

# PEER BULLETIN

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Navigation Tools for the Heart, Mind, and Soul™

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## HAPPY ☆ NEW ☆ YEAR

I'm wondering if I want to stay in this career.

What are your options, Santa?

So, I was telling my reindeer how well they did carrying me from roof top to roof top...

Gee, Santa, they didn't want feedback; they wanted feedback!

Hey, Santa, you know what it's like to give, give, give all night!

Yeah, Santa, what's it like for you?

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# FROM THE SOURCEBOOK OF COACHING HISTORY

## TIDBITS ON THE EVOLUTION OF COACHING

VIKKI BROCK



(Editor's Note: Vikki Brock has graciously prepared a number of brief stories from her book: *The Sourcebook of Coaching History*. Each month during 2013-14, the *Peer Bulletin* is privileged to include one of these stories.)

Before the 1940s, organizations typically operated using mechanistic principles and bureaucratic systems. These included authority-obedience, division of labor, hierarchical supervision, formalized procedures and rules, all of which were based on the impersonality of the workforce. Remember that World War II ended during the 1940s, and as soldiers returned to civilian life, the military models of command-and-control were embraced by management, consulting, education and development. The demand for clinical psychology was also high to treat these returning soldiers.

Operations research, also known as management science, was born in the 1940s and took a scientific approach to solving management problems. At the same time an awareness of the importance of helping groups and group leaders focus on leadership processes was growing in adult education and group therapy. The 1940s saw an increase in group dynamics, which encouraged individual participation in decision-making and noted the impact of the work group on performance (Brock, 2008:355). That change in thinking was promoted by Douglas McGregor and Chris Argyris, among others. They offered a newer model of management, and one that made more sense in a world of complex tasks and a better-educated workforce. In short, employees could be trusted, they wanted to do good work, and they wanted to be treated like adults (Nevis, 1997).

The late 1940s brought the first manager-as-coach training program, which focused on establishing a

coaching culture and enhancing the manager's interpersonal skills. Executive counseling books then appeared, and [RHR International](#) counseled executives using industrial psychologists.

Coaching in business during the 1940s was performed by psychologists under the umbrella of 'developmental counseling.' RHR International, a consulting firm composed primarily by psychologists, has been providing developmental counseling, also known as executive coaching, since the late 1940s. According to Edwin Nevis, a consulting psychologist and one of the pioneers in the organization development field, RHR's service was primarily getting contracts with corporations to do ongoing counseling of their executives.

During this period in the acting field, New York-based acting teacher, Lee Strasberg (1901-1982, [Biography](#)), used the training model created by the Russian actor and director Konstantin Stanislavsky (1863-1938, [Biography](#)) to train aspiring actors such as Dustin Hoffman, Anne Bancroft, Al Pacino, and Marilyn Monroe. In Strasberg's approach experienced actors coached students in small groups to construct the 'Method', which requires an actor to draw on his or her own emotions, memories, and experiences to influence their portrayal of a character.

### References

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- Nevis, E.C. (1997). Gestalt therapy and organizational development: A historical perspective, 1930-1996. *Gestalt Review*, 1, 2, 110-130.