A Tribute To Coaching

Looking back, looking forward and identifying impacts

As choice celebrates five years of publishing “the magazine of professional coaching,” we felt it was a fitting time to explore coaching’s past, present and future. How far have we come? Where are we going? How are coaches making a difference in people’s lives? What should we be proud of in the coaching industry? What is it that we’re not looking at? What do we need to do next as a profession? We asked these questions to some of the leaders in the coaching field, and even we were surprised by some of their responses. The one thing they all agreed on: coaching is here to stay.
The Pioneers

By Vikki Brock, MBA, MCC, CEC, CMC, CCMC, PMC

Just who are the pioneers of the professional coaching field? I’m sure some names come to mind as you read this question – and the correct answer is “it depends.” If you are from the United States it may be Thomas Leonard, Julio Olalla or Laura Whitworth. If you are from the United Kingdom it may be John Whitmore or Graham Alexander. If you are from China it may be Eva Wong. I maintain that these pioneers could be called “transmitters” – those individuals who applied theories and models from the root disciplines into a practice they called coaching.

The root disciplines that influenced coaching include psychology, philosophy, business, sports and education. Therefore, there are a group of pioneers who came before the transmitters. I call them “originators” – the individuals who created the theories and models in the root disciplines that became incorporated into coaching by the transmitters.

Many of these originators were from the field of psychology, where they were viewed as rebels and pioneers, challenging the status quo. Alfred Adler, a colleague of Sigmund Freud, and Carl Jung, who broke with Freud, were early advocates of a well-balanced holistic view of the individual. Humanists Abraham Maslow, with his hierarchy of needs and self-actualization, was an early proponent of people’s potentiality, and Carl Rogers, with his client-centered therapy, focused on the client leading the process. Each of these individuals were pioneering psychological approaches that were outside the accepted practice of the day.

Other originators included motivational gurus Napoleon Hill, author of...
Think and Grow Rich; Dale Carnegie, author of How to Win Friends and Influence People and Earl Nightingale, who popularized audio motivational messages on using internal wisdom to unlock potential. Sports greats John Wooden and Red Auerbach from the 1950s were known for turning raw talent into championship teams. In the business sector, Peter Drucker focused on opportunities rather than problems and framed questions rather than providing answers. Werner Erhard reached great numbers of people through his large group awareness trainings, which emphasized self-responsibility and transformational ideas.

The transmitter pioneers took these ideas and theories to the next level, and coaching was born. What the originators and transmitters have most in common, however, is that all of these individuals were passionate about what they believed, and lived the legacy no matter what others thought of them. We are the beneficiaries of their vision and unwavering commitment.

What legacy are YOU actively living?

The “Wild West” of Coaching

By Bill Bergquist, PhD

Whenever I am asked to provide a brief description regarding the history of professional coaching or about the current status of the field I often turn to a specific metaphor – one that reveals my adolescent love for Western movies. I think of professional coaching as a “Wild West” community, attracting people looking for new frontiers, gold, or refuge from some questionable and mysterious past.

This frontier village is populated with a wide assortment of characters, coming from many different lands, observing different customs and speaking different languages. Some of the residents are “snake-oil salesmen” (and saleswomen). They are hustling a product they claim can work miracles, though this has never proven to be the case. Their ability to sell is much more important than their ability to heal.

There are other folks who are reformers. They try to set up a school, a church or a local newspaper. They despise the purveyors of easy solutions, mind-altering elixirs, life-changing techniques, and anything that hints of scintillation.

There are yet other residents who own small businesses. They were lured to this village because as small-time entrepreneurs they could live with minimal regulation, bureaucracy or other impediments to their imagination, creativity and hard work.

