

"Adaptability is the magic key to ABUNDANCE"

Mike Raven, co-founder AQai

# THE COACH'S ULTIMATE GUIDE TO LEVERAGING ADAPTABILITY

HOW TO DRIVE CLIENT VALUE WITH  
**7** POWERFUL PRINCIPLES  
TO NAVIGATE CHANGE

ROSS THORNLEY

# THE COACH'S ULTIMATE GUIDE TO LEVERAGING ADAPTABILITY

o

Ross Thornley

*HOW TO DRIVE CLIENT VALUE  
WITH 7 POWERFUL PRINCIPLES  
TO NAVIGATE CHANGE*

Copyright © 2022 by Ross Thornley

First published 2022  
Adaptai Ltd.

The right of Ross Thornley to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

AQ® and AQai® are registered trademarks of adaptai Ltd. If you would like any further info on AQ, adaptability assessments or other AQai services and products, please email [hello@aqai.io](mailto:hello@aqai.io)

Typeset: CrunchX  
Printed and bound by KDP  
Cover artwork by Ross Thornley

ISBN: 9798842893256

[www.AQai.io](http://www.AQai.io)

## **Acknowledgements**

To AQai Mike Raven, Joe Sale, Nancy Watt, and Rebecca Sutherns.

# THE COACH'S ULTIMATE GUIDE TO LEVERAGING ADAPTABILITY

*“An animal perfectly in harmony with its environment is a perfect mechanism.”*

H. G. Wells



*“We have the power, as coaches, to introduce people to a radical new idea, the idea that we can all thrive in the most significant and rapid period of change in human history.” - Ross Thornley*

# CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>8</b>
State of Play .....	8
The 7 Principles .....	12
 <b>PRINCIPLE 1: RECOGNISE THE ENVIRONMENT .....</b>	 <b>15</b>
AQ-Environment .....	17
 <b>PRINCIPLE 2: LEARN HOW, WHY, &amp; WHEN PEOPLE ADAPT .....</b>	 <b>20</b>
What is Adaptability? .....	20
The Science of Adaptability .....	24
 <b>PRINCIPLE 3: RIDE THE UNPREDICTABLE .....</b>	 <b>26</b>
The Amygdala Hijack .....	26
The Coaching Method.....	28
But how do we get to responding? .....	30
 <b>PRINCIPLE 4: EMBRACE CONTINUAL LEARNING .....</b>	 <b>34</b>
Unlearning .....	34
Supercharge Your Coaching Practice .....	38

<b>PRINCIPLE 5: BUILD ADAPTABILITY INTO YOUR EVERYDAY .....</b>	<b>40</b>
Exercises To Improve AQ.....	41
<b>PRINCIPLE 6: MAP YOUR CLIENT JOURNEYS .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>PRINCIPLE 7: MASTER INTERSECTION .....</b>	<b>45</b>
Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?.....	49
The Voice Of One Crying In The Desert .....	52
The Coach As Guide .....	55
<b>SUCCESS, IMPACT AND A NEW PARADIGM .....</b>	<b>56</b>
Nancy Watt Bio Profile:.....	57
Rebecca Sutherns Bio Profile .....	63
Conclusion .....	67
<b>WELCOME TO THE WORLD'S ONLY AQ® CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS.....</b>	<b>69</b>
Inside the AQ Level : 1 Foundation Certification.....	69



## INTRODUCTION

### State of Play

The world is currently in a state of crisis. I don't say this to sound like a doom-touting prophet. The world has been in crisis many times before, and is likely to be in a state of crisis again at some point in the future.

But the crisis of the modern world, the crisis we're facing right now, is unique in the history of the planet. Never before have we been so connected, and so empowered with technology and information—all of which should help us deal with the problems our societies face.

But our access to technology and information is part of the problem, isn't it? We've grown so rapidly, accelerated our progress in so many fields in such a short space of time, that the playbook of yesterday is no longer fit for purpose.

According to a 2020 World Economic Forum report<sup>1</sup> and 2021 research by McKinsey and Company<sup>2</sup>, owing to the pandemic's acceleration of automation:

- **By 2025, 85 million jobs will be lost.**
- **By 2025, 97 million new jobs will be generated.**

---

1 <https://www.weforum.org/press/2020/10/recession-and-automation-changes-our-future-of-work-but-there-are-jobs-coming-report-says-52c5162fce/>

2 <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/building-workforce-skills-at-scale-to-thrive-during-and-after-the-covid-19-crisis?cid=repeat-soc-lkn-mip-mck-oth-2109--&sid=5526889337&linkId=132403241>

- **40% of today's employment will no longer exist in ten years.**
- **375 million individuals may need to change jobs and obtain new skills.**

We're seeing more change in ten years than we saw in the last one-hundred, and we're swiftly approaching the "singularity". As I wrote in *Moonshot Innovation*: "As we approach the technological singularity, the moment in time when artificial superintelligence will abruptly trigger a runaway of technological growth, catalysing unfathomable changes to human civilization, changes we cannot see beyond, **it will in some ways be out of our hands.**"<sup>3</sup>

*Now there's a thought that some may find scary.*

And what impact is this having on people? In 2021 in the UK alone, a record 634,649 people completed the NHS Talking Therapy programme. This is an increase of around 5% on 606,192 in the year before. "Between 1990 and 2013, the number of people suffering from depression and/or anxiety increased by nearly 50%, from 416 million to 615 million."<sup>4</sup> Across the world, shocking numbers of people are struggling with their mental health, and when we look at these numbers we have to bear in mind that there is still a stigma, particularly with men, in reporting on mental health or accessing therapy, so the actual numbers of people struggling with mental health is likely to be much, much higher.

---

3 Thornley, Ross; *Moonshot Innovation*; 2019.

4 Green, David; *The Age of Wellbeing*, 2020.

I could quote further sources about the technological trends that threaten to destabilise, and transform our current business models—saying nothing of the ongoing war in the Ukraine and the drastic effect that has had on the cost of living—but I think the mental health statistics give us a shot in the arm of the reality we are swimming in.

We have so much—I truly believe this is an abundant world—yet we seem to be struggling to reap the benefits, or to put it more simply: to get the most out of life.

Joseph Campbell once wrote: “The psychotic drowns in the same waters in which the mystic swims with delight.” This might seem a little bit esoteric (and it is) but what this quote highlights is the difference isn't in the water, it's in the person who's swimming, and their perception and manifestation of their emotions and behaviours. As coaches, we can help people to swim, rather than drown. We are the mystics who can give people the tools and techniques to unlock their inner potential, and combat the challenges of this rapidly accelerating world (and we'll come back to the idea of a mystic later).

Needless to say, the rise in mental health issues, the rapidly accelerating change our societies are going through, and the turmoil of the economy pose significant challenges for any coach. I mean this in a double sense. Firstly, our clients will bring more challenging issues to us that they are dealing with; they may even be facing challenges we don't

fully understand due to how technology can transform an industry overnight. And secondly, we, as businesses, are likewise navigating this change whilst helping others to do so! To continue Joseph Campbell's analogy, we are trying to swim the rapid waters whilst also trying to teach others how to do it at the same time! Edward De Bono, author of *Six Thinking Hats* and coiner of the phrase "lateral thinking", said, "To be successful you have to be lucky, or a little mad, or very talented, or find yourself in a rapid growth field." I think we can all relate a little to the second item on the list!

But let's also look at the last item: "or find yourself in a rapid growth field." Society is waking up to the realisation that there is a greater need for coaching than ever before. Coaching is no longer the province of a small select group of elite business owners. Now, people at all levels require coaching, and coaching can be tailored to all kinds of objectives and goals. I believe 'coaching' has the opportunity to transform the 21st century, in a way 'management' did in the 20th. Driving a wave of rapid growth, accessibility and democratization.

Where crisis looms, there is always opportunity. The world needs great coaches to rise up, to help navigate the choppy waters ahead. But coaches too have greater challenges and obstacles to overcome. Something needs to change. Coaches need help, they need to re-imagine their own approaches, acquire new tools, and surf the rapid growth of our era.

***And this is where the super power of adaptability comes in.***

## The 7 Principles

To cope with rapid change, we need to develop our ability to not only cope with change but thrive with change. This is what developing our adaptability muscles can offer. And the great news is, all of us are adaptable inherently, it's just that some have built their skills and curated their environment to harness this resource more than others.

In addition, we each adapt in our own unique way, and understanding our adaption style is critical to manifesting our best selves and unlocking our potential; likewise, understanding the adaption style of our coaches can give us access to new realms of insight and opportunity.

During periods of transformation and systematic upheaval, the prospect of making changes can be daunting. Change can trigger fear, especially for those in leadership positions or positions of significant responsibility, and often, when under stress, humans default to familiar patterns (or whatever solutions worked for us in the past). This is one of many “adaptability paradoxes”: when we most need to learn and change, we stick with what we know, often to our detriment.

But why adaptability and not some other concept? In today's interconnected age, we are constantly bombarded from every front with new ideas, information, offerings, and invitations to new communities.

