KORN FERRY

9

WAYS AI TAKES COACHING TO THE NEXT LEVEL ↗

Smarter tools, deeper impact

🕐 15 MIN

EBOOK

THE FUTURE OF COACHING:
POWERED BY AI

It's becoming the norm for organizations to use artificial intelligence (AI) for things like automating workflows, managing projects, and generating content.

But what about more inherently human processes—like coaching? Where does AI fit?

One-to-one **personalized coaching** can help employees at all levels unlock their potential. While enterprise coaching providers have made strides in democratizing access to coaching beyond senior leaders, many populations still do not receive any coaching.

What if, rather than continue to see coaching as a luxury benefit for some, we could leverage AI to bring its benefits to more employees?

What if it could be used hand in hand with traditional coaching to help it go deeper, optimizing your teams faster and more effectively?

READY TO LEARN MORE?
READ ON.

Source: Korn Ferry Workforce 2025 Survey

COACHING:
THE CURE FOR IMPOSTER SYNDROME?

Most businesses are in a state of constant transformation to spur growth and remain competitive. But the relentless nature of change can push people outside of their comfort zone.

Investing in training and development such as coaching can help leaders at all levels build the confidence and skills they need to deliver their best work.

72%

of senior executives say they experience imposter syndrome.

9 WAYS AI CAN TAKE COACHING TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Where can AI be of value in coaching? Here are nine notable ways that are quickly emerging or already making an impact.

1

ESTABLISHING A BASELINE

The first step of coaching involves a comprehensive assessment to establish a clear baseline for development. AI can help participants make better sense of their assessment report.

Traditionally, they receive a PDF report to review on their own before discussing it with their coach, explains Korn Ferry's Waseem Razzaq.

"With AI, we use what we call dynamic feedback, where an avatar guides participants through their report, helping them interpret and understand it," he says.

Dynamic feedback can create a high-quality and high-impact assessment feedback experience, which is cost-effective for large populations.

2

TAKING CARE OF THE BASICS

AI automates some of the more tedious tasks involved in coaching. Things like:

SCHEDULING SESSIONS

TAKING NOTES

TRACKING GOALS

SENDING REMINDERS

That means less time spent on humdrum admin and more time to develop and deliver training.

AI notetaking allows coaches to focus completely on the person in front of them, being present in the moment, for example. And AI can also help organizations keep the **cost of training and coaching** down by saving on admin.

3

INCREASING ACCESS TO COACHING

Basic training is part of any job, but personalized coaching was historically reserved for the **top echelon of leaders**. That's changed over the past five years and continues to evolve with growing technology adoption.

With AI-assisted coaching, the cost and effort required to deliver coaching are reduced, freeing up resources to deliver coaching to more employees.

Some aspects of coaching can be delivered asynchronously, making it accessible to employees in different geographic locations and time zones.

4

PERSONALIZING TRAINING MATERIALS

AI can personalize training and coaching materials efficiently and effectively, making them more relevant to the participant.

By leveraging AI tech, materials can be customized by region, job function, and even individual employee goals.

This can drive more engagement with the materials and deliver better results for employees looking to develop their skills and reach their career goals.

"" *The real power of AI in coaching is its ability to personalize at scale. It can tailor content to an individual's needs, making development more precise and impactful."*

Kevin Gagan,
Korn Ferry

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MAKING COACHING AN ALWAYS-ON SERVICE

Leaders at all levels are used to getting the information they need, when they need it. Coaching doesn't need to be an exception.

Conversational AI, known colloquially as chatbots, can answer employee questions, send motivational messages, and even deliver personalized coaching tips 24/7.

Some AI coaching tools can even provide real-time feedback during meetings or allow people to practice their presentation skills and speeches with immediate feedback on content, tone, and pacing.

With real-time feedback, AI can prompt employees to put their coaching insights to work in real time. "It might give me feedback that says, 'Hey, listen, you've spoken enough,' or 'You're using very repetitive words,'" says Razzaq.

It can also be preloaded with the topics you want to cover in a meeting or presentation and remind you if you forget to cover them.

6

LIGHTENING UP INFORMATION OVERLOAD

Information is power, but too much information can be overwhelming.

Coaches leverage data from performance reviews, 360 feedback, measurable business metrics, and direct observation to set goals and measure success.

AI can crunch vast amounts of data in seconds, allowing coaches to zero in on what's most critical to a participant's success, ensuring coaching is focused, relevant, and productive.

The organization as a whole also stands to benefit, says Razzaq.

"Every time a participant goes through a coaching experience, they provide a comment," he explains. "With AI, we're easily able to analyze and synthesize all of that information into a digestible format."

