

Coaching Trends: 2022 Predictions

Megan Hudson

If you're still busy planning for 2022, here are some things that you might want to bear in mind.

These annual trend predictions are **my** attempt to help **you crashproof, bulletproof and futureproof** your coaching practice

I try and stay away from the really obvious and focus on useful, practical trends that you need to prepare for.

1. Growth in the coaching industry

The coaching industry continues to EXPLODE – yes, that IS stating the obvious

But we need to ask **Why?**

Here are a couple of reasons:

People lost their employment due to COVID and are displaced by technology (more on that later).

Some of these people may have received training in their former positions to use a coaching approach in the course of doing their job, so they may emerge as **already fully qualified coaches with some experience**.

The great resignation – hordes of people resigning without having a job to go to – is perhaps one of the big contributors to the growth in the coaching industry, with the corollary effect that there is more emphasis and scrutiny on the calibre of training that coaches have done, their experience and their results.

COVID highlights a yearning to live more purposeful and meaningful lives

People have a greater sense of their mortality and society has also suffered a fundamental shock and reset.

People want to leave a legacy and give back.

People want to devote their lives to helping other people.

To put the extraordinary growth into perspective, lets compare some figures:

December 2020 LinkedIn figures (based on search results for the different terms):

Coach: 1,603,532 search results

Coach South Africa: 27,226 search results

Executive coach: 109,051 search results

Business coach: 137,029 search results

Life coach: 81,579 search results

December 2021 LinkedIn figures:

Coach: 6,640,000 search results **(+314% growth)**

Coach South Africa 107,000 search results **(+293% growth)**

Executive coach: 1,300,000 search results **(+1,092% growth)**

Business coach: 3,180,000 search results **(+2,220% growth)**

Life coach: 1,360,000 search results **(+1,567% growth)**

And yes, I double-checked all the figures because I simply couldn't believe it!

The enormous growth has been in people calling themselves executive coaches, business coaches and life coaches.

You'd better not get me onto my soapbox about being clear and explicit about your niche, what you offer and the work that you do - oh, and let's not forget the tangible results that you deliver.

2. Covid has accelerated 4th and 5th industrial revolution

"The Fourth Industrial Revolution is the ongoing automation of traditional manufacturing and industrial practices, using modern smart technology.

Large-scale machine-to-machine communication and the internet of things are integrated for increased automation, improved communication and self-monitoring, and production of smart machines that can analyze and diagnose issues without the need for human intervention." - <https://www.elastosorchard.eu/...>

This has led to a level of dehumanisation and sense of alienation in the workplace.

COVID has created a **greater adoption of the online space** with 80% of consumers now seeing the world as ALL digital (Forrester).

I think this is great - giving all of us the opportunity to extend our coaching across borders and to play in the global arena,

We have a buyer expectation for immediacy and instant gratification – if you have a **problem**, you want to find an immediate **solution** (Forrester)

And here the temptation to get onto my soapbox overcame me...

This creates an opportunity for coaches to get more and more explicit about the work that we do, our area of specialisation and our niche...

...to make it as easy as possible for potential clients to see us as the solution to their problem(s).

We need to clearly demonstrate what results we offer – what our clients will achieve as a result of working with us

Coaching helps us cope better, regulate ourselves, raise our performance, achieve goals, improve our work/life balance; develop self-awareness and assertiveness; increase confidence; develop better relationships, networks, and interpersonal skills; adapt to change more effectively.

So here's a little conversation that I had with myself:

Self, do I want to achieve my goals?

Of course.

Do I need a coach for that?

No, I've got my own tools like my BestSelf Journals

Self, do I want to increase my self-awareness?

Maybe, but it's not a pressing need.

Self, do I want to improve my relationships?

Nah, I don't feel like I'm having problems in that general area – or at least not badly enough that I think I need a coach

Do you start to see what I'm trying to demonstrate here?

Here's an example: I'm keen to get back into swimming in a big way. I've done long distance swims like the Midmar Mile and so on and would like to work my way back to that level of fitness.

For various reasons, I haven't swum at any level of endurance in the last 2 years or more.

My problem – I need to put in the time and lengths, and I need to work on my technique to get me ready for the next Midmar Mile in Feb 2022.

Solution: find a swim coach.

Easy.