In light of this, it would be easy to see adaptability as a bit of a buzzword. After all, it's taking the world by storm, and with good reason. Just about every major study—from the World Economic Forum, to Deloitte, to Mckinsey, LinkedIn and PWC—are placing 'adaptability' as the #1 essential skill of our time. <sup>5</sup>

But in reality, adaptability is an ancient concept, one that's been with humanity since the beginning.

Baron de Montesquieu observed, commenting on the unique success of the Roman Empire, “[The Romans] always gave up their own practices as soon as they found better ones.”

Most empires are destroyed because of their inherent inflexibility and xenophobia; they see any culture other than their own as a threat that must be subjugated. This close-mindedness cuts one off from learning opportunities. But the Romans were different. They stole, adopted and integrate from different cultures repeatedly. So long as it improved upon something, they were happy to get rid of the old and embrace the new. We can see this in virtually every aspect of their culture, even their religion!

Cultures that refuse to let go of the old tend to die off. Even the mighty Spartans, who at one time were the greatest

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/why-best-coaches-world-learning-how-leverage-adaptability-businesses/>

fighting force in the ancient world, were destroyed because they failed to adapt to new technological innovation. The Battle of Leuctra in 371 BC saw the defeat of Sparta at the hands of Thebes, and among the many strategies deployed by the Theban general, Epaminondas, were slingshots and light-cavalry. These technological developments threw the Spartans, who had been entrenched in a very specific method of warfare for seven hundred years. Arguably the Spartans were in decline long before that battle, with a diminishing population and increasingly strained ties with other Greek city-states, all due to their inflexible mindset. Their relationship with tradition was extraordinarily rigid—understandable given how much success it brought them in the beginning—ultimately this rigidity spelled their doom.

So, adaptability is the key to swimming in the waters of life and change. Over the course of this ultimate guide we will cover seven powerful principles that will allow you to begin your journey to harness your own adaptability and drive incredible client value.

## **These seven principles are:**

- 1. Recognise The Environment**
- 2. Learn How, Why, & When People Adapt**
- 3. Ride The Unpredictable**
- 4. Embrace Continual Learning**
- 5. Build Adaptability Into Your Everyday**
- 6. Map Your Client Journeys**
- 7. Master Intersection**

The first principle we shall cover strongly relates to what we discussed in the opening of this book: how our environment is changing, and how we need to change and find flow with it.

## PRINCIPLE 1: RECOGNISE THE ENVIRONMENT

**A**t AQai, we use a tripartite model of Adaptability in order to measure “Adaptability Quotient” AQ. We call this the A.C.E. model: Ability, Character, and Environment.

We’ll cover Ability and Character in time, but for now we’ll start with the third: **Environment**. It might seem strange to start here, but the reality is that much of our suffering or success comes from disharmony or harmony with our environment.

Our environment is a context in which we behave and act. If our behaviour is incongruous with or inconsiderate of the context, then we are likely to run into problems. This is precisely the issue the modern world is facing. We’re still behaving as if we’re in environment X, but the world has moved on, we’re now in environment Y. Technology and our environment are ahead of us, and the gap is going to keep widening unless we change our thinking, our playbooks, and our practices.

As H. G. Wells observed, “It is a law of nature we overlook,



that intellectual versatility is the compensation for change, danger, and trouble. **An animal perfectly in harmony with its environment is a perfect mechanism.**"

To take this one stage deeper, we are not separate from our environment (though we experience the illusory feeling of separation or disjoint, as I've described above). We are part of the "perfect mechanism". Gregory Bateson (creator of the double-blind theory of schizophrenia) theorised that "man's only real self is the total cybernetic network of man **plus society plus environment.**"<sup>6</sup> We therefore have an interactive relationship with this environment. It influences us and we influence it. And it's important to note that when I say "environment" I don't mean just the planet and the ecosystem, as important as these are. I mean work environment, home environment, the area we live in (be it city, countryside, town, or mountain peak!). What social networks do we abide in? All of these are contributing factors to who we are and, of course, influence our adaption.

We tend to believe in the West especially that we are the masters of our environment. We split hills to make roads, we level ground to raise cities, and we insist on dictating to technology rather than letting technology take the wheel (and in many fields, like health diagnosis, AI has proven to be more accurate and egalitarian than human beings!). This is why we feel the disconnect even though, in reality, we are part of our environment (as well as products of it).

---

6

Quoted in The Spectrum of Consciousness, Wilber, Ken; 1977

So, if our environment is the context in which we behave (or perhaps I should say: is made up of contexts), how can this knowledge help us on our adaptability journey?

## **AQ-Environment**

**AQ-Environment asks the question “When does someone adapt and to what degree?”**

No doubt, as a coach, you have likely asked your client questions about their environmental factors, about their situation. You’ve also probably observed that most people tend to view their environments as “static”. In other words, if your client is continually experiencing a bad time at work, they might think: “I need to quit my job.” The environment is outside of their control, and perhaps fixed, so the only recourse is to abandon it altogether.

**The reality, however, is that our environments are ever-shifting.** We influence them and they influence us. Not only this, but we are the curators of our environment. Viewed another way: we create an environment that we then invite other people in to cohabitate. In the words of David Green, “Environmental Wellbeing is about living a lifestyle that is respectful and in harmony with our surroundings, nature, planet earth and all species living in it. **It is the bi-directional impact between us and our environment** whether built, natural, physical or virtual and includes our home, neighbourhood, workplace, community, country, planet and even the universe.”

Green emphasises the holistic and multifaceted nature of an environment we've explored, rather than simply thinking of it as the ecology of the planet. When we begin to see environment this way, it opens up a whole realm of possibilities. We can, for example, begin to see how we might change our behaviours in certain contexts. Do we, for example, use different language when at work than when at home or with friends? This is an obvious one—we all know we might adopt a more formal tone or manner at work—but how often do we pay specific attention to these subtle differences? And what can we learn from the differences?

And what about problematic environments? If we have a problematic environment at work (for example, a toxic culture of micro management, and distrust), how do we approach that “bi-directional” relationship? Do we fight against the culture and try to give as little as possible, do we go with the flow and shrink to fit and comply, or do we provide alternatives? Whilst we obviously view flexibility as a good thing, too much flexibility can mean a loss of identity. If the bi-directional influence is imbalance and you're the one being influenced all the time, but not able to influence others, then might this not have negative impacts on mental health and sense of Self?

Of course, to a degree, our choice of environment may be limited by financial resources, location, education and many other factors. But even if we believe we cannot afford to move jobs or start our own business, we can make the

most of the space and connections we have; this is saying nothing of the psychological environment we create: is it one of trust, of mutual respect, of openness to all views and ideas? In my view, our environment can be either the “magical multiplier” of success or its great subtractor.

This is not to say we should forever “stick it out” if we are truly unhappy. But I want to remind us all, we have the power to instigate change. Environments are powerful, but we are part of them and have the ability and responsibility to influence them for the better.

**However, before we do that, the first step is to correctly identify the environment we operate in.** No two coaches are alike, despite a shared interest in developing people, and there are so many different fields of coaching in which we operate: leadership, strategy, business consultancy, digital, therapeutic, motivational, one-to-one versus team, the list surely goes on, and new ones are emerging all the time.

So, what field are we operating in and what is the current state of that environment? How do the global movements I’ve described impact our industry? Is work drying up or do you have more work than you can handle because so many businesses are struggling with their people?

Each problem and opportunity will have a different array of solutions. To unlock these solutions, we have to understand AQ, or adaptability, at a deeper level.

## PRINCIPLE 2: LEARN HOW, WHY, & WHEN PEOPLE ADAPT

### What is Adaptability?

One of my preferred definitions is that “Adaptability is the capacity to adjust one’s thoughts and behaviours in order to effectively respond to uncertainty, new information, or changed circumstances.” (Martin, Nejad, Colmar, & Liem, 2013). We can immediately see the role of the environment in this definition. Our environment—especially in today’s age—is constantly providing us with “new information” and “changed circumstances”, to the point where we can feel whiplashed trying to keep up with it all. Not only are all these changes happening rapidly but we also tend to get notified about them in real time due to social media and instant messaging (though not always with a hundred percent accuracy, it must be said!). This naturally contributes to a feeling of overwhelm that is undoubtedly linked to the mental health crisis described in the first part of this book.

However, the good news is that we can adjust our thoughts and behaviours in order to be able to not only cope with what’s changing but create success out of continual change.

Countless studies, and the examples of history, have shown the key to longevity and success in any enterprise is adaptability. Indeed: “As a disposition and skill, adaptability

is essential to an individual's psychological health, social success, and academic or workplace achievement." (National Institutes for Health, 2015).

But how do we know how adaptable we are? And how can we improve our adaptability?

Many articles and leaders advocate becoming better at navigating change, but they miss out the how.