I would suggest that this is a fairly accurate portrait of the field of professional coaching as it existed five to seven years ago – when some would say that the field peaked as a “fad” and stood at a transition point between frontier “village” and established, respectable “town.” The “do-gooders” were trying to clean things up – setting certification criteria, producing professional journals and magazines (like choice), running training programs, setting up courses of study in universities, and identifying professional coaching as a discipline or perhaps even an intersection between several disciplines. With the maturation of this nascent discipline, some residents decided to leave town, believing that everything was getting too restrictive and the spirit of creativity and adventure had vanished. These men and women have in many instances moved on to a new fad (a new gold deposit) or at least to a new unbounded frontier.

We have also witnessed the loss of many smaller entrepreneurs. Corporations have seen the value of professional coaching and have moved in with their own quality-control standards and their own bureaucratic structures. Distinctions are drawn between personal and organizational coaching.
and several new internecine battles regarding turf have broken out. Rather than seeking out new territory, the inhabitants of our now-established town fight over the existing territory: who is allowed to do certain work and what are the requirements, prerequisites or competencies associated with each type of professional coaching strategy?

What’s next? Hard to say ... most likely the town called “coaching” is here to stay. There will be nostalgia for the good old days, as well as some justifiable concern about this town losing its diversity and creativity. But there is also a very good chance that this town will continue to grow, mature and develop, beyond being merely a fad to becoming a viable and valuable contributor to the overall economy and culture of the broader society in which it was founded and to which its residents offer valuable services.

**Overcoming Obstacles**

*By Laura Berman-Fortgang, MCC*

I was 29 and hanging out with people 10 to 15 years older. Across the conference room table, people who you would now consider pioneers and seasoned veterans of the coaching field (some quite famous) were meeting to share ideas on how to grow a solo-practice as a coach. We also talked about needing some kind of organization that put ethics and standards to this thing we called coaching.

I remember having slightly more time in the field than half the folks in the room (months) but feeling intimidated because I was so young and looked even younger. Nonetheless, I had determination to succeed. I was leaving acting (my dream) for this new career and I knew that with two to three years in the ‘real world’ (versus the acting world) I could be successful at whatever I did, regardless of how few people had ever heard of this budding field.

Working with actors for $50 a month at the time, we all dreamed of earning what Thomas Leonard charged – a whopping $250 a month in 1991. I soon realized that actors were not going to be a lucrative target market, so I joined a women’s networking group called “Women on the Fast Track.” Week after week I described my services and then one day, the founder and leader of the group hired me in front of everyone. She was going to pay for three months of coaching at $150 a month. I had tripled my fee! And over the next year, every single woman in that room became a client.

That first woman’s vote of confidence gave me the courage to pursue corporate clients, and I quickly met Thomas Leonard’s fee and then some. With the proper leveraging, one corporate client yielded another and another. A reputation grew and media coverage followed.

And that’s how it started.

Nowadays coaches complain that there is too much competition. I don’t agree. If you are good at what you do, there is little competition out there. My obstacle was no one knowing what coaching was. So I educated them, I studied, and I became really good, essentially setting a new standard. “THIS is what coaching is,” I declared. Just like a homesteader, I got to declare the territory my own.

The keys to success as a coach are still the same as they were all those years ago for me: have confidence in yourself, become the best coach you can be, carve out your territory, set a new standard for excellence, and don’t give up.

**Coaching To Change The World**

*By C.J. Hayden, MCC, CPCC*

Who are your coaching clients? This basic question about how we practice coaching can be the most critical factor in determining our impact on the world around us.

If we choose to coach anyone who can afford to pay us, the likely result is that those with the most disposable income will receive the most coaching. Is this truly the impact we would like to have on the world? On the other hand, when we decide to coach a population whose increased success creates a shift we would like to see in society, we become positive agents of change.

Over the past decade as the coaching profession has matured, coaches have begun to realize our potential impact on the planet. Instead of simply focusing on our own survival, many of us are now seeing a much larger role for coaching, and coaches, to play.