Problem AND goal – find solution.

Why is **that** decision so much easier to make than getting a coach?

OUR problem, as coaches, is that we don't position ourselves as clear SOLUTIONS to specific problems, and I don't want to hear you say: "But how can I? Coaches can coach anything. I'm not a consultant."

Put yourself into a potential client's shoes, and listen to yourself telling your client that you don't specialise in a specific area but can coach anything that your client brings to the coaching session.

How compelling does that sound?

I think it sounds a bit weak, actually.

I get it. We were ALL trained from a Rogerian perspective, but the world has changed and we need to change with it.

Just because we believe that the client is the centre of the coaching session and that they set the agenda, doesn't mean that we can't position ourselves as specialists in a certain area.

That still allows the client to set the agenda, but in an area where we create our best results with clients.

Our job is to coach our client towards getting those results in that area.

Problem and/or goal – solution.

We need to align ourselves with the solutions that our clients are looking for.

Remember what I said before: **We have a buyer expectation for immediacy and instant gratification.**

The ICF continues to emphasise that **coaches specialising in niche/specialist areas will see more employment opportunities than coaches who don't specialise.**

Finding and defining your niche reinforces your brand value, brilliance and uniqueness.

3. The rise of Artificial Intelligence coaches

Dr Nicky Terblanche and colleagues at USB have developed an artificial intelligence coaching app – Coach Vici (proudly South African).

Early research on the Coach Vici app showed that people using it were more likely to achieve their goals.

Most importantly, this is an **intelligent** AI coaching app, unlike some of the others on the market.

A few years ago, I played around with a newly launched coaching app called Wysa. It didn't end well. No really, it was a frustrating experience.

The first question that I asked it was how to manage uncertainty.

The answer was: "Visualise what you want to happen and you may find some tools in my toolkit."

I didn't find that very helpful and it **CERTAINLY** didn't feel like a coaching conversation.

I won't bore you with how the rest of the "coaching session" went.

Hopefully we've progressed.

The Hello Coach app has been developed for employee wellness, there are online AI medical coaches and more.

Of course, we are all familiar with the coaching apps that give us workouts etc...but then that's not really coaching as we know and accept it.

One of the huge advantages of AI/chatbot coaches and coaching apps is the accessibility and consequential democratization of coaching experience.

They aren't going to replace us – real live people and human relationships – but we can use these tools to **ENHANCE** our offering.

I think that they definitely a great tool for us to include in our baskets and to be able to offer our clients to enrich their coaching journey.

4. Virtual Reality

I think this offers some super exciting possibilities to enhance our coaching.

Imagine this introduction of virtual reality into a team coaching session to deal with scenario planning and decision-making under simulated circumstances.

It's got the potential to help in assessing the risk/reward of planned strategies.

5. Wearable Technology

Many of us, including our clients are wearing what is called "wearable technology". We have smart phones and smart watches that can measure everything from heartrate variability to stress levels and sleep quality.

10% of the world's population is now wearing accessories or apparel connected to the internet (quantumrun.com)

In fact, I often ponder how we are complicating our lives by having watches, phones, books and so on that all need to be kept charged and whose software needs to be regularly updated.

I was excited to read that neuroscience is starting to make inroads into the sporting arena.

At Liverpool Football Club, the coaches have realised that the athletes are at peak possible fitness and performance levels. There's really very little that can be tweaked in terms of diet, training and conditioning.

What they've done is to introduce EEG's with key players like Mo Salah where they are looking at brain activity in set pieces to see if they can create a greater competitive edge by changing neurological responses and reactions.

How gobsmackingly exciting is that?

Imagine being able to work with a client in this way - looking at their brain activity and neurological responses to what is happening in their lives or in the workplace and devising strategies to cope better.

Could we see this spilling over into the boardroom? We already have coaches who base their work on neuroscience.

Will it progress usefully from data collection and analysis/ predictive analytics?

What does this mean for us as coaches and what capabilities we need to develop?

Perhaps, we need to flag this on our horizon and start keeping an eye out for potential collaborations.

Just like we use things like Enneagram assessments, etc we may see a future where we will use AI and applied neuroscience as an adjunct to coaching.

I don't think it's too great a leap from personality and behavioural assessments to the introduction of technology like EEG's and galvanic measurements from neuroscience.