We have spent years collating the most robust scientific studies, the latest research, and observing cutting edge trends to formulate our comprehensive operating system for adaptability. From this, we understand AQ in terms of three interrelated master dimensions (the A.C.E model):

**Ability** (*your adaptability skills -  
How and to what degree one adapts*)

This is your adaption muscle system. It reflects how, over time, you can develop mastery in multiple or changing fields. This element encompasses your ability to be resilient and bounce back/or even forward from hardship, mental flexibility with holding opposing thoughts, your grit, as well as your mindset and ability to unlearn.

**Character** (*who adapts and why*)

This reflects a more innate (but contextual) aspect of

adaptability quotient: your drivers, triggers, styles and willingness to adapt. Whilst you may be able to live other characteristics in specific circumstances, we seek to understand preferences which channel flow and not compliance when it comes to why someone makes an adaptation of change. This important master dimension uncovers your profile, in motivation style, emotional range, extraversion, thinking style and hope.

**Environment** (*how your environment can help or hinder your adaption - When one adapts, and to what degree*)

Your environment can either help or inhibit your adaption. Typically, this is can be out of your control, yet you are part of the input! We explore areas such as company support, team support (psychological safety), work environment, emotional health, and work stress.

These three master dimensions further break down into seventeen sub-dimensions, which allows us to drill down into specifics. This creates what we call our **"AQ Aadaptiotic Table™"**.

# THE A.C.E MODEL OF ADAPTABILITY

THE AQ ADAPTIVOTIC™ TABLE

THE 17 SCIENTIFICALLY VALID MEASURES OF ADAPTABILITY

## AQABILITY

HOW AND TO WHAT DEGREE DO I ADAPT?

1 Gr 2 Mf 3 Mi 4 Re 5 Un

## AQ CHARACTER

WHO ADAPTS AND WHY?

6 Er 7 Ex 8 Ho 9 Ms 10 Ts

## AQ ENVIRONMENT

WHEN DOES SOMEONE ADAPT TO WHAT DEGREE?

11 Cos 12 Eh 13 Tes 14 We 15 Ws

1. GRIT
2. MENTAL FLEXIBILITY
3. MINDSET
4. RESILIENCE
5. UNLEARN

6. EMOTIONAL RANGE
7. EXTRAVERSION
8. HOPE
9. MOTIVATION STYLE
10. THINKING STYLE

11. COMPANY SUPPORT
12. EMOTIONAL HEALTH
13. TEAM SUPPORT
14. WORK ENVIRONMENT
15. WORK STRESS

## AI PREDICTIVE INDEXES

16 Crt 17 Rsi

16. CHANGE READINESS INDEX
17. RESKILL INDEX

*Ross Thornley*

THE AQ GUY

**AQdI.**

COPYRIGHT ADAPTALTD. | AQ® AND AQdI® ARE REGISTERED TRADEMARKS OF ADAPTALTD. | WWW.AQdI.O



## The Science of Adaptability

We collaborated with Dr. Nicholas Deuschel, a research professor at Spain's leading Carlos III University and used one of the most robust models in organisational psychology (the input-process-outcome model) to create our tripartite **Ability Character Environment model (or A.C.E.)**. In our case, "adaptability" is the outcome, a result of a process and an input.

In our model, AQ-Character catalyses adaption (this is the "input"). In other words extraversion-introversion, our motivation style, our "personality traits", all create the impetus that drives us to adapt.

At the same time employees can learn new skills that allow them to adapt in different ways. This is AQ-Ability which also adds to the "input" stage of the model.

In addition, we are also influenced by our environment. We may have all the unique skills in the world to help us adapt, even a personality that is innately adaptable, but due to an inhibiting environment are unable to fully harness our AQ muscle. This is also another important "input".

We then experience the "process" in the form of adaptability behaviours, examples such as exploration, exploitation, problem solving and creativity. And in a business context resulting in a series of outputs, desired, predicted, and

actual “outcomes”. For example, accelerated innovation, employee engagement, retention and reskilling with increase employee mobility and enhanced career pathways. Learning & development culture, overall productivity and performance , together with health and wellbeing - stress and burnout reduction.

**Understanding the specific flow, mix and value of inputs, the resulting and chosen processes and then the impact on outcomes will help us to continually leverage and optimise what we understand as our adaptability intelligence.**

Of course, this is only scratching the surface. But hopefully this basic overview has given you an idea of how the underlying principles of AQ are present and active in our lives. What would you do differently if you could frame your client’s difficulties, challenges and opportunities with this tripartite model?

## PRINCIPLE 3: RIDE THE UNPREDICTABLE

**N**ow we know the rudimentary basics of AQ, and the three master dimensions that are constantly interacting and acting upon us (and in turn being acted upon by us), we can begin to harness this knowledge to better ride and navigate uncertainty and unpredictable changes.

### **The Amygdala Hijack**

**Y**ou simply cannot predict what people will say in a coaching session. You cannot know what they will bring to the table, even if you discuss it beforehand over email. And on a macrocosmic scale, we cannot predict what is going to happen to our industry. As I said in the opening, it's increasingly complex. New coaching apps are emerging all the time, powered by sophisticated AI. These are not necessarily designed to replace coaches and therapists wholesale, but they are probably going to augment our work, and replace certain tasks within coaching practices. On the one hand, these innovations allow coaches to scale up in a way never-before-seen (for we are no longer limited by the hours in our day), but on the other they will pose many challenges. How do we distinguish ourselves from a service that can provide digital coaching instantly, at the click of an app? Do we offer more? How do we offer more? What boundaries do we set?

Naturally, when thinking about these things, it can evoke the “fear response”.

I’m sure most of you will know what I mean by the fear response, but just to recap: this is when the amygdala, the primitive reptilian part of our brain, hijacks our thinking.

In their study, “Resilience Training That Can Change the Brain” (2018), Golnaz Tabibnia and Dan Radecki stated that: “One of the challenges of consulting and coaching psychology is helping individuals, teams, and entire enterprises weather life and work stressors. These stressors can be one-time and acute, such as unexpected job transfer or job loss, or more chronic, such as bad bosses, broken peer relationships, and dysfunctional team members. Some people are more resilient than others in the face of such stressors, but many of the skills that make for resilience can be learned.”

In other words, without resilience, these “stressors”, whether acute or chronic, can overwhelm us. And even worse: “cortisol and adrenaline are actually neuro-toxic; that is, too much of them and they can harm or even kill off brain neurons.”<sup>7</sup> In other words, stress literally “shrinks” our brains!

When the amygdala has hijacked us, and we can only compute “fight or flight”, our decision-making becomes significantly impaired. To make things worse, our brains are

---

7

Psychologies Magazine; Real Strength; Capstone; 2017.

largely unable to differentiate between a life-threatening situation and one which is simply uncertain, unexpected, or unfamiliar. The brain offers the same response whether we are faced with talking in front of an audience of thousands or with a dangerous animal in the wild. This wouldn't be so much of a problem if we were easily able to dissipate this stress or fear response, but in the modern world, we cannot act on the fight or flight impulse in most situations. Therefore, we find ourselves in states of stress for extended periods of time. This means our decision-making ability is impaired not just in one particularly stressful instance but often over the longer term. Hence, our careers, our mental and physical health, and our relationships are all impacted.

As organisational leaders, there are even deeper consequences for succumbing to amygdala hijack and failing to adapt than simply those of personal burnout or failure—distressing and profound as these moments can be. We can literally drive our companies into the ground, thereby impacting all our employees, partners, and clients.

## **The Coaching Method**

Every coach has moulded their unique style, and approach, but many coaches will recognise it's essential to give your client the tools to solve their own problem rather than dictate solutions to them. Most of the time, the client does in reality know what's wrong and often what they have to do to fix it, but they either don't want to see it, or they can't

because of too much other clutter; maybe personal issues are interfering with their work, or maybe they aren't ready to admit they have personal problems, and keep trying to make everything about work! Either way, it's unlikely telling them what to do will help. They need to be guided to discover and figure out solutions for themselves. This is coaching and therapy 101. To return to the image of the ancient mystic, we lead the coachee up to the door, but they have to walk through it. It's an old metaphor, but a gold one.

So, given the aim of coaching is often not necessarily to present solutions but to ask the right questions and empower the client with new thinking tools, where does AQ and adaptability fit in?

One of the core tenets of AQ is shifting from reacting to responding during change.

A reaction is often knee-jerk, like the old medical test where they strike the knee with a miniature hammer, to see you kick out, without intention. A reaction is not considered and often, sad though it is to say, makes matters worse. A response, however, is considered and appropriate. Bringing the best of ourselves into a situation and circumstance. Remember we discussed in the opening how environments are contexts, and it's when our behaviour does not match the context that things go wrong. Reactions almost invariably clash with our environment. For example, at an important meeting, Person A says something mildly

offensive. Person B is unable to contain their anger and explodes, angrily berating them. Everyone treats Person B like the bad-guy even though they were technically not the initiator of the conflict. This is because while what Person A said was offensive it could have been said in a calm manner appropriate to the context, whereas Person B's response was loud and abrasive and inappropriate to the meeting-context. If, however, Person B had instead been able to respond, rather than react, the meeting breakdown could have been averted.

