

History of Coaching

The term “coach” originated in the sports field in the late 1880s, and has been a well-known profession within the sporting arena for years. However, it has only been in the last 40 years or so that coaching has emerged as a distinct profession with applications to all walks of life.

1950s & 1960s

After the second great depression of the 1930s and the Second World War in the 1940s, America entered a period of sustained economic growth, coupled with relative peace and security. This gave people the space to explore other aspects of their lives apart from their daily subsistence needs.

At the same time, many famous scientists, psychologists, writers, and philosophers from Europe had crossed the Atlantic during and immediately after the war where they were able to collaborate with their American counterparts. In addition, academia and college students were being increasingly exposed to the Hindu, Taoist, and Zen philosophies of India, China, and Japan. The air was palpably bursting with fresh ideas. It was in this concoction of demand and supply that the “human potential movement” took off, especially in California in the 1960s, to explore what humans were really capable of if they lived life to the fullest.

Psychologists such as Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and Fritz Perls, singer-songwriters like Joan Baez, writers such as Aldous Huxley and George Leonard, anthropologists like Gregory Bateson, as well as experts in Daoism (Gia Fu Feng), Zen (Alan Watts), and Hinduism (Haridas Chaudhuri), explored this question in great depth and often in close collaboration. This led to a multidisciplinary synthesis, the likes of which had perhaps never been seen before.

1970s

In the 1970s, many of these ideas and principles were aggregated, codified, and made available to a much wider audience through self-awareness courses run by highly charismatic trainers. Fernando Flores, with whom Newfield Network founder Julio Olalla worked for many years, was a key architect of these courses. There was an increasing number of people who had done these self-awareness workshops but, despite understanding many of the principles on an intellectual level, they were finding it difficult to apply them practically to their daily lives in a sustainable way.

This was a problem looking for a solution. This came in 1974 when W.T. Galway, a tennis coach, wrote his famous book *The Inner Game of Tennis*. It was based on humanistic and transpersonal principles and the concept that “the opponent within is more formidable than the one outside.” According to many people, this was the first

major transition from the sports coaching model of control and teaching to what initial practitioners, such as Julio Olalla and other leading lights, developed and fine-tuned, and to what eventually became personal coaching.

1980s

Not all coaches were as talented, however. In the 1980s, there was a profusion of people calling themselves “coaches” in this rapidly developing field. However, there was no formal training or qualification of coaches. As a result, although there were many excellent coaches, many clients had substandard coaching experiences.

1990s

At the turn of the decade, the first widely respected professional coaching schools came into operation. Thomas Leonard (Coach U, Inc.), James Flaherty (New Ventures West), and Julio Olalla and Rafael Echeverria (the Newfield Group, which preceded the Newfield Network) were among the first to go about turning the “coaching industry” into the “coaching profession.” An increasing number of books started treating coaching as an independent field of study, the first of which was John Whitmore’s *Coaching for Performance* in 1992.

In 1995 Thomas Leonard formed the International Coach Federation (ICF), which provided a certification for coaches that has become the worldwide standard. This meant that clients could be assured of a high level of competence from coaches, provided the coaches were qualified. As a result of increasing professionalism, coaching found wider acceptance in the business world. Executive coaching as a discipline which blended personal coaching with organizational behavior and management studies took off.

Famous CEOs and MDs such as Jack Welch (GE), Meg Whitman (eBay), Sam Palmissano (IBM), Alan Mulally (Boeing/Ford), Mark Tercek (Goldman Sachs), and Joe Katzenbach (McKinsey) appreciated the value generated from having an executive coach. The latter part of the decade also saw the rise of superstar coaches such as Tony Robbins and Marshall Goldsmith.

2000s

Coaching is now a well-established profession in America and Europe. The number of companies employing the services of professional coaches has gone up substantially, not just for their CEOs but also for their high-potential managers. Companies regularly employ full-time internal coaches. IBM has over 60 of them. Even space exploration organizations like NASA send select employees to Newfield to become certified coaches.

2010s and Beyond

We are already seeing in certain countries a demand for certified coaches that far outstrips supply. Over the next few decades, coaching is likely to be an exciting, fulfilling, and lucrative profession for people who love contributing to others, and who are willing to invest in their own development so that they can do so effectively. These people will become the “brand ambassadors” for the coaching profession, establish themselves as the “figureheads” and “knowledge experts” of the coaching industry, and influence the evolution of the profession.

