

Introduction to Coaching History



by Vikki Brock, MCC

Coaching is an emerging and evolving field, complex and dynamic, integrating the substance of many fields and the innovative thinking of great pioneers. Many coaches don't understand the rich and eclectic history of coaching, seeing it wrongly as having sprung up in the 1980s or 90s. In fact its roots go much farther back and examples of those who practiced a form of coaching stretch back into antiquity. Eastern philosophers and ancient athletic coaches were among the first practitioners. In the East, the focus of physical training was martial arts, rather than athletics. In the West, images captured on the amphorae of ancient Greece provide evidence that athletic coaches have played a role in Western culture for nearly three millennia. Just like their counterparts in modern sports today, the ancient Greek coaches – former athletes themselves – helped the competitors of their day achieve personal excellence.

Against the backdrop of the success merchants (Norman Vincent Peale, Napoleon Hill, Dale Carnegie) of the 1930s, to humanistic and transpersonal psychology in the 1960s, through the Human Potential Movement of the 1970s, and into the halls of business in the 1980s – coaching evolved while defying all attempts at definition and containment.

1930s-50s *Counselors, therapists, and organizational psychologists were 'counseling' executives using practices that are similar to coaching. *Sales coaching focused on how to be a better salesperson. *Sporadic articles appeared on coaching, performance improvement, and management development.

1960s-70s *Coaching emerged in the business world when leaders' role in change was viewed from the intersection of Organizational Development and psychology. *Executive and business coaching emerged from leadership programs and assessment centers. *Seventeen articles on coaching were published in 1970s along with four books on coaching authored by managers. *Edgar Schein coined the term 'process consultation' in the late 1960s, to describe the consultants' non-directive and questioning role as groups solve their own problems. *Richard Fournies' Performance Coaching for Managers, and David Megginson's A Managers Guide to Coaching were published.

1980s *Timothy Gallwey's Inner Game presented an approach to sports adapted to business and called it "coaching." *The first companies providing individual and

business coaching services were founded in United Kingdom and United States. *Psychological consulting first begins to provide services called "executive coaching." *Sports coaches and business people identified common coaching principles across disciplines. *The first training schools were founded to deliver coach training to individuals and business in United States and Europe. *Coaching was introduced into business in German-speaking countries. *Coaching literature expanded with doctoral research and 29 academic articles. *Five books were published addressing coaching by supervisors to improve performance.

1990s *Coach specific training schools/programs grew from two to eight in 1995, to 164 in 2004. *Professional coach associations grew from 0 in 1990 to 12 in 2004. Annual coach conferences grew from 0 in 1994 to 16 in 2003. *United States consulting psychologists published three journal special issues on executive coaching. *Virtual teleclass training supported the global spread of coaching. *The first internal coaching assignments in companies were created. *Seventy-nine coaching books were published during the 1990s with 62% in 1998-1999

Early 2000s *Six peer-reviewed coaching publications began in 2001 or later in support of evidence based coaching. *Coaching psychology (identified as distinct in 2000) special interest groups were created in United Kingdom and Australia psychology organizations. *153 coaching books were published 2000 through 2004; 132 coaching articles published in business and psychological journals. *Coaching culture became a common term in business. *Coach industry publications grew from zero in 2000 to four in 2004.

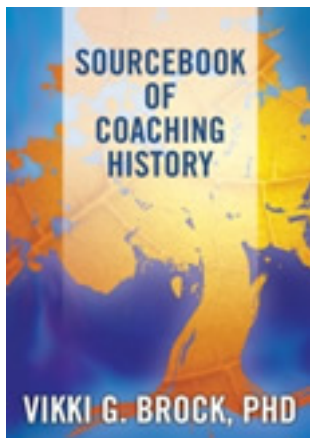
Coaching emerged during the postmodern period of the late twentieth century, born of a rapidly changing socioeconomic environment and nourished by the root disciplines of psychology, business, sports, and adult education. Psychology provided many of the essential theories, as well as a practical toolset, for the emerging discipline of coaching. Business provided the first theaters of operation, a fertile field for coaching's application, growth, and diffusion. The business sector also had established tools and theories, including those which concentrated on the individual, and those who focused on the organization. Individual coaching was practiced in the 1980s behind closed doors as a form of workplace counseling focused on personnel problems affecting the business as a whole, and was available only to executives. Coaching's movement into middle-level management offered coaching its greatest early opportunity for growth. Those who worked in organization development and management consulting, were also well positioned to expand their efforts. In the business sector, the help offered to individuals and organizations had a different focus – improving the bottom line. The results focus of business coaching emphasized metrics as a critical demonstration and justification of coaching's value.

Now, approximately 20 years later, we can benefit from the perspective we have gained in coaching's short, yet explosive history. Coaching emerged from an intersection of people, disciplines and socioeconomic factors. It wasn't just happenstance; it emerged through linkages. Many key influencers and early coaches knew each other, though they lived in different countries and worked in

different fields. Various groups said, “we were the first”, and that’s not really true. Coaching sprang simultaneously from independent sources and birthplaces, and spread through a complex series of relationships, fueled by a series of serendipitous, interdisciplinary gatherings. The key figures in those meetings, long before technological advances made such interaction much easier, connected through face-to-face conferences, workshops, and forums.

One example of the breadth of relationships was Werner Erhard and his connection to key figures in business, sports, and the emerging coaching field. In the 1970s Werner Erhard popularized human growth and development through the large group awareness training known as “est.” Many key pioneers in coaching participated in Erhard’s programs and/or were his friends. For example, Gallwey (The Inner Game of Tennis) coached Erhard in tennis; Blanchard (The One Minute Manager) was a personal friend; and Warren Bennis took est in 1979 in London and advised Werner in the 1980s. Sir John Whitmore (Coaching for Performance, 1992) brought Werner to the UK in May 1974; James Flaherty (1985 training Coaching: Evoking Excellence in Others) apprenticed to Fernando Flores (whom Erhard sponsored into the US through Amnesty International), as did Julio Olalla (founder of the Newfield Network coach training). When Thomas Leonard (founder of Coach U, ICF, CoachVille, IAC) worked as an accountant for Werner Erhard & Associates, he hired Laura Whitworth (The Coaches Training Institute and Professional Personal Coaches Association).

If this brief introduction to coaching history has interested you to dig deeper, check out the *Sourcebook of Coaching History*, published May 2012 by Vikki G. Brock. Through interviews of over 170 coaching influencers (including our very own Judy Feld), this book looks at the root disciplines, emergence, and growth of coaching globally. Read about the influence of business and its contributions to coaching. Additional resources are available at www.coachinghistory.com.



Vikki Brock brings over 20 years experience in a Fortune 100 company, and 10 years as a successful entrepreneur. As a member of the executive coaching team of The Ken Blanchard Companies, she has coached numerous leaders, sales executives from Fortune 1000 companies. In her work, she emphasizes authenticity, collaboration, and inclusion as a foundation for personal and organizational health and increased productivity. She has been credentialed since 1998 as a Master Certified Coach by the International Coach Federation and since 2002 as a Certified Executive Coach by the Worldwide Association of Business Coaches. She is a certified practitioner of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). She is an active member of the International Coach Federation. She was Chair of the Program Application Review Committee and Co-Chair of the Credentialing Committee from January 2005 thru June 2006. She enjoys leading teleclasses and workshops and has done so since 1996 for a variety of groups.