Is there a possible opportunity for someone to make this technology more accessible?

6. The 5th Industrial Revolution

This is starting to leak into the 5th Industrial Revolution.

Let's look at a hypothetical example based on a prediction about the use of AI by Alan Couzens.

I'm going to change the scenario that he created to that of a business/team.

So you're a coach working with a team in a business.

In the morning, you wake up to a report on the team giving you info like:

Mary's sleep quality has been poor for the last few nights. There is a direct correlation between her sleep quality and her ability to make good business decisions. Perhaps you could encourage her to set aside important decisions for another day, or to work more closely with a colleague on making these decisions.

Dave has been exhibiting signs of high levels of stress if we refer to his HRV. Perhaps he needs to focus heavily on mindfulness practice and also taking regular breaks from his desk plus introducing other strategies to reduce cortisol levels in his system.

I think that BIG DATA actually allows for a more **humanistic, somatic and human-centred** approach to be introduced – although it may take a LOT of convincing for clients to agree to this level of intrusion.

I think this is hugely exciting and filled with enormous possibilities for catapulting the effectiveness of coaching to a new level completely.

It will, however, need to have a whole school of ethics dedicated to this - and apparently this work is in progress in progressive organisations like the ICF.

Neuromining is using neuroscience and behavioural psychology to analyse, understand and influence our behaviour and give us a deeper understanding of our clients.

The Fifth Industrial Revolution will see much more advanced collaborative interactions between humans, machines, processes and systems for maximum performance optimisation.

The World Economic Forum puts it this way: *"In contrast to trends in the Fourth Revolution toward **dehumanization**, technology and innovation best practices are being bent back toward the service of humanity by the champions of the Fifth ... In the Fifth Industrial Revolution, humans and machines will dance together, metaphorically."*

So there's a return to the recognition of the need for human touch and humanity in order to be effective.

But here we also juggle the contradiction of remote work, and advances in technology allowing people to work with less and less interpersonal interaction with this recognisable growth in the need for personal touch and person-to-person interaction.

In fact, the hybrid workplace brings with it the problems of ineffectual interpersonal communication, highlights personality conflicts, brings trust in relationships into the spotlight.

We also see dysfunctional personalities leaking out more easily and a whole new set of dynamics that leaders, managers, employees and coaches have to deal with.

Misunderstanding and trust issues increases exponentially.

I remember a leader of an organisation telling me that the biggest lesson that she had to learn as a leader was that email had no "tone".

In other words, unless specifically explicit, what we read or hear needs to be treated as toneless. We need to have an awareness of both content and context.

What gives it tone is context and the underlying relationships.

"The biggest problem with communication is the illusion that it has taken place." George Bernard Shaw

On that note, how many of us have attended online funerals, sitting alone in our homes or offices and denied the companionship of grief that occasions like funerals normally allow.

How do we ensure that we and our clients deal healthily with this?

I think that you are ALL seeing greater and greater trends of higher levels of stress, anxiety, overwhelm, burnout, fatigue, lack of resilience, etc.

In fact, I don't know about you, but I hear the terms burnout and resilience EVERYWHERE.

In my 2021 trends prediction, I spoke about the importance of high levels of psychological literacy - in fact, this (in my opinion) is one of the hallmarks of a great coach.

Our clients are stressed about their jobs, keeping their jobs, managing changes in their jobs and lifestyles.

Some clients experienced dramatic cuts in income.

Clients are deep in grief over many losses – family members, friends, freedom, familiarity.

There is a noticeable increase in underlying conditions like depression and PTSD. I have heard from SO many medical professionals that they are treating more and more people for these conditions.

Are these clients coachable?

Will coaching be effective?

What is our ethical responsibility?

Most professional body's codes of ethics call for coaches to cross-refer.

How are you going to deal with this possibility in a shrinking coaching client base, with greater pressure on your fees and a rapidly growing competitive environment?

We're dealing with fear, uncertainty, grief, PTSD, depression and all of these other conditions with our clients.

BUT we're ALSO dealing with them in our own lives.

Coach Supervision becomes more important for US in our self-care than ever before.

I think that there is an awakening consciousness in the world and that coaches and their clients will be having more and more conversations about ethics, meaning, purpose, mortality and general "what if's".