Cindy Reinhardt and Donna Zajonc saw a new way for coaches to make a dif-
Studies show a healthy trickle-down effect: the employees of a leader being coached become more coach-like themselves.

This kind of change is urgent for many reasons.

Ten years ago internal coaches were unheard of. One study in 2005 showed that around half of 55 large companies surveyed were now using internal coaches in some form, though in the main, coaches were not being certified or properly developed. The next step is to ensure that these coaches are well trained, but in a way that’s suitable to the fast-paced corporate world. As this begins to happen, I believe the ideas of coaching have the potential to be a deep force for positive change in the lives of millions, and not just for a select few at the top, but for a wider base of people everywhere.

What Are We Not Looking At?

By Ruth Ann Harnisch, CPP

What are we not looking at?” When I earned my living as a journalist, this was a mantra. Now that I am a coach and a foundation executive, that question is still vital in my work.

What are we not looking at in coaching?

Academic research. Researchers all over the world are beginning to look for and look at previously unobserved and unrecorded subjects, identifying areas of study which will become the foundation of a recognized profession. Without peer-reviewed academic research creating a believable underpinning for an accepted set of practices, it will be

Coaching As Leadership

By David Rock

When I first recognized the power of coaching back in 1996 it became clear that coaching should be made accessible to as many people as possible. I struggled for years to see a way to do this. The insight I needed came in 2001, when I realized that large organizations were the most fertile ground in which to plant the seeds of coaching. Not in the form of executive coaching for senior leaders, which though helpful, generally impacts less than 0.1 percent of people in any organization. Instead, I focused on developing lots of leaders as internal coaches. As challenging as this sounds, and it is mighty challenging at times, I firmly believe that developing internal coaches is the least difficult way to give large numbers of people access to coaching.

One company I know of wanted to provide external coaching to leaders. Yet the uptake was minimal. When they brought this in-house, they were able to develop over 100 leaders as formal coaches, who now coach hundreds of leaders each year. The coaches are part-time, and it seems to have a positive impact on their productivity. Learning to formally coach others is an excellent leadership development program.

I estimate that inside this one organization about 5,000 people each year are discovering that their boss is being coached on both business and personal issues. Studies show a healthy trickle-down effect: the employees of a leader being coached become more coach-like themselves. As people learn more about themselves, they also learn about others: self-awareness and compassion are two sides of the same coin. People being coached become more conscious and less automatic, reflecting more on the wider implications of their decisions.
impossible for the field of coaching to take its place with other recognized disciplines. I believe in this so strongly, I’m pioneering the philanthropic initiatives offering grants for academic research (www.thefoundationofcoaching.org).

What else aren’t we looking at in coaching?

Each other. We’re not looking closely enough, or often enough, or deeply enough, or long enough. I believe there’s a need for meaningful discussion, so I’m funding the Coaching Commons (www.coachingcommons.org), where coaches and interested others engage in conversations, regardless of schooling, credentials, nation, faith, or any other drawn boundary.

We’re also not looking at what coaches are giving.

When I first started meeting coaches, I couldn’t help noticing that they were, almost to a person, givers (most would give a free session to practically anybody who wanted one).

I noticed that coaches gave seemingly countless hours to volunteer organizations for their profession, like the International Association of Coaching, the International Coach Federation and so many others. The presidents of these organizations were CEOs who not only didn’t get paid, but their paying work suffered. The same could be said for every volunteering coach – you work for free and you lose time when you could be making money, all for the greater good.

And coaches were also likely to be volunteering in other ways, from planting trees to sitting with the dying. I believe the world ought to be looking at the impact these gifts are having. Coaches are changing – and in some cases, saving – lives. Coaches are helping to save the planet in many ways.

Attention should be paid. So we are launching a website to do just that: www.thegiftofcoaching.org.

What are we not looking at? It’s a good question, one we can ask ourselves, our clients, and the institutions we serve. Today’s technology allows us to share our answers and help open each other’s eyes to those things we need to see – and do – to truly celebrate coaching.