By responding, we are able to match our environment and context, as well as act in a more considered way.

## **But how do we get to responding?**

**W**hen we're driving a car and we want to change gear, before we can shift into the next gear, we have to go via neutral. Going via neutral, and disengaging the energy from the drive shaft, is in some ways quite scary, because the car has reduced control in neutral. And if we stay in neutral too long, we'll end up stationary. However, without neutral, we cannot get anywhere else, we cannot shift gears.

Another term I use for this is "limbo". When we receive an external stimuli we deem to be threatening, or when we enter the unknown, our minds and bodies, like a car, realise they need to shift gear, and we are taken into neutral or limbo. Ken Wilber described this phenomenon in a fascinating

analogy:

“For instance, if I come up behind you and yell ‘Boo!’ there will be a few seconds wherein you remain still, even though you have heard me yell, and during this very brief time **you might feel a type of passive or quiet alertness**, but this feeling shortly explodes into a sensation of mild shock (or something similar) accompanied with an onrush of thoughts and emotions... **In those few seconds of passive awareness, your Energy was beginning to mobilize but it was not yet experienced as shock or mild terror**—it was pure and without form, and only later did it disintegrate into thoughts and emotions of shock and fright.”<sup>8</sup>

It is by harnessing and leaning into this “passive” energy that we can quieten the fear response, and see the problem from a neutral standpoint.

So, when a client comes to you with a unique or challenging problem, or indeed if you wake up to shocking news (such as the government deciding to regulate all coaches or consultants in the same way as therapists—it is unlikely but it could happen!) rather than succumbing to the amygdala hijack we can instead remodel from a reaction to a response.

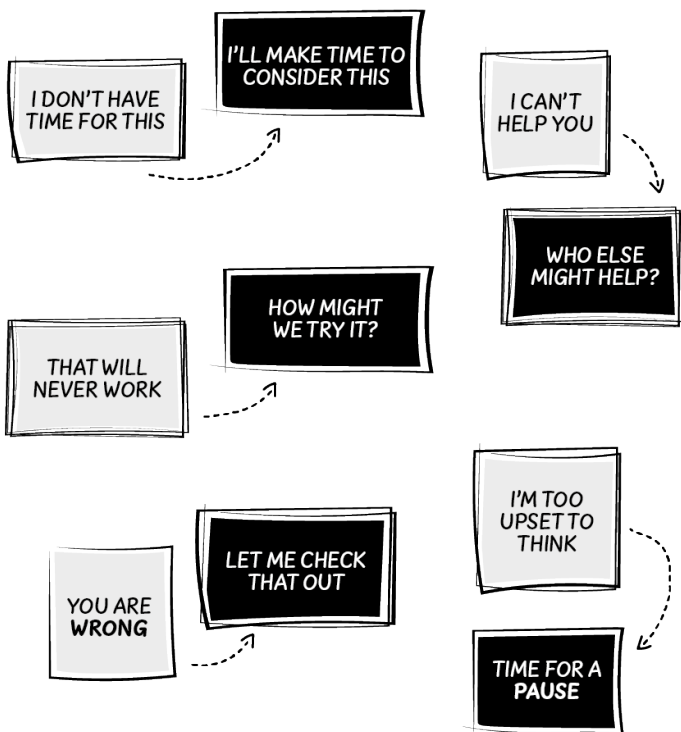


Let me share a short tip, from my book -

***Decoding AQ - Your Greatest Superpower -***

In order to give a response, rather than succumbing to a reaction, we must harness “the pulse of adaptive behaviour”. This “pulse” might be considered a deep breath, a pause. It is a moment where we step back rather than allowing the muscle-memory of our in-built responses to take over.

## FIVE POWERFUL LANGUAGE RE-FRAMES TO SHIFT FROM REACT TO RESPOND



*Ross Howley* THE AQ GUY

**AQai.**

COPYRIGHT ADAPTAI LTD. | AQ® AND AQAI® ARE REGISTERED TRADEMARKS OF ADAPTAI LTD. | WWW.AQAI.IO

We must create comfort in the discomfort, we must ride the unpredictable by leveraging a pause, the space in-between react and respond.

## PRINCIPLE 4: EMBRACE CONTINUAL LEARNING

As you have probably gathered, there is a lot to learn about AQ. Taking on new information or learning new techniques can be a beautiful mix of exciting and daunting at the same time, especially when we feel like we already have expertise in a field. There is certainly a degree of “sunk costs fallacy” here. We invest time, energy, and money into the skills and knowledge-bases that we believe will carry us forward into the future we desire, and so when these skills or knowledge-bases are disrupted, or become less relevant, we find it hard to let go.

*This is where Unlearning comes in.*

### Unlearning

Unlearning is one of the fifteen main sub-dimensions of AQ. It sits under the bracket of AQ-Ability. It is a learnable skill, and one that is vital to surviving in the faster-than-light-speed world which we are currently inhabiting.

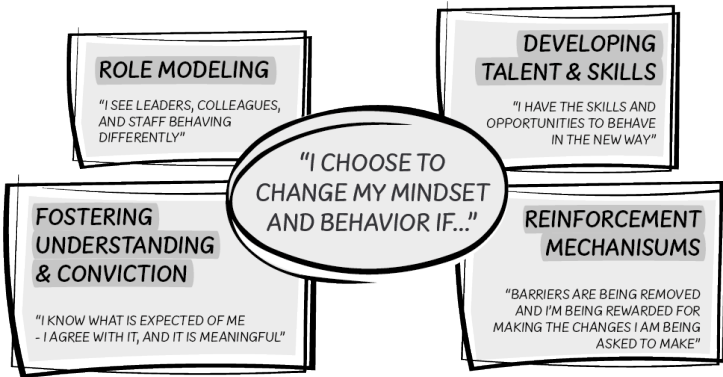
Unlearning is a two-fold dimension of adaptability, as it represents not only our passion and hunger for more knowledge, but also our ability to let go of redundant information. As Barry O'Reilly observed in his book

**Unlearn: Let Go of Past Success to Achieve Extraordinary Results,** “My inspiration to write *Unlearn* came from what I frequently find to be a significant inhibitor when helping high performance individuals get better—not the ability to learn new things but the inability to unlearn mindsets, behaviors, and methods that were once effective but now limit their success.” Success, or thriving, is as much about getting rid of what doesn’t work as doing more of what does!

The process of unlearning is becoming especially critical in a world where the successful methodologies and approaches of yesterday are morphing into the very anchors and tethers holding us back. The trick is knowing when to let go of these past processes and strategies to make room for new ones that are more able to support our transformation into future success and growth.

Studies identify four key “influence levers” that help “shift mindsets” and therefore facilitate an unlearning process:

## FOUR INFLUENCE LEAVERS TO HELP SHIFT MINDSETS AND BEHAVIORS IN SUPPORT OF DESIRED CHANGE



*Ross Thornley* THE AQ GUY

SOURCE: MCKINSEY & COMPANY - THE FOUR BUILDING BLOCKS OF CHANGE

9

Role-modelling, fostering understanding, developing talent and skills, and reinforcement mechanisms. Collectively they form a very disciplined approach to leadership. However, because of inherent autonomy and freedom, leadership in agile organisations comes from a self-disciplined approach—leading not in fear of punishment or

9 Source: <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/the-four-building-blocks--of-change>

sanction but in service of purpose and passion. As Torben Rick observed in 2014: “Of the 500 companies that appeared on the first list [Fortune 500], in 1955, only 71 held a place on the list in 2008... **Organizations, and the people within them, must constantly re-invent themselves to remain competitive.**”

As I said before, we become very emotionally attached to the knowledge or methods that “got us here”. This is because we invest tremendous energy in the process of acquiring said knowledge or expertise, and why the process of unlearning or letting go of old/redundant information is so hard. It can truly feel like ripping out a part of ourselves. However, we must let go if we are to adapt and become our best selves.

One analogy that I’ve found helpful is that of a staircase:

Imagine a staircase. You place one foot on the lowest step. This is symbolic of the knowledge you have acquired so far. You place your other foot on the next step up. Your current knowledge base got you to this second step. Congratulations! However, if you want to make it to the third and fourth and fifth step—maybe even to the top of the staircase—you have to take your foot off the first step. If you think about it, it’s literally impossible to climb any higher without first letting go! If we remain rooted to the first step, refusing to take our foot off it, then we can’t get any higher. Sadly this is the case for many people who are too emotionally attached to a particular set of skills, to a knowledge base, or to their

expertise.

It may well be that your “first step” consists of traditional personality-based assessment tools. And like I said, these are not necessarily invalid or to be discarded entirely. However, a failure to recognise the growing import of AQ to career success, organisational change, engagement, and wellbeing—to name just a few fields where AQ is blooming—and a refusal to take on board new knowledge at this tipping point in history, could prove completely disastrous.

