Chapter 1
The Development and Growth of Professional Coaching as an Education Retention Strategy

ABSTRACT

This chapter develops background, data points, research, and literature review context around the factors and the educational environment that led to the identification of processional coaching as a promising retention strategy at post-secondary institutions. The chapter begins with some background on the history of educational coaching and how it was initially defined and then chronicles the development of professional coaching as an educational retention strategy. The chapter briefly discusses the financial impact of low retention both from a student and an institutional perspective. The chapter then looks at graduation rates by institution and surveys online versus face-to-face graduation rates and the growth of online learning and its impact on student retention. There is exploration of how for-profit institutions and their growth created a conducive environment for the design and deployment of professional coaching in the higher education sector. The chapter also investigates how increased participation in higher education led to lower completion rates and how this dynamic eventually led to the development of new and innovative strategies around retention. Some background on the birth and ascension of online degree completion programs also helps to set the stage for later research related to retention and student success and how non-first-time students as the new majority are impacting the post-secondary education marketplace. Learning and motivation challenges for non-first-time students are also introduced and explored within the context of the development of coaching as a retention strategy.

INTRODUCTION

The term "executive coaching" can be traced back to the late 1980's when it began to appear in reference to the repackaging and redefining of certain forms of individual counseling and therapy methods (Bosworth, 2006). The new coaching concept was described as a highly personalized process designed to transport individuals from a current state to a highly desired outcome or to help individuals attain goals (Bosworth, 2006; Witherspoon, Goldsmith, Lyons, & Freas, 2000). Witherspoon, Goldsmith, Lyons, and Freas (2000) explain that a coach "helps people see beyond what they are today to what they can become tomorrow. A great coach helps ordinary people do extraordinary things. In short, a great coach provides a sturdy shoulder to stand on, so one can see further than they might see on their own" (p. 12).

HISTORY OF COACHING AND CURRENT COACHING MODELS

The oldest reference to the type of educational coaching for purposes of this book is an 1880's reference to tutors helping students study for and prepare for examinations at Oxford University (Bosworth, 2006). The terms "executive coaching" and "life coaching" are much more recent and can be traced back only to the late 1980s, when they first appeared as new, more personalized applications of general counseling techniques and certain therapy approaches (Bosworth, 2006). The International Coach Federation (ICF) began in 1995 when American, Thomas Leonard, called himself a professional coach and formed ICF as a non-profit organization devoted to supporting professional coaching and to growing coaching as a profession (International Coach Federation, 2015).

Similarly, the first references to coaching as an educational service began in 2001, when InsideTrack, a for-profit company headquartered in San Francisco, California, became the first corporate coaching organization to develop specific coaching programs and services targeted to higher education institutions. The purpose for the organization was to improve retention rates and student success scores (InsideTrack, 2015). Over the next decade several other educational coaching and academic mentorship organizations began to develop technology and services for supporting and assisting university level students. Some of the better-known companies that brought retention support

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