

# History of coaching

Coaching emerged during the postmodern period of the late 20th Century, born of a rapidly changing socioeconomic environment and nourished by the root disciplines of psychology, business, sports and adult education

By **VIKKI BROCK**

Coaching is an emerging and evolving field, complex and dynamic, integrating the substance of many fields and the innovative thinking of great pioneers. Many people 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 way 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.

## Workplace counselling

Coaching emerged during the postmodern period of the late 20th 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 theatres of operation – a fertile field for coaching's application, growth and diffusion. The business sector also had established tools and theories, including those that concentrated on the individual, and those who focused on the organisation.

Individual coaching was practiced in the 1980s behind closed doors as a form of workplace counselling 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 organisation development and management consulting were also well positioned to expand their efforts. In the business sector, the help offered to individuals and organisations had a different focus – improving the bottom line. The results focus of business coaching emphasised metrics as a critical demonstration and justification of coaching's value.

Now, some 20 years later, we can benefit from the perspective we have gained in coaching's short, yet explosive



## SIDE BAR INFORMATION

### 1930s-50s

- Counselors, therapists, and organizational psychologists were 'counseling' executives using practices that are similar to coaching.

### 1960s-70s

- Coaching emerged in the business world when leaders' role in change was viewed from the intersection of Organizational Development and psychology.

### 1980s

- Timothy Gallwey's Inner Game presented an approach to sports adapted to business and called it "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

- Formation of the international Coach Federation (ICF) in 1995
- 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.

### 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.

### 2010s

- Coaching emerged in the Middle East and East Africa.

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, fuelled 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 popular-

ised 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.

### The future of professional coaching

Professional coaching is growing at an accelerated speed with emergence of coaching schools and coach training programmes to address increased demand for professional coaches. There's also an increasing awareness of the value for coaching both to individuals and the businesses, and therefore more willingness by clients to pay for coaching services. As the forces of supply and demand continue to gain momentum, we can expect that coaching as a profession and career will become more respected, recognised and regulated. ☛

Email: [coach@vikkibrock.com](mailto:coach@vikkibrock.com)



## OVERALL WINNER

Are you aware of recent  
**LAW making it COMPULSORY**  
for Industries and Buildings to  
perform  
**ENERGY AUDITS**  
**ONCE IN 3 YEARS?**

For Comprehensive Energy Audits  
We are the experts in the Energy  
Consultancy field

We have conducted over 200  
Energy Audits in Kenya alone for  
Factories, Supermarkets, Hotels  
and Institutions

Reduce Your  
**BILLS**  
By up to **25%**



OFFICE: 4 th Floor, Kipro Centre, Westlands,  
Nairobi, Kenya  
Safaricom: +254 728 249 674  
Airtel: +254 736 450 649  
Telcom: +254 20 4450649  
Email: [info@leansolutions.co.ke](mailto:info@leansolutions.co.ke) Website:  
<http://www.leansolutions.co.ke>  
Follow us: [twitter@LeanEnergySlns](https://twitter.com/LeanEnergySlns)  
[facebook.com/Leanenergysolutions](https://facebook.com/Leanenergysolutions)