**The time to act is now.**

## **Supercharge Your Coaching Practice**

Coaching has a profound business impact. Studies reveal an astonishing **88% increase in productivity**<sup>10</sup> among managers who received personal coaching rather than the traditional managerial training program. A study published by the Manchester Review<sup>11</sup> stated that 100 executives from Fortune 1000 companies reported benefits to themselves and their companies after completing an executive coaching program. These benefits included a **32% rise in executive retention**.

While the changing times pose a significant challenge for business leaders, they pose an exciting opportunity for

---

10 Research by the President of Human Resources Solutions Inc, Dr. Gerald Olivero PhD,

11 <https://www.perspect.ca/pdf/ExecutiveCoaching.pdf>

coaches and consultants. Many are beginning to realise there is a large skill gap across various industries regarding adaptability, and they are starting to leverage this to their advantage.

To be a highly valuable business coach, you must have the right approach and solutions for the demands of today, backed by access to the right toolkits, community, and learning to scale your solutions for maximum impact. The coaches who are learning the science and model of AQ (Adaptability Quotient) are benefiting from the fastest growing adaptability-focused community in the world. They are winning more valuable, rewarding and interesting work.

Embracing the mindset of continual learning and the ability to unlearn will supercharge your coaching practice. Not only will you feel more like an expert by enhancing your toolkit, which in itself will provide you with confidence, but you will also be able to offer your clients much more. Rather than offering familiar approaches to coaching, you will have deeper reserves of knowledge that you can leverage at opportune moments to help get your people back on track. This will attract new customers and repeat business alike, because you always have something fresh, relevant and powerful to offer. This is saying nothing of how enriching it is to operate in a field that isn't static.



## PRINCIPLE 5: BUILD ADAPTABILITY INTO YOUR EVERYDAY

There is more than simply an expertise benefit to harnessing AQ. Yes, AQ is going to help us navigate this ever-changing world. Yes, I sincerely believe we can deliver better coaching sessions, deliver more value to our clients, if we understand adaptability. But, there is a clear financial benefit too. This isn't simply because AQ is one of the "rapid growth fields" described by Edward de Bono, although it certainly is. The reasoning is actually far more simple:

On a practical level, most psychometrics are one-off evaluations. They map fixed aspects of Self, and are therefore immutable.

It is difficult for even the best coach to have a long term engagement with a client based on a one-time revelation. Once the coachee knows they are a Red or INFJ, they pretty much have the idea. You can work on strategies, but really, the rest is on them. Alternatively, if you are not using psychometrics, but working on very specific issues, once those issues are resolved, the client tends to drift away or view themselves as "fixed" (when in fact we're all works in progress).

But adaptability (or AQ) is mutable and changes over time in accordance with new experiences and learning; it is a journey not a fixed point. On a business level, this is

invaluable for a coach, as it means you can assess clients multiple times, which exponentially increases revenue potential and facilitates establishing long-term relationships with clients.

AQ can be used to continually monitor someone's progress and adaptability journey, and also to tie together the individual, specific issues they might be dealing with, providing an umbrella that allows a coach to contextualise and narrate their client's obstacles, opportunities and insights within a framework.

Building adaptability into your everyday life as a coach could well mean more long-term client work, better relationships with clients, and more powerful insights.

## **Exercises To Improve AQ**

**H**ow do you help clients work on their AQ? And, of course, develop our own AQ? The idea of building AQ into our everyday practice is not just about the business plan, but about our daily routines.

One exercise I recommend to clients is to visualise going for a usual walk or trip out, but doing so with their eyes closed (if you are blind, then you will have already exercised this adaptive muscle extensively, but perhaps there is a new way you could challenge yourself?). What strategies do we adopt to successfully and safely complete the walk?

Might we walk slower? Do we hold onto something such as a railing or tree? Do we crawl on all fours? As you can see, something that—for most people—is easy and familiar suddenly becomes a great challenge and we have to move in radical and unusual ways in order to get to where we need to go. People recovering from serious illnesses often talk about the sense of wonderment and awe they feel making small gains back towards health. For example, the simple pleasure of walking to the corner shop can suddenly become a grand challenge one must bend will and intent towards after surgery or treatment. People who have been in these recovery situations understand how easily the known can become the unknown once again and that it is possible to re-learn, to re-skill, and even go further than we ever went before getting ill. In fact, there are many stories of people who have recovered from serious health issues who ended up going on to run marathons and compete at high level sports, which they never did before getting sick!

If we take this into a workplace context, we should be performing regular scenario planning sessions. Perhaps by subtracting a key pillar from the business; a client, or a resource, like a key product or service. Maybe the departure of a high-performance leader, or technology lynch-pin. Run planning sessions by where you seek to accept, understand, imagine and plan the potential routes back to success with the obstacle identified. What strategies would you consider? What methods do you employ to think through the situation?

This act of thought experiments and basic future-proofing, will help you to help see around corners, to help build mental flexibility, and hope. To quieten the amygdala response, through becoming more comfortable with the uncomfortable. By starting with challenging ourselves to complete an everyday challenge, but with new parameters, we increase our tolerance of fear, and therefore, when we face the real thing, we are more familiar with the sensation and better prepared.

## PRINCIPLE 6: MAP YOUR CLIENT JOURNEYS

In James Sale's book *Mapping Motivation*<sup>12</sup>, the author outlines the four key areas of any organisation: Finance, Marketing & Sales, Operations, and People. For an organisation to thrive, these four areas “need to interact and support each other”. The issue, however, with getting these four areas to synchronise is due to the odd one out: people. As James Sale observes, **“In the people area or domain of organisational life, the certainties of numbers give way to uncertainty**, and with that there are two corresponding phenomena: the rise of ambiguity, and the erosion of control.”

Sadly, many managers and business owners and senior leaders simply despair of ever being able to rectify the “uncertainty” of people. They view continually struggle to

---

12

Sale, James; *Mapping Motivation*; Gower; 2016.

find harmony and optimisation, sinking literal millions into recruitment fees (and consequently also sinking millions into severance packages and recouping time and expertise lost). A PWC study found that **63% of CEOs<sup>13</sup> are unable to find and recruit talent that can adapt to the requirements of the business.**

The reality, however, is that it is possible to map people and performance in the same way that we map sales data or business growth, but we have to approach it from a slightly different angle. And, of course, we need sophisticated modern tools for enhanced people data.

We believe our patent pending AQ assessment is one such people data platform that allows businesses to get a metric and scientific measure of their people and where they are: whether they're struggling with adapting to a new role, whether their resilience is being eroded by an increased workload, or whether they feel their current environment and level of work stress is having an adverse effect on their ability to perform. Our AQ assessments can offer oversight of an entire organisation, a team, and of course down to the individual level.

As a coach, this metrical element gives you concrete data you can work with. You can assess your clients, measuring where they are now, then check in 6 months on to see whether their scores have changed as a result of

---

13

<http://preview.thenewsmarket.com/Previews/PWC/DocumentAssets/330782.pdf>

interventions and new practices. Whilst we're firm believers that no AQ profile is inherently bad or good (in certain very specific professions a resistance to change can even be a good thing), having the numerical data will empower you to help your client work towards their goals and know for certain when they have achieved them.

## PRINCIPLE 7: MASTER INTERSECTION

**A**s we have said before, our unique tool, developed with a unique AI conversational interface, does not invalidate any other tool, nor does the existence of AQ render other helpful metrics such as IQ, EQ, or personality redundant! On the contrary, it can enhance and give greater meaning, and tie them together with a more holistic approach. Indeed, covering the rarely considered aspect in people data assessments, of context, through measuring the environmental factors of the individual and team.

Many of our coaches use our AQme assessment in combination with other assessments and tools. Our rallying cry to coaches and consultants around the world is not to tear any edifices down, but rather to raise new ones up, integrate and achieve greater harmony and purpose.

Of course, we have also discussed the importance of Unlearning, but in one sense we cannot dictate to you what needs to be Unlearned, because it will be different for every

person, every context, every requirement. Let's look at a radical example of what I mean...

Blacksmithing. You would think this skillset had become redundant in the industrial age, let alone the digital one. Yet, even today, there is a need for people who can hand-craft objects of beauty via traditional methods. Type "blacksmith" into Etsy and you will find a surprising number of them, whether they are making ornamental swords, sculptures, jewellery, broaches, paperweights, bookends, the list goes on forever.

There are two things to consider here. Firstly, rather than blacksmithing serving a basic societal function it has now become boutique—we have machines and engineers who can craft basic machine parts, so we no longer need this level of craftsmanship to fulfil this function. The market for blacksmithing has changed. Rather than one blacksmith being responsible for turning out all the basic metal components required for their little hamlet to function, from divots to chainmail, blacksmiths now are making a smaller number of more ambitious (and artistic) projects.

And secondly, the ways those skills are promoted—using sites such as Etsy and social media platforms such as TikTok—has changed dramatically in the thousands of years the human race has been shaping metal. Indeed, a large portion of the revenue these blacksmiths make will be from advertising on YouTube or sponsorship from relevant brands; in other words, from the entertainment factor.

