

INTEGRATING LEARNING INTO FUTURE ACTION:

How the ICF's Updated 2025 Core Competencies Advocate a Focus on Transitions

The International Coaching Federation's (ICF) recently refined Core Competencies (September 2025) have introduced a powerful emphasis on *“Partners with the client to integrate learning and sustain progress throughout the coaching engagement...”* (8.07). This is not just a technical refinement; it signals a recognition that coaching is not a neat, linear process and that learning needs action for it to be fully utilised.

Life, leadership, and teams do not move in straight lines nor do they work in isolation. We call this **transition planning** which is needed which includes proactivity on considering options and operationalising plans, coping with **setbacks and dependencies**, as well as addressing ways to sustain momentum during change. Transition planning is part of the CoachME Model as explained below.

What excites us at CoachME / BECKETT MCINROY is how closely this aligns with the foundations of the CoachME Model, created over 15 years ago, which has always placed **Transition Planning** as important. <https://beckett-mcinroy.com/bmc-coachme-model/?srsId=AfmBOorjA9Qwiuw4dMHyjHyMIF8VHEKwv0LSDExNX8KGWHbtldPiNBjd>

From the beginning, we found that coaching conversations should not end with reflection alone. They must also embed practices, fast forwards, and pathways that enable smooth transitions into new ways of showing up. Coaching projects can also review integration of learning and consider what worked, what didn't and, well, what now in the light of that experience!

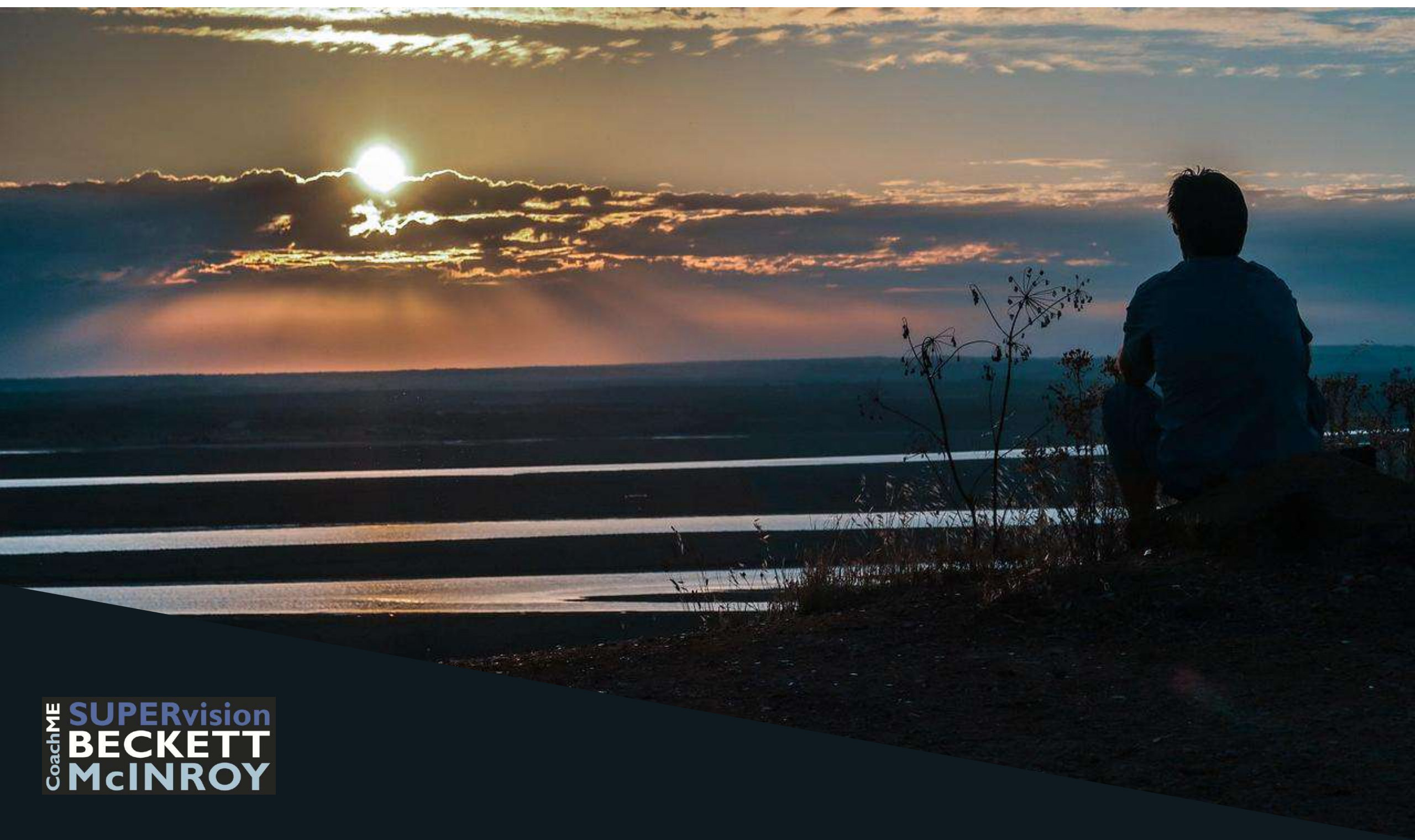
We need to prepare leaders, teams, and individuals to **anticipate setbacks, navigate dependencies, and experiment with future-oriented practices** directly in sessions. The updated ICF competencies now mirror what we have been championing for over a decade: coaching as rehearsal, exploration, and activation to enable and ignite change.

