GLOSSARY

Your CoachHub guide to coaching & AI coaching terminology

Understanding the language of modern coaching

Your guide to the terminology of coaching

Coaching has evolved. Once reserved for leaders, it's now accessible to entire organizations, powered by digital platforms and enhanced by AI.

This glossary is designed to help HR, L&D and business leaders speak a shared language about where coaching is now and its future. One where behavioral science meets technology and human insight drives measurable, long-term change.

What is coaching?

Partnering to unlock your potential.

Coaching is a professional development partnership that empowers individuals to reflect, grow and take purposeful action.

It's a collaborative process between a coach and a coachee, designed to unlock potential, build self-awareness and translate insight into measurable results (International Coaching Federation, 2024).

At its best, coaching creates a structured yet flexible space for people to think deeply, experiment safely and strengthen their ability to lead themselves and others.

In practice

A coach doesn't provide answers, they ask the questions that reveal them. Professional coaches undergo rigorous training and credentialing to master evidence-based methods of reflective inquiry.

Through guided reflection, the coachee defines goals, identifies obstacles and commits to sustained behavioral change.

Scientific foundation

Coaching effectiveness is driven by self-reflection, goal-setting and the working alliance between coach and coachee (de Haan et al., 2016; Grant, 2014).

Setting the context

Before exploring the language of coaching, it's important to clarify what coaching isn't. Many professional development practices share its language, such as mentoring, training, feedback yet their intent and impact differ.

Understanding these distinctions builds confidence in how coaching complements other learning methods across organizations.

What coaching isn't

Coaching is not telling, guiding or instructing. It's unlocking.

MENTORING

Mentors share personal experience, industry expertise and their own insights to guide another's career.

How it differs from coaching: Mentors draw from their path, coaches draw from yours.

TRAINING

Structured learning to teach defined skills or knowledge, typically via specialist courses or workshops.

How it differs from coaching: Training transfers specific information, coaching drives application and sustainment.

FEEDBACK & PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Processes that evaluate and communicate employee performance against objectives.

How it differs from coaching: Feedback looks backward, coaching looks forward. Performance management measures results, whilst coaching explores mindset and motivation.

PROFESSIONAL CONSULTING & ADVISING

Provides expert analysis or recommendations based on knowledge and observations.

How it differs from coaching: Consultants give answers, coaches develop thinking.

TEACHING AND TUTORING

Transferring knowledge and ensuring comprehension of new material.

How it differs from coaching: Teachers instruct, coaches evoke insight.

Coaching & digital coaching terminology

Grounded in human connection and powered by technology.

Foundations of coaching

The essentials of coaching, what you need to know.

COACH–COACHEE PARTNERSHIP

The collaborative relationship built on trust and respect that fuels self-driven learning (ICF, 2024; de Haan et al., 2016).

Why it matters: This partnership is the heartbeat of every successful coaching experience.

THE COACHING PROCESS

Coaching involves partnering with clients to help them reflect on themselves, their situation and context, and identify new insights and actions to unlock potential, enhance well-being and improve performance. (CoachHub, 2021)

Why it matters: It turns reflection into movement and insight into impact.

GOAL SETTING & ACCOUNTABILITY

Turning intention into measurable progress (Grant & Cavanagh, 2011; Grant, 2014)

Why it matters: Coaching transforms intention into achievement and behavioral changes, increasing motivation, engagement and performance.

REFLECTION & SELF-AWARENESS

Examining thoughts and behaviors to create insight (Grant, 2014).

Why it matters: Awareness is the first step to meaningful growth, resulting in changing attitudes and beliefs, such as transitioning from a fixed mindset, into a growth mindset.

Principles in practice

The core principles, how coaching drives sustainable development.

BEHAVIORAL CHANGE

Small, sustained shifts in thought and behavior reinforced through reflection (Grant, 2014).

Why it matters: Real change happens through repetition, not revelation.

FEEDBACK LOOP IN COACHING

A self-directed cycle of noticing, reflecting and adjusting that enables continuous learning.

Why it matters: Keeps growth active and self-owned.

DIGITAL COACHING

Human-led coaching delivered via digital platforms for global reach (de Haan & Nilsson, 2023).

Why it matters: Digital tools democratize coaching without losing its human core.

CONFIDENTIALITY & ETHICS

The foundation of psychological safety (ICF, 2024).

Why it matters: Ethical boundaries and confidentiality build the trust that makes coaching work.

Enablers of scale

Structures that enhance coaching impact across organizations.

MEASUREMENT & IMPACT ANALYTICS

Using data to demonstrate the impact of coaching (de Haan & Nilsson, 2023).

Why it matters: By tracking progress, organizations can connect people's growth to measurable business outcomes.

HYBRID COACHING MODEL

Blending human and digital tools for scale.

Why it matters: Combines individualized development with scalability.

LEARNING IN THE FLOW OF WORK

Embedding development into daily tasks so learning becomes continuous (Bersin, 2019).

Why it matters: Growth happens where work happens.

SCALABILITY & SECURITY

Global consistency with enterprise-grade data protection.