The same skills—ones that have been passed down for thousands and thousands of years—but a radically different approach to earning an income from those skills!

So, when we talk about Unlearning, it may not be that we have to let go of the skills we're attached to, it might be instead the way those skills are promoted, marketed, and monetized change.

In fact, this is perhaps an even more pertinent form of adaptability, especially in the context of our shifting industries and environment. And sometimes, rather than Unlearning something entirely, it is by combining an old skillset with something new that we make breakthroughs.

Here is an example. One industry that has seen radical change over the last two decades is publishing. Would it surprise you to learn that now the majority of top-earning authors are self-published? You may be flabbergasted by that statistic; I was when I learned of it. The indie authors have performed a quiet little revolution while many were totally oblivious.

There are a number of reasons for this shift, but many of them are technological and environmental in nature. Increasing financial pressures are driving publishers to offer writers less and less money (harsher and harsher contracts). Meanwhile, self-publishing technology gets better every year, putting the power of the big publisher in the hands of



the independent author.

However, this alone might not have been enough to tip the balance. The key difference is in the power of social media advertising and savvy use of algorithms. With these two powers on the side of the indie author (albeit, one who is prepared to learn these new skills and embrace the technological world we live in) who needs an old-school print distribution network? Authors can reach their readers directly and cut out the two middle-people of a literary agent and a publisher, who would normally both be taking a slice out of their profits.

A strange side-benefit of all of this is that it's also better for the environment, because print-on-demand means no stock-wastage.

This is a basic example, and in other fields, technology is going to enact far, far more radical change. But you can see how a traditional business model is being utterly subverted by the intersection of old and new. What's great is that this vital and important skill has not been lost just because the industry has changed. On the contrary, the number of readers is actually going up every year, even in our age of Netflix and streaming; authors are simply finding new ways to promote, market, and monetise their talents. They have Unlearned the traditional mode of publishing and sought a new path, but the fundamental skills of storytelling (the bit that the reader cares about) remain the same.

## Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?

So, we've seen the importance of intersection, but how do we master it? A novelist and friend of mine shared, "I strongly believe that all great books are not born out of one great idea but two". One great idea isn't quite enough on its own to tell a great story. You need a second element.

He went on to explain the way these two ideas interacted and shaped one another would create something new and interesting. The example he gave was Blade Runner (or to give the title of the original Philip K. Dick novel: Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep). Ostensibly, it's a detective story. A crime has been committed and our detective, Deckard, has to find the killer and bring him to justice. Only, it's not just a detective story. It's also a story about AI, and consciousness, and empathy, and what it means to be human. These two seemingly disparate elements (a very logical, left-brain element of the detective case, and a very imaginative right-brain element of a philosophical exploration) form a tension that creates something new, something ground-breaking.

This principle also applies to the way we work with coaching clients, the way we structure our business, the way we move forward into the future. One great idea, or great tool, even if it's the best tool in the world, is not likely to carry us the distance. We need longitude and latitude to pinpoint where we are on the map. The intersection is where we discover surprising revelations and also carve out

our special niche.

By introducing AQ into your practice, but combining it with existing knowledge and expertise, you can perform the alchemical fusion that creates a ground-breaking masterpiece.

In what ways can AQ, and all you've learned about it so far, synergise, and multiply with your existing offerings?

**This might be considered on a number of levels.**

1. Do you currently map your clients' journeys? If so, how might a regular AQ assessment augment this process if it was integrated with the mapping?

2. What tools do you currently use with your clients? DISC, Predictive Index, EQ, Myers Briggs? Strengthsfinder? Which of them synergise with AQ? And, to put this in a more fun way: what points of overlap interest you? Are you fascinated by the role of motivation, or EQ in adaption, or how the Big 5 correlate with AQ Character? You may not have all the answers at this point, but consider what evokes your curiosity, as it may lead you to surprising revelations and delightful opportunities.

3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of your business model (time to dust off the S.W.O.T. analysis!). It's likely one weakness will be the limits of your time—you can only

see so many clients in a day. How would a digital coaching app, and AI-powered AQ insights, change that and create scalability for you? Growth from collaboration opportunities with other values and mindset aligned coaches? What would you achieve if there were no limits on the number of clients you could service?

4. How do you currently measure progress with a client? Do you use questionnaires, or do you take their testimony as an accurate measure? How would introducing a numerical metric into your coaching practice change things? Would it give you more visibility and actionable points? Would it also give you positive data points with which to measure and improve the success-rate of your coaching? For example, “98% of my clients were able to improve their adaptability, their hope, and reduce stress after completing my 6-week ‘thrive program’.”

5. Consider what your most commonly asked questions are. What do clients ask you over and over again? Do the questions have a relationship with AQ and the “three master dimensions” of: Ability, Character, and Environment? How might this knowledge empower you to provide answers to these questions? How might using this tripartite model give your client a framework for understanding their challenges?

6. Are you running leadership workshops and training programs? How might you integrate a program of

development around adaptive behaviours? To unlock an ambidextrous organisation? That can simultaneously exploit the core, and explore the radical innovations of tomorrow? To ensure sustainability and growth.

These are just a few ways in which you can explore the intersections between your existing practice and AQ. Whilst we cannot provide all the answers, deepening your understanding of AQ can only lead to new frontiers and possibilities.

## **The Voice Of One Crying In The Desert**

This phrase, “The voice of one crying in the desert”, may be familiar to you. It occurs twice in the Bible, but the particularly relevant instance is the second time, where it is used in the Gospel of St. John by John The Baptist.

John The Baptist is asked by the Pharisees—the religious authority of their time—who he is, and these words are his startling reply: I am the voice of one crying in the desert. He is quoting scripture, the Book of Isaiah (which is the first time the phrase is used). However, the words are particularly apt and relevant to him personally, because John The Baptist did indeed live in the wilderness or desert, an outcast from society.

However, John was no madman: he knew the truth of what was about to happen. He could see the coming of an

impossible and incredible future, a future predicated on a radical idea: that all human beings were equal. Thus, to be “the voice of one crying in the desert” is to be someone who is so ahead of the curve that society has not quite accepted it or caught up yet.

This book is my invitation to you to become another voice calling the desert. Because fairly soon, it’s not going to be one voice, or even a few voices, but an earth-shaking choir.

With all our talk of metrics, it’s important to note AQ is not a ranking system, where we value more highly adaptive people over less adaptive. It is a measure that provides self-insight and allows us to determine how we might improve ourselves and develop our adaptability muscles. Our purpose at AQai is: **To inspire & empower every human with the skills to adapt and thrive. Ensuring no-one is left behind in the fastest period of change in history.** That means helping people get to the next stage of their adaptability journey, wherever they might be.

**But it also means not leaving *yourself* behind.**

You owe it to yourself—to invest in your skills, to curate your teams, to become your best Self. And you owe it to everyone around you who will benefit from you becoming the best version of you: especially your clients. We are able to serve not only more people but more powerfully when we are able to rise up. Doing so, we start to have a positive

impact on those around us, and the ripples of this can travel surprisingly far indeed.

Communities are unquestionably powerful. In fact, it is often small groups of people, tight-knit communities, that have changed the world, rather than large organisations or governments. As coaches, we must harness this tremendous power for good.

One phrase that has been repeated frequently on the news of late is Mass Hysteria. This is the psychological phenomenon where the fear response becomes so tangible it can pass—like a viral infection—from person to person, so that eventually a person who has no relationship with the perceived threat still experiences the same level of terror. We know this phenomenon is real because we've seen it playing out all around us—especially in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic and now with the looming uncertainty of expanded military conflict in the East. But what many people do not consider is that this process can be reverse-engineered. With the power of Communities, by becoming our best selves and setting an example, we can create Positive Hysteria.

**It's time to start the movement towards positive change.**

## The Coach As Guide

It should be clear from reading this book just how important we consider coaches to be. Not only that, but the data and research speaks for itself: coaches make a huge difference on every level—individual, team, and organisational. However, I want to take a moment to consider what a coach really is (if that's not too philosophical a tangent!).

It's my belief that coaches are, like John The Baptist, the prophets, spiritual guides, and healers of our time. This might sound a little bit New Age, but there's a large degree of truth in it.

The role of a spiritual guide, such as the shamanistic guides of the Amazon who used Ayahuasca to enter visionary dream-states, was to shepherd their students through difficult times and experiences, to nurture their talents, and to help them fully realise their potential.

The means and mechanisms and language may have changed, but the fundamental role has not.

I think there is a reason that whilst so many professions are becoming more and more regulated, coaches have—thus far—been left well alone. Coaches think radically, they try new things, and they understand the secrets of the human soul or Self, secrets that are sometimes painful to look at or dwell upon, but which—when grasped—can lead to healing



and fulfilment.

John The Baptist was a teacher. He didn't just dunk people in water and bless them! He taught his students about this new and radical philosophy, which gave them hope in a time of great uncertainty and exploitation.