7

HELPING PARTICIPANTS HELP THEMSELVES

Without self-awareness and reflection, coaching is essentially a wasted opportunity. Self-reflection allows people to integrate new information and cultivate a sense of ownership of their success.

AI can offer prompts to help guide self-reflection, which can help them take a more active role in developing a framework for personal change with their coach.

DID YOU KNOW?

At Korn Ferry, we use AI and text analysis to analyze our coaching clients' satisfaction surveys to improve our service quality.

The result? A deep understanding of how different coaching styles align with personality traits and learning preferences.

11,000+
coaching clients

20,000+
comments analyzed

" *AI can help extend the benefits of the coaching outside of the session."*

Kevin Gagan,
Korn Ferry

> " *AI gives you the opportunity to practice communication. It can feel surprisingly human. You're just having a conversation, and it's recording everything about you to give you feedback afterwards.*"

Waseem Razzaq,
Korn Ferry

8

LEARNING BY DOING

While we are not yet living in **the metaverse**, AI technologies can use virtual and augmented reality to immerse participants in learning situations.

For example, AI can help clients who often find themselves in conflict situations explore and rehearse different ways to deal with challenging or even volatile situations.

AI tools can simulate realistic interactions, allowing individuals to practice and develop their conflict resolution skills in a controlled, risk-free environment.

9

ENCOURAGING BEHAVIOR CHANGE AND INCREASING ENGAGEMENT

Just as AI can be trained to answer questions, it can also be programmed to ask questions.

After a workshop or training module, for example, AI can ask people questions. These can help them reflect on insights and how they might apply to their own situations, making the training feel more relevant to their individual work situations rather than an abstract concept.

COACHING:
WANTED
OR WASTED?

Employers know that coaching works. But how do employees feel?

Our 2025 survey of 15,000 global workers reveals a clear connection between development and employee retention.

Source: Korn Ferry's 2025 Global Workforce Survey

76%

of global workers say that excellent L&D opportunities make them want to stay at an organization.

63%

say they would stay at their job if it gave them opportunities to progress and upskill quickly, even if they hated the role.

CHECK YOUR
AI BLIND SPOTS

While AI is a powerful tool, it still needs human guidance to ensure it's safe, effective, and protects employee privacy.

Here are some potential pitfalls to watch out for:

LOSS OF CONNECTION

For coaching to work, there needs to be trust, rapport, and the human touch. AI can help, but overreliance risks the loss of meaningful connection, such as a coach relying too much on AI-generated insights instead of actively listening and responding in real time. This can make coaching efforts feel transactional rather than personal, ultimately reducing engagement and effectiveness.

ETHICAL DILEMMAS

AI is a data-mining technology, so it's vital to ensure that sensitive employee data stays safe and protected from potential data breaches and privacy violations.

LOSS OF TRUST

While the personalization AI can offer can be useful, it's important to get the balance right. Some conversations should never be recorded for follow-up prompts, for example, and it's essential to keep it that way to maintain trust between the participant and the coach.

LESS-QUALIFIED COACHES

AI can help less scrupulous coaches mask a lack of skills. Organizations will need to ensure coaching credentials are carefully verified or risk wasting time and money on ineffective coaching.

ACCURACY FLAWS

AI has been known to suffer from what's known as **AI hallucinations**, where the tool generates incorrect or misleading information, often presented as factual. This is due to limitations in data, biases, or processing errors. A review process should be in place to help catch AI slip-ups.
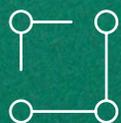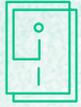
YOUR AI COACHING QUICK-START GUIDE

Ready to start experimenting with AI-assisted coaching at your organization? While every company's journey will be different, there are a few universal steps for getting started.

STEP 1

ASSESS OR ESTABLISH YOUR COMPANY'S AI POLICY

To protect your organization and your people, ensure you have a clear AI policy that covers how AI can be used, including:

THE SCENARIOS IT CAN AND CANNOT BE USED FOR

HOW ANY SENSITIVE DATA WILL BE HANDLED

HOW EMPLOYEE PRIVACY IS PROTECTED THROUGHOUT COACHING

For example, coaches may share overarching themes from coaching sessions to benefit the organization holistically, but not raw data from participants.

STEP 2

DO YOUR RESEARCH AND TRY A PILOT

Start looking at coaching and development suppliers, such as Korn Ferry, to see which ones line up with your values and deliver on what is most important to your organization. Ask lots of questions of potential partners, and make sure you review their credentials, policies, and guidelines before moving forward.

