Coaching for Socio-Technical Revolution

In an era where artificial intelligence, robotics, and digital automation are rewriting the rules of professional work, career coaching will evolve beyond resume polishing and linear trajectory planning. Already, many career coaches are preparing their clients for an uncertain world. They are the opinion formers whose approaches need to become widespread.

David L. Francis and Michael Woodcock's book, *Surviving and Thriving in the AI Era: An Essential Guide for Managers, Professionals, and Future Leaders*, provides career coaches, executive mentors, and HR development specialists with an action-oriented, evidence-based manual. While designed as a self-guided "AI Era Career Workout," the text serves as a robust coaching curriculum to help clients transition from technological anxiety to proactive professional reinvention. As the authors explain, the workout **"has been designed to help managers and professionals increase their chances of surviving and thriving in the world of work as AI Era technologies redefine roles, opportunities, and expectations"**.

Reframing Career Anxiety into Proactive Opportunity
A coaching journey begins by addressing the profound uncertainty clients feel as AI automates routine managerial and professional tasks. When interviewing managers about their future, the authors found widespread concern: **"It's uncertain. I'm anxious for myself and my children"**. A central role for the coach is helping clients reframe this disruption not as a career threat, but as a **"profound liberation"** that frees humans from repetitive routines to pursue **"the possible"**. As Francis and Woodcock emphasise, **"AI Era technologies will unlock vast new landscapes of opportunity, akin to the wealth of discoveries that emerged in the era of Christopher Columbus"**.

Coaches can guide clients through the book's four-step workout—moving systematically from exploring changing career realities to setting concrete developmental goals. By encouraging clients to define their career as a **"living project"** and to view themselves continuously as **"a work in progress"**, coaches help individuals detach their professional identity from rigid, outdated job titles and anchor it instead in adaptable capability.

Auditing Capabilities with the "Three-Layer Cake" Model

At the heart of the book's coaching methodology is the **Three-Layer Cake model**, which establishes that true professional mastery requires an integrated stack of capabilities: **"Mastery = Core + Role + Task-Specific Capabilities"**. While task-specific competencies change rapidly and role-specific expertise provides technical depth, the foundational layer consists of five **Core Personal Dynamic Capabilities (PDCs)**:

- **Impactful Agency**: **"the capacity to shape outcomes, drive beneficial change, and influence what happens or doesn't happen"**.
- **Requisite Agility**: **"the ability to intelligently and proactively adapt to changing situations with both speed and wisdom"**.
- **Entrepreneurial Zeal**: **"the passionate, energetic drive to identify possibilities, take calculated risks, and transform ideas into value"**.
- **Adhocracy Leadership**: **"the practice of swiftly creating or adopting the most effective organisational structure for a specific situation"**.
- **Innovation Competence**: **"the disciplined capacity to transform creative ideas, opportunities, and resources into practical, defensible value"**.

Coaches can use this framework to conduct diagnostic audits with coachees. As algorithms assume routine execution, coaches focus on cultivating the **Human Premium**—the irreplaceable human qualities that provide competitive advantage. As the authors highlight, **"When technology becomes ubiquitous, and computing power is commoditised, the ultimate differentiator will be human character, ethical foresight, and emotional intelligence"**.

Coaching Management as a Craft and Facilitating "Unlearning"

A key coaching insight is treating management not merely as a corporate job, but as a traditional craft requiring intentional practice and character development. The authors write: **"Management is a 'craft' in the ancient sense of the term . . . A manager is not a scientist… A manager is not an artist… Managers are practitioners: they are professionals in the obscure art of getting the right things done despite difficulties"**.

Coaches can draw on the historical guild progression—guiding clients from *Apprentice* (acquiring core values and basic skills) to *Practitioner* (trusted, experienced execution), and ultimately to *Master* (possessing deep creativity and commitment to mentoring others). Furthermore, as technical skill half-lives shrink, coaches must facilitate **"lifelong unlearning"** alongside lifelong learning. Borrowing from Reg Revans' Action Learning methodology, coaches help clients evaluate real-world performance, noting that **"learning was inextricably connected with performance"**. Through reflective dialogue, coaches assist clients to **"investigate ourselves kindly"** while internalizing the empowering conviction: **"I am the decision-maker"**.

Deploying Learning Review Activities (LRAs) and Dismantling Blockages
For practical session structuring, the book provides 17 sets of **Learning Review Activities (LRAs)** at the end of each chapter, offering coaches off-the-shelf coaching assignments such as "Deconstructing Your Current Role," "Unlearning Policies," and "Self-Auditing Core Values". Crucially, the book offers a targeted approach to personal growth through **blockage analysis**. Rather than solely polishing existing strengths, coaches help clients identify internal constraints—underdeveloped self-management, fear of risk, or rigid habits. Using the authors' plumbing analogy, the coach helps locate and clear the specific blockage holding back the client's potential. This combination of rigorous self-review, structured capability building, and human-centred character development equips career coaches to guide clients toward enduring professional relevance.