Likewise, we have the power, as coaches, to introduce people to a radical new idea, the idea that we can all thrive in the most significant and rapid period of change in human history.

## SUCCESS, IMPACT AND A NEW PARADIGM

As inspiring as it might be to think of ourselves as mystics, it can also be daunting to measure ourselves against those standards. Not only this, but it can be hard to reconcile the experience of people living in such a different time with our own experience. Therefore I would like to share a story of two of our amazing AQ coaches, **Nancy Watt**, and **Rebecca Sutherns**, who have supercharged her coaching practice with AQ.



**600%**  
ROI within  
24 months

**COACH PROFILE:**

**Name:** Nancy Watt

**Role:** President of NANCY WATT COMMUNICATIONS

**Location:** Toronto, Canada

**Experience:** 6 years as a leader in Improv, Training and Communications

**Sector Focus:** Technology, Education, Engineering, Healthcare, and Banking

**Certification Level:** AQ Level 1 Foundation, AQ Level 2 Professional & Certified L1 Delivery Partner.

In early 2020 Nancy lost 90% of her revenue. 2020 was to have been her year - jobs were confirmed and travel secured in nine cities across four different countries. Then, COVID shut it down and she was at a standstill. After the initial shock and a much needed trip to her cottage, Nancy began a radical transformation of herself and her business. Realizing a need to learn about adaptability and making a

decision to embrace the new opportunities the pandemic offered she found AQai, and committed to embracing change. ***“Life isn’t what happens to you, it’s what happens for you”***, she says. “Not to sound too much like a fridge magnet, but it’s true!”

After completing her AQ level 1 foundation in the summer of 2020, Nancy quickly started sharing the science and power of adaptability with many of her clients. Using a ‘pracademic’ style, her applied improv workshops delivered experiential learning of evidence-based social science and harnessed humor. She quickly landed work with Microsoft and delivered a keynote and series of three workshops. Next came the Government of Canada, introducing AQ at a significant off-site retreat with a large departmental leadership team. Then, after completing her AQ level 2 professional certification she landed a year-long contract with GEI Consultants with their diversity and inclusion initiatives. She believes there is tremendous opportunity to weave AQ with diversity & inclusion work since many organizations need to develop a better environment and proces of Unlearning.

### **Leveraging Adaptability:**

- Delivered multiple keynotes, presentations and workshops for leading organizations
- Partnered with several members of the AQai community to deliver bigger projects

- Nancy is also licensed to deliver AQ level 1 foundation certification, running cohorts in partnership with Competitive Edge

### **Results & Impact:**

The decision to focus on adaptability and weave this into her propositions and existing deliverables has transformed her business. The result is her best year to date.

The largest project Nancy has for adaptability is with HAVI, the global supply chain and logistics company. AQai introduced Nancy to HAVI as the lead coach and consultant taking HAVI leaders through an AQai adaptability accelerator as a critical part of the Learning and Development initiative. This demanded a high volume of 1-2-1 debriefs, workshops and developing learning content.

- Significant revenue growth
- Won new business
- Gained deeper projects with existing clients
- Created new propositions
- Ability to do more interesting and rewarding work

Her experience really reflects not just the value of AQ but also its demand. **Large organisations are actively looking for people who are able to coach their people on adaptability.**



To go deeper, I asked her a little bit more about how she works with individual.

"I love the debrief. They take on average about one hour. They are sent their assessment, then they're sent my calendar after they do the assessment. We find a mutually convenient time. We block out an hour and I get their report. We do the one-hour and also do a follow up email and continue the conversation. AQ is just rife with data and information."

Nancy also spoke about her learning points exploring AQ:

**"One of the things that people appreciate with the AQ assessment that differentiates us from you know, PI or Strengthfinders is the emphasis on environment** deeply affecting an individual or teams or organisations ability to adapt. We really sort of drop anchor in the conversation

of the environment. And I think the feedback and the learnings to the organisation as a result of some of those conversations will be beneficial and will continue to have real impact for the organisation.”

Finally, I asked her what tips she would give other coaches to win meaningful engagements.

**“Learn about the client, understand where the pain points are, and understand enough about the social science of the components so that that first initial few conversations can be fruitful. That is coming in as someone who understands their issues.”**

## **Nancy Watt Bio Profile:**

Using a ‘Pracademic’ approach, Nancy Watt elucidates evidence-based research in an engaging and entertaining way using the tools and techniques of improv honed from her days at The Second City Conservatory in Toronto. This form of experiential learning has been used in diverse settings with a wide swath of clients from marginalized populations to the judiciary, medical school faculty and law societies.

In order to capture effective experiential learning, she builds a camaraderie-filled ensemble where the participants learn while laughing.

Rated in the top five Leadership Workshops at Microsoft’s global conference for the last four years, NITA’s Communication Specialist and regular at corporate team

building events, Nancy Watt delivers powerfully creative and memorable sessions. Her dynamic workshops on communication, leadership and collaboration directly impacts any organization that needs to deal with unpredictability, build mental agility and foster innovative thinking.

Her workshops have been delivered to Engineering and Science departments at Harvard University, Princeton, MIT, Rutgers, New Jersey Institute of Technology, University of Toronto, University of Waterloo, and McMaster University.

Nancy is busy in the business, healthcare, and education sectors. Her work is referenced in academic papers for pedagogical experiential learning.

She's from Second City's Improv Conservatory and Sketch Writing Programs in Toronto and Chicago. She has a B.A in Psychology, Certificate in Applied Positive Psychology, is a Certified Improv Practitioner, Diversity and Inclusion Executive Program from Cornell University, and EQ-i Emotional Intelligence Certified.

Nancy is writing **H.A.P.P.I.E.**, How to Apply Positive Psychology Improv Exercises.

## **COACH PROFILE:**

**Name:** Rebecca Sutherns, PhD CPF

**Role:** CEO, Sage Solutions

**Location:** Ontario, Canada



**Experience:** 25 years Strategic facilitation with the community sector

**Certification Level:** AQ Level 1 Foundation, AQ Level 2 Professional

### **What attracted you to become AQ certified in the beginning?**

My practice focuses on nimbleness -- in facilitation, in strategy, in mindset. So having a way to measure adaptability was a very aligned and attractive addition to my menu of offerings.



**What was the problem you were facing, or the opportunity you were trying to capture, by becoming AQai certified?**

Becoming certified has given me a reliable and valid measurement tool that can serve as a baseline for improvement with my clients. It's also given me a network of new valued colleagues, which was a bonus!

**Leveraging Adaptability:**

Rebecca is engaged AQ with over a dozen clients. With two programs within a regional municipality who are both encouraging wider innovation through their work. As organizations they are specifically promoting adaptability and experiencing the need for it. The challenge they are seeking to solve is rooted in two different cultures newly relocated within a single department who need to leverage each other's strengths and work well together. AQai gave them shared vocabulary to discuss their preferred pathways toward improved adaptability.

**Results & Impact:**

- Revenue growth
- Expanded connections and peers to collaborate with
- Expanded your knowledge
- Gained deeper projects with existing clients
- Created new propositions
- Increased personal confidence

- Ability to do more interesting and rewarding work

**In your opinion what has been the best/biggest part of your return on the investment?**

There has been a credibility boost to having a tool that accompanies my talks

**Rebecca Sutherns Bio Profile:**

A trusted advisor, navigator, strategy maker and Certified Professional Facilitator who is interested in increasing personal and collective adaptability. Rebecca "untangles knots and connects dots." She asks great questions and designs engaging processes to help groups collaborate well and reach their strategic objectives. Rebecca has over 25 years' experience with diverse initiatives across Canada and internationally. She adds value as an analytical thinker, insightful coach and consensus builder. You can expect Rebecca to deliver alignment, strategic clarity, effective collaboration and time well spent.

Excited to be one of the few professionally certified Adaptability Quotient coaches globally. This new work in adaptability aligns well with her books on adaptive strategic planning and nimble facilitation. Also delighted to launch a new collaborative leadership development program called **ELASTIC** in 2022.

A divergent thinker who helps people converge around what matters to them. Helping purpose-driven leaders align what's important to them with what they actually do.

**Skills:**

- Facilitation design and execution
- Strategic planning
- Group and individual coaching, particularly with Executive Directors
- Stakeholder engagement
- Mediation and conflict management
- Keynote speaking
- Training design

## Conclusion

The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. AQ is no ordinary topic and we are only beginning to uncover just how vast it is. This is an all-too-brief glimpse into the science and principles of AQ. In reality, each sub-dimension of AQ could be a life's work to understand and improve. Angela Duckworth's book entitled *Grit* is a testament to that fact! This means it can be daunting to know where to start.

The temptation, having done an AQme assessment, is to dive immediately into our weakest sub-dimension (for example, perhaps we have low Resilience) and then frantically begin trying to improve it. However, this is a reaction, not a response!

I personally recommend starting with the three master dimensions: AQ-Ability, AQ-Character, and AQ-Environment. If we understand how these "three inputs" interrelate, then we can leverage the best results for ourselves and for our clients.