In the future, executive coaching will reach far more deeply into an organization than it does now. Already there are companies that send hundreds of their most senior executives for executive coaching. As the number of certified coaches increases, it is likely that companies will hire coaching firms to perform much larger interventions. Indeed, the day when companies do a full-scale coaching intervention is not far away. Progressive companies will build their own in-house coaching knowledge expertise by employing full-time executive coaches or by having handpicked employees trained up as ICF coaches. As a result, they can embed a coaching culture within the organization in a way that augments and complements existing structures (appraisals, bonuses, development plans, corporate learning Web sites, etc.). For large companies, the CEO is likely to have an external CEO coach as per current practice. However, there will be internal or external coaches coaching a much larger number of managers in the company, and the methods employed will be far more innovative and cost-effective. Traditional coaching will be combined with elements of peer coaching, Web-based learning, group tele-seminar coaching, etc.

What Is Ontological Coaching®?

One of the key differentiators of Newfield’s Certified Coach Training Program is that it is grounded in a rigorous and substantive theoretical framework—ontology, the study of “being.” When a leader is said to have “presence,” it is his or her “way of being” that is being referred to.

To clarify what “being” is, let us contrast the conventional paradigm of “Have-Do-Be” pushed by marketing executives all around the world with the “Be-Do-Have” paradigm that Newfield coaches use. An advertisement may show a guy riding a racy bike that impresses an attractive girl who falls for him. The message being pushed is that only if you “have” the bike (by buying it) will you be able to “do” certain things (like attracting good-looking women) and therefore “be” a certain kind of person (i.e., cool and sexy). However, our understanding is that the order is completely reversed. Bill Gates needed to “be” a risk taker in order to “do” certain things like quit college and start his own company. Only then was he able to “have” fame and fortune. It all originated with his “way of being.”

A person's way of being refers to how that person perceives the world. It determines the actions he would consider taking, which ultimately determine the results he creates.

The results we create, therefore, provide feedback on our way of being and how we observe the world. Thus, for example, if a person were working in a safe but boring job, it would indicate he perceived the world as a risky place and placed a premium on security. He would only be able to become a successful entrepreneur if he fundamentally shifted the way he saw the world—as a place primarily full of opportunities rather than threats. He would have to shift his way of being.

A person's way of being can be understood more clearly by breaking it up into three areas—the way he uses language, the mood he generates, and the way he uses his body.

Language

If a boss asks a subordinate whether he will be able to complete a project on time, there is a big difference between the answers “yes” and “I’ll try.” By being conscious of the different uses and abuses of language, we can become far more effective in creating what we want to achieve with others. The problem is that we are so used to the language we habitually use (including the internal conversations in our head) that we don't realize what we are generating. Language has long been considered an inert tool that describes reality. Yet, Newfield coaches understand that language is actually highly active and in fact generates reality, as we perceive it. Newfield coaches are highly sensitized to the various distinctions and can help their clients learn to employ language far more effectively.

Moods and Emotions

Many times we have fights with a loved one and know on some level that we should apologize or make a peace offering. However, we are unable to take that action because we are stuck in the emotion of stubbornness. Our moods and emotions also determine our “way of being” and the results we create. A person who is predominantly in the mood of anger will produce very different results from one who is predominantly in the mood of gratitude. This is an area that most basic coaching models completely miss. Newfield coaches understand the importance of practices that will help their clients learn to stay more consistently in a mood that is effective for creating what they want.

Somatics

The way a person uses his body also determines how he perceives the world. The simple act of deliberately uncrossing one's arms facilitates a more open way of being. Standing up straight can increase a person's confidence. Newfield coaches become adept at coaching people on how to shift their body so as to create shifts in their way of being. In our coach training program, we have a trainer who works exclusively on showing participants how to use their body to generate the appropriate non-verbal presence for the situation with which they are dealing.

Language, moods, and body are all coherent. A shift in one can produce shifts in the other two; hence, this creates multiple entry points into shifting a person's way of being which, as we've discussed, determines the results they create.

ICF Core Coaching Competencies

We teach our coaches the ICF core coaching competencies, which include how to build rapport and trust, how to enter into a coaching agreement, how to work with the coachee to develop coaching plans, etc. However, we begin the Newfield Certified Coach Training Program by teaching frameworks, models, and practices that effectively facilitate the process of change in the participants before they try it with others.

