

Tom Kube on the Emerging Field of Executive Coaching in Higher Education

“Our work is unique because it is based on many years of hands-on experience in Higher Education and Association management.” Tom Kube

Executive Coaching is an evolving dynamic today in Higher Education management. At Kube & Company, we’re proud to have been a pioneer in this area of services since the late 1990s.

My practice grew from one focused mostly on compliance to a more holistic entity in Higher Education that includes “C” level executive searches for colleges and schools, compliance work in a variety of areas, and organizational development as well as executive coaching. There are other entities in this community of work that offer a slice of the service line we offer, but none have quite the rich history and direct hands on expertise that we’ve developed over time.

For example, I started my career in association management, including the foray into accreditation and certification work, at the American Automobile Association Headquarters when it was located in Falls Church, Virginia. I worked my way up to managing the Corporate Strategic Planning Department for them. At the time AAA had 32 million members. In Higher Education, I started at the National Association of Trade and Technical Schools (NATTS), which later became part of the Career College Association (CCA), as the Associate Executive Director of its Accrediting Commission. I was promoted to Executive Director after it became part of CCA. As circumstances took place, I was

intricately involved in the consolidation of NATTS and the Association of Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS) into CCA. That was a once in a lifetime opportunity that I feel privileged to have helped happen. Almost immediately thereafter, the organization became a separate and independent entity from CCA in order to conform to the 1992 Higher Education Act.

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Before I left the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges of Technology (ACCSCT), I was intricately involved in the 1997 Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. I also served as the Executive Director for the Council of Educational Facility Planners, served a Chair of the Professional Truck Drivers Institute Certification Commission and as a Distance Education and Training Council (DETC) Commissioner. Executive Coaching became the next logical, and much needed, step in Higher Education management.



Thomas A. Kube

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Planners (CEFPI). Prior to this, he served as the Executive Director/CEO of the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges of Technology (ACCSCT). He also served as the Manager of Corporate Strategic Planning for the National Headquarters of the American Automobile Association (AAA). In all, he has held leadership and operating positions in business and education for more than 35 years.

So, the question is, what is Executive Coaching and how is it used in Higher Education management?

The U.S. economy and the various sectors that comprise it are in a constant state of flux. Our two primary client groups—Private Colleges and Schools and Associations—are no different and perhaps are more subject to the vagaries of burdensome regulation and economic uncertainty. Our coaching practice has helped both individuals and organizations unlock untapped potential and minimize or eliminate behaviors that have limited their success. That's

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not to say that our clients are unsuccessful. Rather, they are on the upper echelon of the individual or institutional strata of these sectors and have realized they need to “*break through*” to a higher level of performance. Quite frankly, why not employ all the resources available to you to improve success. That's what coaching helps accomplish.

To elaborate further, here are some questions that my clients most often ask:

Q: How did you move into the coaching field? What was the stimulus?

Well, frankly, it was just such a natural fit with all of the services that we provide as part of a comprehensive professional knowledge group. The proprietary sector has a large number of schools and colleges nationally and we've worked with a unique spectrum of executives from owners, private equity firms and “C” level personnel who have sought coaching for performance, to address some career plateaus, and those who have been downsized and are looking to maximize their strengths for a new job search. We have also coached teams for better performance and communications. The stimulus was being able to help facilitate improvement that was self-motivated by the client. For those of you who know me, I've been a champion of the proprietary sector for years.

Q: What excites you about coaching?

I'd have to say almost immediately that it's the opportunity to help a truly skilled and

proficient person grow even stronger through self-assessment and identifying opportunities for positive change. Helping them develop action plans and a set of steps to reach the outcome is very exciting. This also draws on strength of my own and that is Strategic Planning.

Q: Who do you most enjoy working with?

Our clients are very competent and highly skilled professionals. It is very exciting to work with high performing executives, be it system “C” level executives or campus level Senior Staff. What makes them seek coaching is that they may have hit a “flat spot” in their career, been downsized or just want to improve performance in an existing position. The ability to associate with them, and work toward a common goal, is rewarding for our coaching team as well as the client—*we both learn from each other*. It also makes for strong, long-lasting connections.

Q: What is the value that you find coaching brings people?

CEOs and Senior Managers sometimes view coaching as “remedial” as opposed to a process that enhances and nurtures high performance, similar to how elite athletes use a coach. Typically, they indicate interest in such skills as conflict management and communication, yet they put the need for compassion, relationship and persuasion skills far down the list. They think of the latter as “soft skills,” ancillary at best. Effective CEOs and Senior Managers need to grow their skills and effectiveness, which include increased self-awareness, honest self-knowledge about one's motives, personality capacities and values. When this is lacking, it tends to diminish the relevance of coaching in the view of most senior leaders. The infrastructure of successful leadership vision and behavior is heightened self-awareness about one's motives, values and personality traits. When we reach this destination in the coaching process, our clients really see the value and the Return on Investment they get out of the process.

Q: What is a typical process in Executive Coaching?

Each client is different and we don't use a one size model, or try to “shoe horn” our clients into a process. Basically, our coaching process goes as follows:

We begin by identifying critical organizational issues, including company culture, business strategy, and short- and long-term objectives. This

information is combined with the executive's role, personal style, existing strengths, and leadership capabilities to create a customized program. The process adheres to this general model for many of our clients:

1. **Develop a Case for Action** – We help our clients define issues and values as well as the desired outcomes they wish to achieve.
2. **Introduction of the Process** – Here we'll discuss the candidate's history and options. The coaching process is agreed upon with specific baseline measurements as well as agreed upon outcome targets.
3. **Assessment Phase** – A behavioral assessment inventory is administered and processed. We may also conduct interviews with supervisor(s), peers, and direct report personnel as appropriate. Next are introductions and relationship building in which we explain the process, checking for the candidate's understanding and perceptions about their current situation. We conduct a life/career review and assign assessment instruments to identify skills, interests, values, style, and organization perceptions. We then agree on expectations, schedule meeting times and coaching for results.