As coaches, we have a HUGE new responsibility and need to develop a completely new set of skills and abilities.

It goes without saying that the rise of machines, AI, robotics, etc will exclude a whole level of people on the margins of society.

This is the perfect segue-way into the next topic...

7. Diversity, Equality and Inclusion

This is currently hot topic globally.

It's been exacerbated and accelerated by progress towards 5th IR.

With the "Internet of Things", robotics, and Artificial Intelligence replacing people in the workplace, doesn't this create greater diversity, exclusivity and inequality?

Coaches working with people in leadership and management positions will be dealing with these general issues – automation, remote workplaces, DEI – to greater and greater degrees.

In fact, remote working environments are predicted (by Forbes) to lead to an increase in hiring contractors so there is increasing pressure on leaders and managers to create strong team bonds and also to foster strong team or corporate cultures.

Leaders will be making complex decisions – sometimes based on fields that are WAY out of their areas of expertise or comfort.

How do we support them? What do we need to add to our coaching knowledge, skills or competencies to effectively partner our clients?

Also, with this increasingly online world where we are able to play in a global space, we will now be coaching across borders.

This means that we will need to develop cultural competence - an understanding of different cultures - as well as (potentially) being multi-lingual.

Anyone adding studying a foreign language to your list of CPD activities this year?

8. Personalisation, Individualisation and Customisation

With growing lack of interpersonal contact and communication, I see a HUGE trend towards militant personalisation and identity politics.

One real life example is that – with more and more people using online dating apps as a direct result of Covid – the dating apps have met clients **needs to feel included and to be able to express their identity** by including categories like LGBTIQ+, non-binary, non-monogamous, pan-sexual and many more.

We're also going to need to become more experienced in recognising the words behind the words, meta-language, body language and micro-expressions in the virtual coaching environment.

In an age where we may see clients where we are all wearing masks, our eyes truly become the window to our souls

In fact, I don't know about you, but I sometimes struggle to understand what another person is saying to me from behind their mask.

I never realised how much I relied on lip-reading to "hear" what is being said.

For this reason, I rather like the see-through plastic or PVC masks, not that I would wear one.

People are even using their masks as a form of self-expression. Just a trawl of a site like Amazon shows how mask manufacturers' imaginations have run wild!

On a frivolous note, wearing masks does take away that stress of "do I have some spinach stuck in my teeth?" or "Did I remember to put on lipstick?"

We are navigating an era of identity politics and of individualism and we need to be aware of this as coaches.

I think we don't need to get tied up in knots about always being politically correct as I think that's like trying to hit a moving target (please note that tis is my personal opinion).

I think we need to rather focus on our **sensitivity and ability to deal with identity without judgment** – which is quintessential to being a good coach.

I think we're going to see a growth in interesting and expressive "face furniture"/glasses, more expressive make-up, men using facial hair to make personal statements, tattoos, earrings, necklines, ties – even face masks – becoming statements that speak for us.

Even hairstyles and hair colour will become part of how we tell the world what we identify with.

Digital/online coaching is becoming the mainstay of how coaching takes place compared with previous years. Various surveys show dramatic growth in online coaching, and I'm sure your own practice reflects this.

I think that coaching may become more democratized and widely available through a combination of virtual coaching and AI coaching.

Virtual coaching increases accessibility, is more time-efficient for coach and client, creates higher levels of flexibility and may make coaching more affordable.

I'm personally a HUGE fan of online/virtual coaching and can attest to the high quality of personal relationships that I've built with my clients.

In fact, I met one of my clients on my 12 week Marketing & Sales Accelerator programme for coaches for the FIRST time in person only after we had completed the online programme supported by virtual coaching.

We both remarked on how easy and familiar it felt to meet in person after having built up an online relationship over the 12 weeks.

We see this with online dating where people meet virtually and go on to have relationships in person.

Why shouldn't it translate into the coaching world - the ability to build great relationships?

Connectivity, technological and access issues aside, the hybrid workplace is here to stay.

It's encouraging to know that there is research showing that digital coaching is **as effective** as in-person coaching. Facetime is what is most important, combined with the quality of relationships.

A study by Berry (2011) showed that virtual coaching is as effective as in-person coaching provided the coach is a skilled virtual coach

What makes a skilled virtual coach?

