argue that human coaches may soon be displaced. Yet, beneath this narrative lies a deeper truth: there are realms of coaching where algorithms will always fall short—and where human coaches will remain not just relevant, but essential.

1. Transformational Depth: Beyond Metrics and Nudges

AI can track habits, surface insights, and even simulate conversations. But coaching is not about data points—it is about deep human transformation. A skilled coach

brings presence, intuition, and emotional resonance that touches the client at a level far beyond the transactional. Transformation is not about compliance with a prompt; it is about unlocking untapped potential, something only a human presence can catalyse.

2. Trust and Relational Nuance: The Invisible Currency of Coaching

At its heart, coaching is an act of trust. Clients open their inner worlds—fears, ambitions, vulnerabilities—in ways that demand safety and empathy. While AI can mimic empathy linguistically, it cannot embody the warmth, attunement, or the subtle relational dance that unfolds in genuine human connection. Trust is not coded; it

is felt, and this feeling is what sustains breakthrough coaching relationships.

3. Contextual Judgement and Ethics: Navigating the Grey Areas

Coaching does not unfold in a vacuum. It operates within cultural contexts, organisational politics, and human complexities that resist codification. Coaches interpret nuance: the unspoken signals in a boardroom, the delicate interplay of hierarchy, or the moral weight of a leader's decision. These are not merely decisions—they are judgments shaped by ethics, sensitivity, and lived experience. AI may predict outcomes, but it cannot ethically navigate the grey zones of human leadership.

4. Professional Credibility: Standards That Sustain Trust

Only rigorously trained, ICF-accredited coaches are bound to uphold global standards of ethics, confidentiality, and continuous development. This is not a feature that can be downloaded into an algorithm; it is a commitment to a profession. Well-trained human coaches anchor credibility for organizations navigating turbulent change.

The Future: Symbiosis, Not Substitution

The future of coaching is not about AI replacing humans, but about AI augmenting coaches. Imagine a world where AI handles data analytics, tracks progress seamlessly and personalizes resources—freeing the coach to focus on what they do best: creating transformation, fostering trust, and enabling leaders to rise above complexity with clarity and courage.

In such a future, human coaches who integrate technology with presence will not only thrive but command premium value. Because while AI can optimize, only humans can ignite transformation.

As the coaching landscape evolves, the question is no longer "Will AI replace coaches?", but rather: "Which coaches will harness AI while deepening the distinctly human qualities that no algorithm can replicate?"

The answer to that question will define the next era of leadership and growth ∎

ROUND-UP

BEYOND 10: COACHING WITH ETHICS – Building Trust and Integrity

The virtual half-day event on August 23, 2025, attracted 150-plus registrations from all ICF India Chapters and overseas participants, including ICF Colombo, marking the 5th event in the 10-event series celebrating ICF Mumbai Chapter's 10-year milestone.

The theme, "Ethical Coaching: Building Trust and Integrity," explored how coaches can uphold ethics, maintain confidentiality, and build authentic relationships.

Opening Keynote – "The Moral Compass of Coaching: Why Ethics Matter More Than Ever" by **Vandana Shejwal, MCC & VP-HR at HDFC ERGO Ltd.** introduced a Moral Compass for Integrity, Authenticity, Boundaries, and Service, along with a comprehensive and unique Ethical Coaching Checklist.

Masterclass – "Invisible Lines: Navigating Boundaries, Confidentiality & Integrity" by **Shweta Handagupta, MCC and Chair- ICF Global Enterprise Board**, featured the 4 Dimensions of Ethical Integrity, 5 Invisible Lines, and 6 Letter Anagram ATTUNE as Ethical Flagstones on the Coaching Pathway of Integrity and Authenticity.

Fireside Chat – "Trust Is Earned: Real Conversations on Ethical Crossroads in Coaching" with **ANUSHLY SITHAMPARAM. PCC. ICF Colombo; SABITHA NATRAJ, Chief General Manager, IndianOil Corp Ltd, GUNJAN SINHA, PCC,** brought nuanced dialogue on Boundaries, Trust, and Equity, emphasizing safe spaces, cultural sensitivity, bias-challenging, and re-contracting for transformational change.

Closing Keynote – "Walking the Talk: Building an Ethics-Infused Coaching Practice" by **M. Asad Pathan, former IndianOil Corp. Chairman,** was an enthralling journey about Creating a Personal Code of Ethics, Leadership and Ethics, Building Trust Through Transparency, Integrity and Authenticity and the Essence of an Ethical Life as a Leader. Pathan left all filled with admiration, emotion and lessons on living a life of unrelenting integrity.

The event concluded with Dexter Valles delivering a vote of thanks, reinforcing the collective blueprint for an ethics-infused coaching practice.

THE WALL

Membership Update | Total: 192
▶ Global members as of August 31, 2025: **109**
▶ Affiliate members as of August 31, 2025: **83**
▶ New joinees in August 2025: **2**

> Everyone who's ever taken a shower has had an idea. It's the person who gets out of the shower, dries off and does something about it who makes a difference.
>
> ~ Nolan Bushnell, Creator of the Atari Video Game System

ROUND-UP

Exploring the Core of DEI in Coaching: What Makes the Right Fit?

What does it truly take to be an effective DEI coach? Our insightful webinar with **Preeti D'mello**, global DEI expert and former ICF Global Chair, on August 7, 2025, challenged participants to explore this very question.

Key insights from the session:
- The Authenticity Paradox - Authenticity must be both genuine and adaptable.
- Self-calibration - Staying present to ourselves, as we are the primary tool in coaching.
- The power of contextual awareness - Understanding it as a cornerstone responsibility for every coach.

Breakout room scenarios brought these concepts to life, adding nuance to the Identity Iceberg framework and enabling deeper unpacking of observations. The session was made even more special with the presence of **Dr. Aikyna Finch, PCC, Vice President DEIB, ICF Global.**
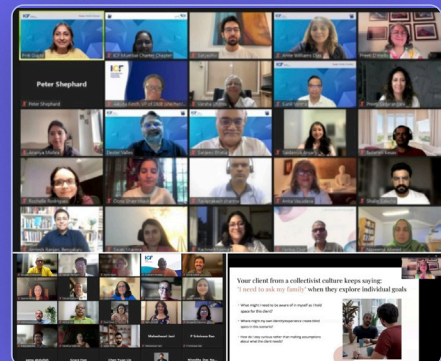
Join ICF Mumbai Charter Chapter today: *memberships@icfmumbai.com*

Editor: Navin Tauro | **Write to us at** research@icfmumbai.com