4. **Feedback Phase** – We hold individual sessions with the client during which we interpret all assessments, determine development assets and liabilities—as shown through the interviews and assessments – and identify career success issues, and potential career “stallers and stoppers.” *This is often a very enlightening part of the process for the client.*

5. **Create Developmental Programs** – Jointly we determine desired behavioral outcomes through individual coaching sessions. We also analyze what is at stake if the individual's changes are not successful and identify perceived barriers and reactions that would help or hinder effective changes.

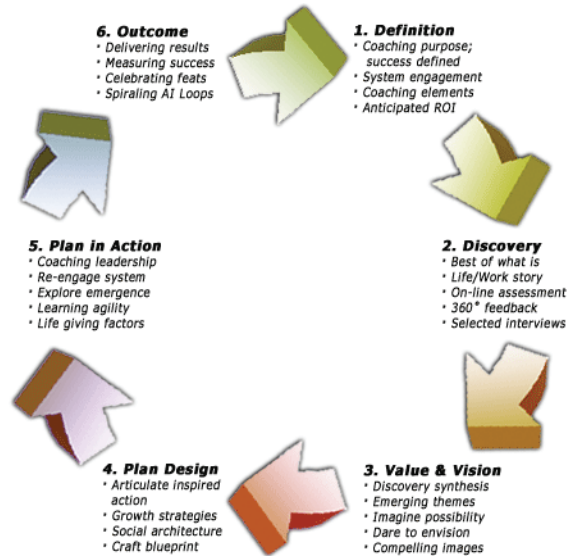
6. **Plan Design** – We select resources and developmental activities, define time frames, and coach the client on how to handle any particular changes appropriately.

7. **Plan Implementation** – At this point the client takes action steps based on resources, curriculum and time. We assume that the client has accepted the coaching and is working on the new behavior(s)/results.

8. Coaching Progress and Reality Check

– This entails holding regular sessions with individual on-going coaching and consultation sessions. These are provided by the coach to help the candidate continue to assimilate the acquired knowledge and skills.

9. **Evaluate Progress** – We then reassess to evaluate growth. I may also seek feedback from a supervisor, organization and support group to validate results. Review of results achieved then takes place with the client.



There is actually more to the process, but I wanted to give a broader step-by-step overview so your readers can visualize it more readily. However if I had to boil it down to simple recipe for success it would be: **G-O-O-D: Goals/Options/Obstacles/Do**. I find this model works often and the above steps are just components of it.

Q: What is an example of you helping others with coaching?

First, I need to evaluate if the person has the quality of ethical confidentiality to approach executive coaching in this manner, and then, without referencing or naming a particular client, I can mentor an individual on the academic elements of professional executive coaching with some broad case scenarios.

In general this includes that we've worked with clients who are employed and want to increase their value to an employer and become

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more promotable; we've worked with executives who have been downsized and want to become re-branded or re-position themselves to get re-hired and are seeking to self assess where they may have limited their past performance. We also help individuals with career changes.

On the Institutional side of the coaching activities we conduct, this may include improvement of the overall Institutional performance and team development as well as working with individual members of a management team to improve communications, leadership and performance—or a combination of these processes.

Q: What is unique about your coaching approach?

I believe our work is unique because it is based on many years of hands-on experience in Higher Education and Association management.

Further, we approach executive coaching as an ongoing partnership designed to help clients produce fulfilling results in their personal and professional lives. Coaching helps people improve their performances and enhance the quality of their lives. We like that aspect of the work.

As a coach I'm trained to listen, to observe and to customize the approach to your individual needs. We seek to elicit solutions and strategies from you—the client; we believe you are naturally creative and resourceful. Our job is to provide support to enhance the skills, resources, and creativity that you already have. While we provide feedback and an objective perspective, you are responsible for taking the steps to produce the results that you desire.

Coaching is an interactive process that helps individuals and organizations to develop more

We continue to grow and build connections through results and relationships. For example, one of these connections has resulted in Kube & Company becoming one of the few select firms that are advising the National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA)—yes that NCAA—on their approach to athletic coach searches. This is an exciting and relatively new area for us over the past two years. We were invited to do this as a result of our reputation in the higher education search community. So, look to see us conducting more college athletic coach searches.

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We are also in discussion with several small education associations to provide management services—which fits nicely with our skill set and background. In a nutshell, we are very bullish on higher education in all its facets and niche areas. It's all about providing value to our clients.

Q: What is next for you and coaching?

On a personal note, I'm engaged in post-graduate work in Executive Coaching. I see it as an area of significant growth for our practice. Again, our executive search, client assessments and HR work make it a natural fit for us in this portion of our practice. ■

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rapidly and produce more satisfying results. We work with clients in all areas including business, career, finances, health and relationships. As a result of coaching, our clients set better goals,

take more action, make better decisions, and more fully use their natural strengths.

Q: Finally, what is next for Kube & Company, anything our readers might find interesting?

Well, I can tell you that we are always looking forward and identifying ways to serve the Higher Education and Association community.