- Facetime – in other words keeping video on
- Meaningful relationships
- Empathy, emotion, honesty
- A triangle of TRUST, BOND and RELATIONSHIP

These all feed each other to make the online/virtual experience worthwhile. Our challenge is creating and delicately balancing these.

With trends towards digital/online (lower touch) coaching, measurement and reporting becomes more important and essential. Coaches will rely heavily on tools like:

- 360 and 180 assessments
- Goal completion
- Action plans
- Self-reports
- Progress reports
- Check-in sessions to revisit objectives
- The expansion of the coaching repertoire

More and more, coaching is being supplemented with video and other additional resources for clients.

The ICF has identified that there is a trend towards including additional touchpoints between coaching sessions, for example: supplementary micro-learning, and gamification.

We can start to include more session pre-work for clients (those increased touchpoints), journaling, assessments, progress checks, research – all with the purpose of priming your clients for the next session with you.

Coaches are increasing tailor-making and their ability to be flexible in customising a coaching intervention.

There is an increasing need need for supplementary support between coaching sessions – remember that accessibility factor that I was talking about?

Between July 2020 and July 2021, the number of job listings including “accessibility” as a key criterion increased by 78%.

This is being mirrored in client's expectations from their coaches.

Coaches are starting to use apps like WhatsApp, Voxer and Telegram to keep in contact with clients in between coaching sessions.

We need to be “always on” – ourselves and our clients. No wonder we are seeing such high levels of burnout.

WhatsApp, email, Telegram, Voxer...how do we manage these increasing intrusions into our personal lives and time?

However, balanced against this is increased automation and outsourcing in coaching practices.

Processes like on-boarding clients are becoming automated.

We also use automation (online assessments, questionnaires, surveys) to assess a client's coach-readiness and even suitability as a match.

The use of VA's is becoming more common to outsource finance, admin, tech and so on...

...all those nasty things that take you away from your core passion: coaching, and bringing out the best in people.

9. Coaching income

The majority of coaches STILL don't make all of their income from coaching alone.

Already, in 2020, there were predictions that coaching fees will come under increasing pressure to be lowered.

Often, coaches include consulting, facilitation, training, workshops, personality profiles and other tools like 360 assessments and so on to supplement their income from coaching.

There is a greater trend towards coaches creating online programmes and “set” short coaching programmes with stated, specific outcomes.

Group coaching programmes and masterminds are on the rise, with programmes and products or training SUPPORTED by coaching.

Think of it as creating specific development pathways around certain problems/challenges for your clients, or to create the resources to support them in achieving a particular goal that is SUPPORTED by “traditional coaching”.

Forbes talks about "co-optition" or competitors co-operating.

Can you see an opportunity? Perhaps put it onto your horizon.

10. Marketing your coaching practice

Yes, my favourite topic!

Coaches HAVE to become consistent content creators to generate business.

Quality content drives business and drives traffic to website by up to 2000%.

Video drives 50 times more organic traffic to websites.

I spoke about how the term “resilience” is ubiquitous, and we also need to be resilient – keeping calm and carrying on, getting up and persevering.

I've said MANY times that it takes between 18 months to 3 years to create a successful coaching practice and that is with going all out with marketing.

Some informal research recently asked how many hours a week that entrepreneurs were spending on marketing their businesses.

Most of the participants reported that they were spending less than 5 hours per week.

The stats showed that entrepreneurs needed to spend at least 10 hours per week/ 2 hours per day.

Are YOU spending 2 hours per day on marketing?

That certainly changes your perspective on how you spend your time, doesn't it?

It ALSO needs to make you think differently about your hourly rates.

So, someone like me can teach you all the tricks in the marketing book, I can give you all the tools, but it's up to YOU how much time you devote to your marketing.

Time spent marketing your business directly translates into how much business you get.

11. Is "traditional coaching" dead?

Looking at all these developments, I've asked myself the question: Is coaching as we know it, in a traditional sense, dead?

No, but there is an increasing conflation of coaching, mentoring, training, teaching and facilitation.

I've given you a whole load of things to think about and possibly add into the mix of what you offer and how you offer it.

Pick what YOU believe will **crashproof, bulletproof and futureproof** your coaching practice.

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