As you explore what works best for your business, consider conducting a few pilot programs. These will allow you to experiment with different methods and providers before rolling it out across the whole organization.

STEP 3

DETERMINE THE RIGHT MIX FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Some organizations might opt for AI coaching with no humans involved, and some will want to invest in 1:1 or group coaching supported by AI. Others will choose to use a mixture of both, offering automated solutions to the general employee population, and AI-supported in-person coaching to more senior leaders.

"Our coaching solutions are AI-assisted but always led by humans," says Korn Ferry's Kevin Gagan. "We believe in the primacy of the human coach/participant relationship."

STEP 4

COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR EMPLOYEES

Thoughtful and consistent communications don't just help employees understand what is happening. It helps them understand why. By illustrating how AI fits into the larger strategy and how it will help individual employees succeed, you build more trust and drive deeper engagement.

STEP 5

BE OPEN
TO CHANGE

Adopting new technology is not a one-and-done activity. The solutions that make sense today may not be the right solutions a year from now. Stay on top of employee feedback and quantitative results to ensure you're making the right investments, and then evolve as needed.

AI: WILL YOUR PEOPLE BUY IN?

TIP Organizations can build on employees' positive feelings about AI by proactively communicating how the tech will change things and how employees will be supported.
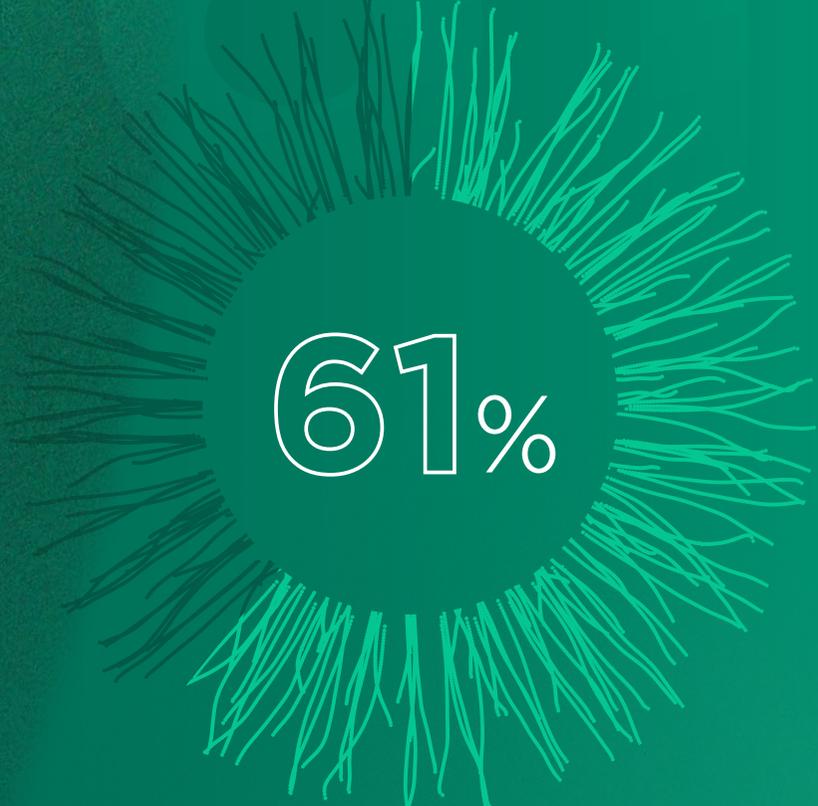
61%

of global employees say they feel excited when it comes to how AI will change the way they work.

Source: Korn Ferry's 2025 Global Workforce Survey

THE PERFECT
PARTNERSHIP

AI can't do everything—nothing can replace the power of people. That's why **82%** of the World's Most Admired Companies say <u>people are more important than technology</u> for driving growth.

Still, AI is weaving its way into almost every corner of business—including coaching—delivering real, tangible benefits along the way. It can no longer be written off or ignored.

Curious how working with a coaching partner can help accelerate change and help your organization meet its goals?

Download our guide, Invest in a Connected Coaching Partner for Greater Impact.

GET THE GUIDE

> *The thing we're most excited about is the ability of AI to surround and support both coach and participant, making that relationship and that experience even more effective and impactful."*
>
> **Kevin Gagan,**
> *Korn Ferry*

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Korn Ferry is a global organizational consulting firm. We work with our clients to design optimal organization structures, roles, and responsibilities. We help them hire the right people and advise them on how to reward and motivate their workforce while developing professionals as they navigate and advance their careers.

Business advisors.
Career makers.