Why This Matters

By formalising the importance of integrating learning into future action, the ICF underscores that coaching must extend beyond insight into tangible shifts in behaviour, energy, and presence. This isn't about 'homework' or waiting for next time; it's about enabling the client to step into the future in the present.

At CoachME, our research across hundreds of sessions shows that when clients engage in coaching conversations around transition planning within the coaching space itself - whether through role play, somatic anchoring, systemic mapping, or existential inquiry - they are far more likely to experience sustainable change in 'business as usual'.

"The 'aha' moment is only the spark. Transition planning is the bridge that carries that spark into the fire of action."



Why Transition Planning for Integrating Learning?

Transition Planning is identified in research as of paramount importance in ensuring that change is long-term and sustained as opposed to a ‘quick fix’. As Grant (2014) emphasises, *“coaching outcomes are more likely to endure when supported by clear goal structures, accountability mechanisms, and planned transitions into ongoing practice”* (p. 148). This element of the CoachME model focuses on who or what can help the Coachee to achieve their desired results in their way and their timescale.

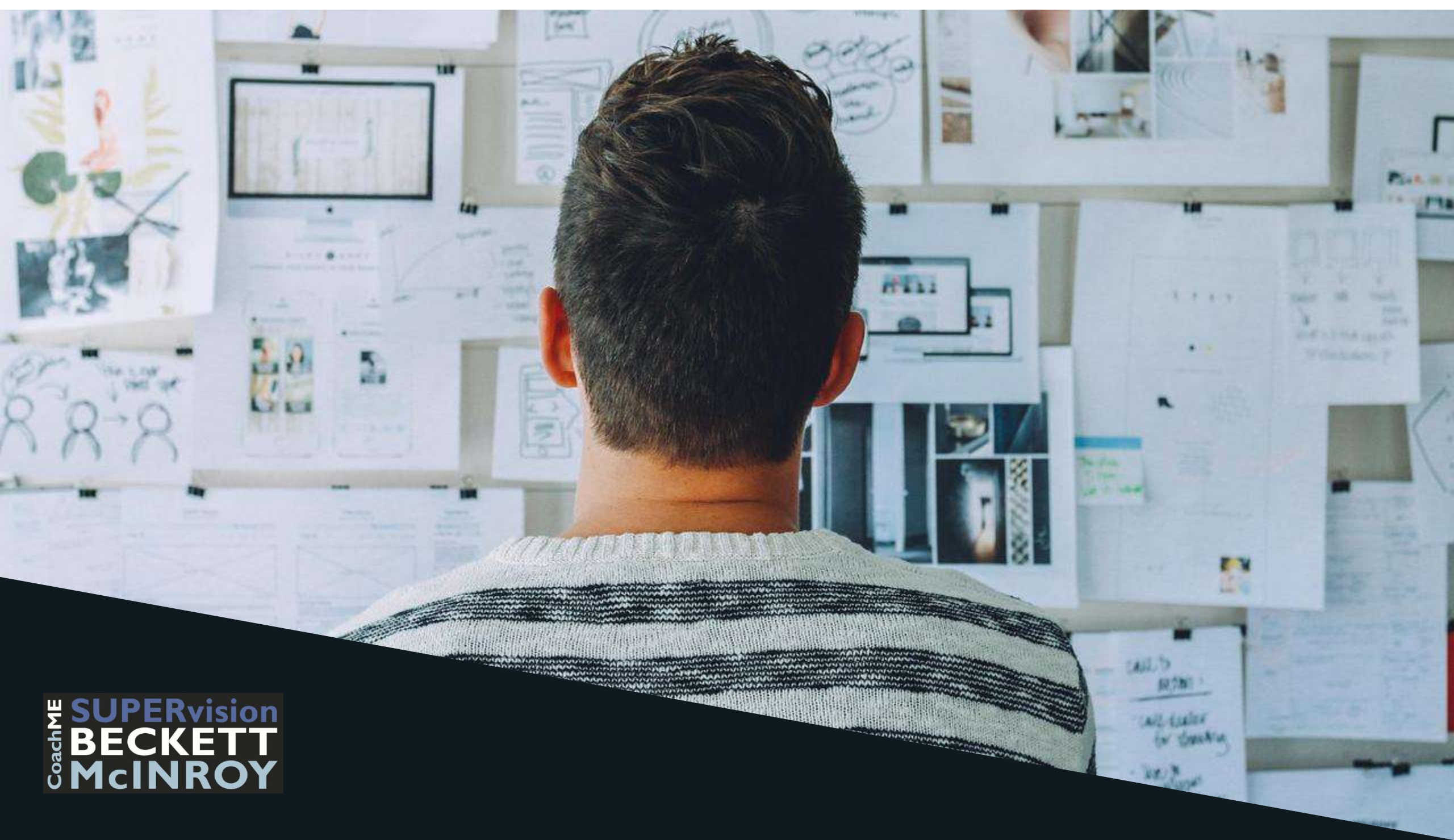
Transition Planning ensures that targets or results are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Articulated, Resonant, Reasonable, Time-bound, and Thrilling (SMART). Research by Locke and Latham (2019) underscores that goal-setting theory provides a robust framework for sustainable behaviour change: *“specific, challenging goals lead to higher performance than vague or easy goals”* (p. 104).