The Next Generation

By Diana Sterling

Coaching has a lineage, a history, a past. We can go back to Socrates, Jesus and Buddha, to name few. We as professional coaches stand on the shoulders of individuals who have taken a risk, used their minds to innovate and learn new things, stretched the philosophical boundaries of their age and caused movements in thinking and in action. We are grateful to these pioneers as we continue their legacy.

Coaching has a present-day voice that is ever evolving. The International Coach Federation (ICF) represents one voice of coaching, while the leaders in the human evolution movement voice another view of coaching. Trainers in organizations, coaches on the ground, public speakers and everyday heroes bring a new emerging voice of coaching in every language, in every country and in every religion. Something is afoot. We are at least 100 years away from coaching ever finding one common voice, one meaning and one purpose. We are diverse practitioners of an emerging profession.

At the last ICF conference in Long Beach, California, Sir John Whitmore spoke of the emerging and profound changes in human evolution, of which coaches play a role: “The need for profound human changes emerges not only as an ethical or religious demand, not only as a psychological demand from the pathogenic nature of our present social character, but also as a condition for sheer survival of the human race.” I believe that we as coaches have been called, summoned and developed for this purpose. To herald in the new era of...
personal and spiritual transformation is the moral obligation and skill set of professional coaches. This is my calling, my duty and my passion. Once you hear this call and act upon it, there is simply nothing else to do. Love for humanity triumphs over all.

In my work with teenagers, young adults, parents and family groups, I see the pain and suffering of wounded relationships, fear, distrust and lack of focus. I see coaching play a vital role in addressing these problems and more. Coaches truly are able to deliver solutions, ideas, partnership, action steps … and much more. Through coaching, I witness human evolution in everyday life, spirit-filled transformation in new relationships, new awareness and consciousness, and above all, love. I see new family paradigms, new loving relationships and new possibilities in the smile of a teenager who is being heard for the first time.

Coaching has a future, for there is a new generation of young people with the courage to coach others walking bravely into an industry filled with 40- and 50-year-olds. I train 20-year-old students in becoming certified coaches, alongside 65-year-old retired school teachers. I see many new coaches with 60-some years of their professional lives ahead in which to coach their own generation and the next with skills I do not choose to develop (I cannot text or blog-coach, for example). Coaching is taking shape in community organizations, in non-profits, in corporations, on television, in new books, in churches, in families and in youth centers. I will not see the zenith of coaching in my lifetime, but I saw its beginning. And I see its future.

The Future of Coaching

By Steve Mitten, MCC, CPCC

It’s been 12 years since I first heard of the new, evolving profession of “coaching,” got on the Internet, found Thomas Leonard’s website and hired him as my personal coach. I wanted to experience what it was all about. I wanted to see if coaching really could help people make important changes in their lives, careers and businesses.

In the time between then and now I got hooked, took all my training, got certified, built my practice, got involved in my local ICF chapter, joined the ICF International Board, served as its president, and attended countless conferences where I met thousands of clients, coaches, volunteers, researchers and trainers from all over the world.

I’ve seen coaching grow from very humble and tentative beginnings to a maturing, international $1.5-billion industry focused on the better development and application of human potential. This is no fad or accident. The amazing growth of coaching is an organic reaction to real and growing needs.

No one could foresee how quickly coaching would spread around the world, and looking ahead, no one can accurately predict where coaching will be in the future. However, at the request of this magazine, and because I have had the privilege of seeing so many aspects of this young profession, I dusted off the old crystal ball to conjure up a few predictions.

As I see it, in the future:

• General public awareness of, and respect for, what coaches do will increase dramatically.

• Coaching standards will continue to rise and the value of a common, independent, world-recognized credential will grow in importance.

• More training and coaching organizations will focus attention on equipping newer coaches with adequate business survival skills.

• Coaches will get much better at mar...