It is my firm belief that in harnessing AQ, we can unlock our true potential, as individuals and as a species.

**Ready to leverage your clients' adaptability  
(and your own)?**

**Find out more about our AQ Foundation  
Certification Program and how it could  
transform your business.**



# WELCOME TO THE WORLD'S ONLY AQ® CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS

AQai provides adaptability certification training for coaches, consultants, and business leaders to help our world navigate and thrive through change.

## **Inside the AQ Level : 1 Foundation Certification**

The first journey inside the mission. elevation and are committed to mutual gains. Only entering into a relationship if it is a win-win where all parties grow. Expanding the ambition and looking for enterprising and new ways to collaborate in all areas of life.



### **100% Online**

The world's fastest-growing and number one Adaptability Certification Course. Learn highly practical and transferable skills from the world of Adaptability. Take your work to the next level. Fully Accredited. Industry Validated.

### **10% One-to-One**

Personal onboarding and business integration sessions. Working with our partner success team, get set up on our platform for impact and growth.

### **65% Self Paced**

Access our online learning platform with 45 exclusive lessons. Learn at your own pace with on-demand, digital modules, quizzes, videos, course materials & workbook.

### **25% Live Session**

Live sessions provide a brilliant space for peer group learning & networking.

### **During the AQ Level 1: Foundation course you'll discover**

Three separate bite size modules all contributing to your foundation accreditation.

### **Module 1 : Introduction**

What is Adaptability

What is our story?

What is the definition AQ?

How do we measure it and why?

### **Why Adaptability?**

Dive deeper into different concepts and the reason why Adaptability has become the Number 1 Demand Skill Employees want in 2021, according to Forbes.

### **The AQAI model**

Learn about our Adaptability framework in detail, including the fundamentals of the research behind it.

## **Module 2 : Application & Model**

### **What are AQ Sub Dimensions**

Our scientific and patent-pending model of AQ is made up of three dimensions - Ability, Character, and Environment, and 17 sub-dimensions. You'll be guided into the definition and understanding of each one of them.

### **AI Predictive Optimisation**

Find out how our two main index components are measured - change readiness index and reskill index.

## **Module 3 : AQ Environment**

### **Assessment and feedback practice**

We will look at tips for 'best practice' feedback sessions and example processes you can follow.

### **How to apply an AQ Assessment**

Dive into video practices of how the assessment has been used by looking at a real-life examples.

### **Bringing your knowledge to life**

Practice interpreting the AQme report by providing feedback to your cohort peers.



# *Find out more about our AQ Foundation Certification Program and how it could transform your business.*

[www.AQai.io](http://www.AQai.io)

**AQai**™ Organizations Coaches & Consultants

Company Support Platform login →

Coaches & Consultants

Organizations

Community

Partners

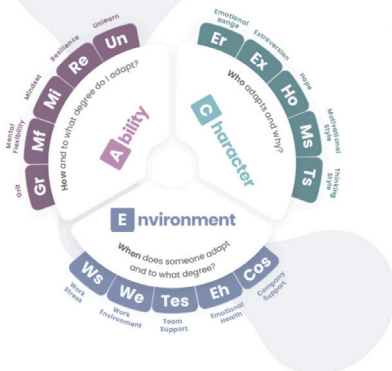
Our platform empowers you to

## Win More Business & Do More Interesting Work

Providing science-backed tools, assessments, adaptability insights, certifications, and training for you to help solve your clients' biggest people challenges. Enabling individuals and teams to adapt quickly in our ever-changing world of work.

How AQ Works For Coaches →

## Help your clients make data-driven people decisions for better results



Transforming the way people and organisations adapt to change

100+

Built from leading scientific publications

500k

Data points collected & analysed

15

Sub dimensions across 3 master dimensions

Learn more about our AQ® Model →

## Benefits for you...



### Goal Setting & Benchmarking

Interactive and engaging conversational assessment experience delivers personalized dashboard reports to every user. Covering 15 dimensions of adaptability.



### Team Performance Reporting

Highly customizable and filterable data reporting, highlighting team insights to increase efficiency and targeted development plans.



### Actionable Insights & tools

Global benchmark data, and actionable development activities directly inside the platform.



### Global community & comprehensive support

Engage with our partner success team who can help you select from our network of over 150 AQC Certified™ practitioners from over 20 countries.



### Super Easy On-Boarding

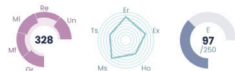
Your platform access and setup is supported by our global team of practitioners, together with simple video walkthroughs and resources.



### Goal Setting & Benchmarking

Interactive and engaging conversational assessment experience delivers personalized dashboard reports to every user. Covering 15 dimensions of adaptability.

**Powerful insight and diagnostic tools to help you create peak performance for organizations & teams**





~

## About the Author

Ross Thornley is an exponential leader, futurist, and adaptability pioneer. Living in the UK with his wife Karen, their two dogs, bee hive and rescue chickens, he balances the rapid technological world with a peaceful life in the New Forest, where they grow dozens of fruit and vegetables for their simple vegan lifestyle.

*"Coach, Mentor, Entrepreneur and 'AQ' Pioneer. Author of Moonshot Innovation & AQ Decoded. Ross's work is opening up new frontiers in workplace education. Leveraging conversational AI and predictive analytics his company's platform enables people, teams and organizations to successfully navigate accelerating change. His ability to contextualize diverse and complex subjects, inspire and engage audiences makes him a highly sought after international speaker."* **WALL STREET JOURNAL.**

At AQai, he is co-founder, CEO and master trainer, in flow when building the army of highly engaged and committed pioneers. Training over 170 coaches in the science and power of human adaptability in the first year of the program.

A passionate and prolific creator and educator. Amassing over 10,000 hours of workshop design, facilitation and keynotes over two decades. A serial-entrepreneur launching and growing multiple businesses across; innovation, branding, training and technology.

*AQai* (2018) transforming the way people and organisations adapt to change. Launching the first AQ (Adaptability Quotient) assessment and personalised digital coaching platform leveraging AI.

An eternal optimist, champion of abundance, and international speaker, he is the founder of 6 companies, including *RT Brand Communications* (2000, exit 2017), a globally trusted strategic branding agency that has worked with UN Volunteers, Thomson Reuters, Sony and numerous other blue chip clients; *Mug For Life*® (2009) a UK designed and manufactured reusable coffee cup, helping companies like HSBC, Amex, NHS, Science Museum and dozens of universities to achieve more sustainable waste policies by reduce single use disposable coffee cups and planting trees through their UK program; *Leaps*® *Innovation* (2017), a rapid, proven approach to moonshot innovation, idea generation and business challenges that empowers organisations to

validate effective strategies, campaigns, new proposition development and solutions within days.

He's been a Strategic Coach® FreeZone Frontiers™ and 10X Member, Abundance A360 Member, and Singularity University Executive Program Graduate. Always excited by ambition, collaboration, and new models of thinking. Looking to connect ambitious people and solutions with communities, through creativity, intelligence and innovation.

## **His MTP is**

**to unite, inspire and accelerate the best of all humanity.**

[www.AQai.io](http://www.AQai.io)

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/rossthornley/>

[ross@AQai.io](mailto:ross@AQai.io)





**Notes:**

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



# THE COACH'S ULTIMATE GUIDE TO LEVERAGING ADAPTABILITY

According to a 2020 World Economic Forum report and 2021 research by McKinsey and Company, owing to the pandemic's acceleration of automation:

- By 2025, 85 million jobs will be lost.
- By 2025, 97 million new jobs will be generated.
- 40% of today's employment will no longer exist in ten years.
- 375 million individuals may need to change jobs and obtain new skills.

We're seeing more change in ten years than we saw in the last one-hundred, and we're swiftly approaching the "singularity".

To cope with rapid change, we need to develop our ability to not only **cope** with change but **thrive** with change. This is what developing our adaptability muscles can offer. And the great news is, all of us are adaptable inherently, it's just that some have built their skills and curated their environment to harness this resource more than others.

**The coach's ultimate guide to leveraging adaptability** shows us how we need to radically rethink and embrace uncertainty without fear. How we can go beyond our knowledge of today, and take the deliberate steps to unlearning and unlock a new paradigm of opportunity.

Adaptability is the key to swimming in the waters of life and change. Over the course of this ultimate guide you will learn seven powerful principles that will allow you to begin your journey to harness your own adaptability and drive incredible client value. **These seven principles are:**

1. **Recognise The Environment**
2. **Learn How, Why, & When People Adapt**
3. **Ride The Unpredictable**
4. **Embrace Continual Learning**
5. **Build Adaptability Into Your Everyday**
6. **Map Your Client Journeys**
7. **Master Intersection**



Ross's work is opening up new frontiers in workplace education... His ability to contextualize diverse and complex subjects, inspire and engage audiences makes him a highly sought after international speaker."

**WALL STREET JOURNAL.**

£6.99 \$8.99

COACHING, CONSULTING & BUSINESS

**AQai.**

[www.AQai.io](http://www.AQai.io)