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Editorial: The New Profession

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The first edition of this journal marks a defining moment in the history of coaching and mentoring. Much has been written about the origins of mentoring in Greek mythology and its rise and relevance in our new millennium. The benefits of coaching as an allied means of 'helping through talking' have also been extensively celebrated. However, the field of life and corporate coaching, whilst widely covered in books and magazines is as yet poorly developed in the academic and professional research literature.

There is an international consensus among many practitioners and academics that this situation needs to be transformed, in order to provide both purchasers of coaching services and those intending to move into the field as practitioners, with the knowledge base that they require. Moreover it is important to underscore the need for evidence-based research as a key aspect of the field's wider acceptance and credibility amongst corporate and private clients.

'Evidence-based' is not just trendy educational jargon. It is an approach which claims that practice should be capable of being justified in terms of sound evidence: it is the process of methodically searching out, evaluating, and utilising up-to-date research findings to support decisions about practice. It is only by grounding the practice of coaching and mentoring in this way that the necessary credibility will be achieved.

The advent of this journal also sees the formal alignment of coaching and mentoring as two different, but closely linked, approaches to helping people increase their sense of self-direction, self-esteem, efficacy and achievement. The main distinction we make in differentiating the two is that coaching does not rely necessarily on the specific experience and knowledge of the coach being greater than that of the client. We believe that mentoring is enhanced by the use of coaching methods, such as perceptive questioning, but also allows knowledge and experience to be conveyed for the client's benefit. The content of the journal will reflect this close association.

The aim of the journal is twofold: firstly, to offer an accessible yet powerful discussion platform for the growing number of coaching and mentoring practitioners seeking to validate their practice, and secondly, to provide evidence-based, well-researched resources for students, professionals, corporate clients, managers and academic specialists who need to be at the forefront of developments in the field.

We recognise the different branches of coaching and mentoring and the range of disciplines upon which they are founded, and our editorial team reflects that diversity. Tony Grant joins us from the University of Sydney and is a coaching psychologist, Bob Hamlin and Sue Kinsey are from the School of Business at the University of Wolverhampton and Grant Ledgerwood, who specialises in strategic management, is based at the University of Greenwich. Pam Richardson is the Managing Director of the UK College of Life Coaching and Elaine Cox leads an MA in Coaching and Mentoring Practice at the Westminster Institute of Education at Oxford Brookes University. Based in the United States, Andrea Ellinger is at the University of Illinois, and Sherryl Stalinski and David Prince represent the corporate sector in America, bringing a wealth of commercial experience to the Board. It is our hope that our trans-national and cross-disciplinary backgrounds will encourage and support a wide-ranging and inclusive audience for the journal.

Stalinski's 'Reflections from the Field', in this issue, focus on the growing market for coaching-related professions in the United States. She argues that there is a need for those working on "human systems" and those working on "process systems" to converge, and that there needs to be a more comprehensive approach to assessment at the beginning of an intervention. Her reflections are opportune and the concerns are echoed by developments throughout the world that stress the need for advancing professional practice.

The papers in this issue therefore, aim to advance practice by recognising the diversity and complexity and of coaching and mentoring. The articles by Mike Travis and Elaine Cox both identify the tacit knowledge base underpinning the application of coaching. Travis explores both the value and the dangers of mental models for change leaders and demonstrates the intricacy of the mental processes that impact on coaching. In view of the current focus in the UK on the development of standards for coaching, Cox's paper is timely. It draws on theories of cognition to explain the potential for accessing and developing coaching and mentoring 'know how' through practice, and to support the argument for a 'post-technocratic' model of professional development.

Ledgerwood's contribution surveys a range of international events, both corporate and civic, in order to introduce the new domain of strategic coaching. Ledgerwood attributes strategic coaching to the development of emergence theory. In this paradigm managers are empowered, coaching support is provided and there is emphasis on networking and communications.

This issue also reviews two recent conferences held in the UK. Both demonstrate the current global preoccupation with the need for standards, ethical codes and suitable qualifications for coaches and mentors.