Why it matters: Scale and safety make personal transformations safe and sustainable.

AI coaching terminology

Where human potential meets intelligent technology.

Setting the stage

Artificial Intelligence is reshaping how organizations learn, lead and grow. In coaching, AI offers a powerful way to extend access, personalize experiences and reinforce reflection between sessions, when it's applied responsibly. Ultimately expanding the application of coaching and its various methods and outcomes.

This section clarifies the language behind AI coaching. Each definition reflects current research and ethical standards so HR and L&D leaders can make informed, confident decisions about integrating AI into their people development strategy.

Essential concepts

The foundations of AI in coaching.

AI COACHING

The use of artificial intelligence to facilitate reflective dialogue, goal-setting and action planning in line with evidence-based models. AI assists but does not replace professional coaches. (Grasmann & Schermuly, 2021; CoachHub, 2025).

Why it matters: AI coaching brings personalized support to every employee, not just a few.

AI COMPANION

A digital coaching assistant that offers real-time nudges, reflection prompts between sessions and keeps track of improvement areas and progress developments. (CoachHub, 2025)

Why it matters: Keeps learning alive between human conversations.

AI-AUGMENTED COACHING

A hybrid model where AI tools enhance human-led coaching through data, personalization and real-time insights. These technologies support reflection, goal-setting and continuous learning (Terblanche, 2020; Grasmann & Schermuly, 2021).

Why it matters: AI strengthens the quality, accessibility and consistency of coaching while keeping people at the center.

CONVERSATIONAL AI

Technology that enables computers to understand and respond to human language using NLP and ML. (McTear, 2022)

Why it matters: Brings coaching conversations to life through intuitive interaction.

Responsible innovation

How ethical AI enables meaningful coaching.

AI ETHICS IN COACHING

Designing AI that's transparent, fair and human-centered (Floridi et al., 2018; NIST AI RMF, 2023).

Why it matters: Ethical design ensures technology serves people.. In coaching, where trust and psychological safety are foundational, AI must be transparent in how it operates, fair in how it responds and explicitly designed to preserve human autonomy.

HUMAN-IN-THE-LOOP

Ensuring human oversight in all AI-supported processes to preserve empathy and contextual judgment. (NIST AI RMF, 2023)

Why it matters: Keeps humanity at the heart of innovation.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Ensuring users feel safe to explore and share (Edmondson, 2019).

Why it matters: People learn best when they feel safe to reflect and experiment.

DATA PRIVACY & SECURITY IN AI COACHING

Protecting personal data through lawful collection, minimization, encryption and GDPR compliance. (European Commission GDPR, 2016; EDPB, 2023)

Why it matters: Trust is the foundation of every AI interaction.

Systems in scale

The technology behind scalable, measurable transformation.

LARGE LANGUAGE MODELS (LLMS)

AI systems trained on vast text data to understand and generate human language, the foundation of conversational AI. (Bommasani et al., 2021, Stanford CRFM)

Why it matters: Enables natural, contextual coaching conversations at scale.

AI GOAL-SETTING & PROGRESS TRACKING

Using AI to help users define goals, create milestones and stay accountable. (Grant, 2014; O'Reilly et al., 2022)

Why it matters: Turns goals into ongoing, measurable progress.

BEHAVIORAL INSIGHTS & ANALYTICS

Aggregated, anonymized patterns that show coaching impact and development trends without exposing personal data (de Haan & Nilsson, 2023; NIST AI RMF, 2023).

Why it matters: Gives organizations visibility without compromising privacy.

SCALABLE COACHING ECOSYSTEM

Integrating human coaches, AI companions, learning resources and measurement within one secure platform. (CoachHub, 2025; ICF, 2024)

Why it matters: Creates a connected, measurable and inclusive coaching culture, that enables flexibility and efficiency for central and decentralized management, monitoring and reporting.

WHAT'S NEXT

How CoachHub is built to help you.

As coaching continues to evolve, so are the ways organizations use it to drive performance and growth.

At CoachHub, our holistic coaching portfolio covers all needs, ensuring the perfect coaching solution for your organization.

Discover how CoachHub combines behavioral science and AI to unlock human potential at scale.

Explore the full ecosystem at **coachhub.com**

Executive coaching

1-to-1 coaching for your leaders with the world's best coaches, data-driven insights and seamless delivery.

USE CASE

Guide executives leading across regions or functions, helping them grow with whatever the organization is facing.

Individual coaching

1-to-1 personal development, leveraging our science-backed coaching frameworks to upskill your workforce and transform your organization.

USE CASE

Tailored people development with our science-backed and customizable coaching framework. Built to unlock your people's potential.

Collective coaching

Group coach-facilitated coaching sessions with an evidence-based framework, for peers to exchange experiences and best practices, to creatively solve problems.

USE CASE

Tap into collective intelligence and adopt coaching techniques to elevate problem-solving skills.

AIMY™

The AI coach for the global workforce, built to fully democratize coaching.

USE CASE

Extending the impact of coaching to everyone within your organization.

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