Beyond learning coaching as a list of "to do" steps, participants deeply explore what it means to be a human "being." Ontological coaching provides an extremely deep well of knowledge from which to draw to serve this purpose.

Research Foundations of Ontological Coaching®

Major developments in biology and philosophy in the 20th century have resulted in "ontology," or "the study of being," providing a deeply grounded view of human life. This is the Newfield basis of a rigorous, substantive, robust, and accessible theoretical framework for the development of professional coaches.

Fernando Flores

Fernando Flores was a key figure in the formation of the discipline of ontological coaching. It took shape in his multidisciplinary doctoral thesis at Berkeley, "Management and Communication in the Office of the Future." He consolidated the ideas of Humberto Maturana, Martin Heidegger, and John Searle, among others, to produce a new understanding of language and communication. This work was later taken on and made accessible by his colleague, Julio Olalla, the founder of Newfield Network.

Maturana and "Structural Determinism"

Maturana was a neuro-physiologist who demonstrated through a series of experiments that humans and other living systems were "structurally determined." This meant that it was their internal structure which determined their reaction to events rather than the events themselves. In one experiment, he surgically rotated the eye of a frog by 180 degrees. When a fly appeared in front of the left side, the frog stuck out his tongue to the right side to try to catch it. This was because the "internal wiring" of the frog was misaligned. To illustrate the principle, when you stick a key in the car ignition, the engine roars to life. However, when you stick the same key in the car door, it swings open. Exactly the same external stimulus produces completely different responses depending on the internal structure of the system being stimulated. In the same way, when someone says, "The exam is making me nervous," it would be more accurate to

say, “The way I am internally wired is making me nervous; the exam is simply activating my circuitry.”

Maturana emphasized that structural determinism did not mean humans and other living creatures could not change their reactions. He found that neuronal systems have plasticity and can change. As the nervous system changes, so does the way the organism perceives reality, and this changes the actions the organism takes. The relevance of these key ideas to ontological coaching is that the client is limited by how he is observing his world and problems, possibilities, and solutions exist in the “eye of the beholder.”

John Searle and *Speech Acts*

At the same time, a major development was taking place in Western philosophy known as the “linguistic turn,” led by Ludwig Wittgenstein, Gustav Bergman, and others—the view that language is not an inert way of describing reality. According to this new theory, language “constitutes reality.” When someone spills ink on himself and thinks, “This is a disaster,” the language of the observation is itself the reality that is created. This had a strong linkage to Maturana’s work because, if language itself was in the “eye of the beholder,” then problems, possibilities, and solutions must lie in the way language is used.

John Searle, a professor of philosophy at Berkeley, synthesized earlier groundbreaking research on language by G.C.J. Midgley, P.F. Strawson, John Rawls, H. Paul Grice, William Alston and, in particular, John Austin, a professor of moral philosophy at Oxford. Searle wrote the book *Speech Acts* in 1969, which laid down the distinctions in the different ways language could be used and abused to empower or limit the user’s ability to create the results desired. “Speech Acts” was later developed into “Basic Linguistic Acts,” a fundamental model used in ontological coaching as taught by Newfield.

Martin Heidegger and *Being and Time*

German philosopher Martin Heidegger’s book *Being and Time* is considered one of the most important philosophical works of the 20th century. In it Heidegger explored what it meant to be a “being,” a subject considered so obvious that it had never really been explored. He concluded that a “being” was something that “experienced” or interpreted the world. Heidegger also emphasized the importance of moods in our interpretive existence when he said, “The foundation of any interpretation is an act of understanding, which is always accompanied by a state-of-mind, or in other words, which has a mood.” He felt that moods were a “predisposition for action.” The mood one is in determines what actions one can or cannot take. Based on the work of Heidegger and the even more famous philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, a model called “Basic Moods of Life” has been developed by Newfield and is used by coaches to help clients develop new ways of interpreting events and generating new, more effective habits.

Julio Olalla and the Newfield Network

Julio Olalla had served in the Chilean government of President Salvador Allende before a coup orchestrated by the military dictator Augusto Pinochet forced Olalla to flee to Argentina. Olalla later moved to the United States and studied with many great thinkers to develop the theoretical framework for Ontological Coaching®. In order to take this coaching to the widest possible audience, Julio set up one of the first professional coaching schools in the world, the Newfield Network, where the work has continuously been refined and developed.