Transition Planning also brings in accountability measures and identifies who or what can support the Coachee around accountability. It ignites exploration of connection and helps Coachees articulate what results will look and feel like. As de Haan (2019) notes, *“coaching is at its most effective when clients feel both supported and challenged, and when they experience the process as relationally accountable”* (p. 57).

CoachME Coaching is about both the Coach and the Coachee staying fully present, being flexible, and wanting the best outcomes for Coachees. Transition Planning raises awareness and supports the generation of options as well as new perspectives, reminding the Coachee that they are not alone. Research shows that integration of coaching learning into day-to-day practice is strongly linked to ongoing reflective work and structured follow-up (Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2018).

Transition Planning is also about designing action, anticipating potential setbacks, and planning ways to tackle them so the Coachee can get back on track as smoothly and quickly as possible. Work around shadow side, resilience and energy levels are all important here. Measures of desired results need to be clear for the session, overarching goals and specific developments. It is also useful to discuss optimal situations for thriving, desired ways of being considering the impact on different stakeholders (family, colleagues etc), critical incidents that enable us to shine or trigger us and significant others who can support results in various ways, including acting as change agents and brand ambassadors in organisations which can bring in transcultural, transpersonal and other approaches. Research highlights that *“leveraging internal networks and peer accountability structures enhances transfer of learning and reduces organisational silos”* (Jones, Woods, & Guillaume, 2016, p. 250).

Transition Planning is, therefore, the framework which supports change and transformation, ensuring that coaching learning is not only insightful in the moment but embedded, lived, and sustained into the future.



Practitioner Research Insights From Our Global Team of MCCs

Our team of MCCs has been researching the lived experiences of clients engaging in transition planning. **Here are some of the ways it has shown up:**

“When my Coach helped me explore the systemic ripple effects of a decision, I suddenly realised I wasn’t just transitioning roles... That existential lens gave me the courage to move with clarity.” – Amal

“In our sessions we practised how I would literally walk into the boardroom and breathe before speaking. The somatic rehearsal anchored me. By the time I entered the C-suite, my body already knew the script.” – James

“As an HR Director, working in the energy sector, transition planning helped me to shift performance management from one-off conversations to ongoing coaching dialogues across the company. That changed the culture.” – Leila

“In our team coaching we discovered dependencies we hadn’t named before. That fast forward practice meant we navigated the actual event with ease.” – Ravi

“Career coaching gave me the space to consider difficult conversations with my manager about my next step. Because I’d tried the words on in session, I found I could show up more authentic and confident. We discussed possible outcomes from the conversation too and ways I wanted to act to them...” – Sarah

Applications Across Coaching Domains

- **Team Coaching:** Fast forward role-play of sprint retrospectives in agile teams helps reveal hidden dependencies, enabling smoother iterations.
- **Agile Coaching:** Practising “stand-ups” in session allows leaders to embody collaborative rhythms before they take them live.
- **Executive Coaching:** Leaders moving into C-suite can experiment with presence, voice, and somatic awareness in-session, reducing the friction of transition.
- **Career and Life Coaching:** Clients rehearse courageous conversations, practice networking introductions, or even map decision trees, experiencing agency before acting.
- **Health Coaching:** Transition planning supports clients to practice resilience strategies in-session, such as visualising their routines, so behaviour shifts are integrated more sustainably.

Why We Love This New Competency Focus

The ICF’s integration of future-focused partnering validates the non-linear, practice-rich approach we have embedded in CoachME from the beginning. Transition Planning is not an afterthought - it is a catalyst for transformation.

*“The moments of happiness We had the experience but missed the meaning
And approach to the meaning Restores the experience in
a different form Beyond any meaning We can assign to happiness...”*

Cats – Andrew Lloyd Webber

This is the first of five articles where we will explore how the CoachME Model is fully aligned with the ICF (EMCC and AC) Core Competencies. This model is the only one globally that has been translated into over 30 languages. It is used for 1:1, group and team coaching, is eclectic in nature blending systemic, results-focused, existential, somatic and many other modalities.

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CONTACT US

Email: office@beckett-mcinroy.com

Web: www.beckett-mcinroy.com



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