

INFLUENTIAL CONVERSATIONS

EP #26

“Do I need a life coach?” You’re listening to Episode 26, with Rhiannon Bush

Welcome to the Do I need a life coach? Podcast. We’re here to discuss the ins-and outs- of the life coaching industry and give you tools to use, to see for yourself. I’m your host, Rhiannon Bush. Mother, management consultant and a passionate, certified life coach.

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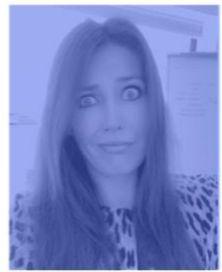
So I believe a coach has to be influential and they also have to have the authority in the conversation. They need to be an expert, or at the very least, come across as one (fake it until you make it and all that) whether they feel it or not. The coaches feelings are irrelevant in a coach-client relationship. When I’m coaching a client, my feelings have to be irrelevant, because if I let my feelings influence my thoughts and make their way into the conversation, I am going to end up leading that client in a way that my feelings believe it should go. I don’t believe we can be entirely objective. That’s now how we’re wired, but I also believe we, as practicing life coaches, should do our inner work and get to a place where we can best serve our clients. Yes, we’re all works-in-progress, but we should know ourselves well enough to recognise our triggers and deal with them outside of a coaching session.

An impartial coach is one of the beauties of a coaching session and the beauty of coaching - as a practice and as a type of therapy, because a coach is not to weigh-in or give an opinion, and they are certainly not to advise the client on what they should, shouldn’t, can’t, would, maybe ought to do.

With that said, a coach has to be able to hold the space during that conversation. There’s a power balance. And what I mean by power-balance in coaching is that the coach needs to be the authority, two tease out of the client whatever it is that’s holding them back and preventing them from moving forward and getting what it is they’ve said they want.

I was recently introduced to someone as an ESG expert at a networking event. ESG stands for Environmental Sustainability and Growth, and it’s a really hot topic right now, obviously because of the state of our planet and organisations needing to take a firmer stance and action to improve the impact we’re all having on the environment. Just watch David Attenborough’s final testament on Netflix if you want a better understanding of what I’m talking about – I highly recommend it and will put the link in the show notes.





When I met this expert, he questioned me on whether ESG was something that I was interested in and I said yes because I am more passionate about it than I realised. I think it needs to be something we are all very interested because of the risk for future generations and the current way we live not altering those risks fast enough. Also as a mum, I'm conscious of the fact that I've brought two little humans into the world and its' future looks grimme. Anyway, along-side this conversation, I'd recently completed a very long survey that asked the participants about ESG and what we could do on a micro and macro level to improve our impact. I'm honest and had to openly admit that I can't talk to this confidently because I don't know enough about criteria and metrics, etc. The problem feels huge compared to the little amount my life or actions - for better or worse - would contribute to the overall problem.

When I said this to the ESG expert, he said he'd viewed some of the survey results and that he had to sort his language out to educate others because there were survey participants who, like me, didn't know much about it, and then there were others who know a tonne about it and are highly educated. The way he was talking - his body language, tone and lack of conviction throughout our conversation made me question his expertise. I have it on good authority that he's incredibly experienced and knowledgeable about ESG but taking him on face-value, it was interesting the lack of selling it I felt from him.

As the specialist, the one with the knowledge, I expected conviction and certainty and I believe that's truly important in selling and influencing. While this isn't your typical "sales conversation", what he's selling matters and requires him convincing people and influencing them to change. At the end of the day, the more educated individuals are on ESG on what we can practically do to make changes and create a positive impact, the better. As educated people will educate others.

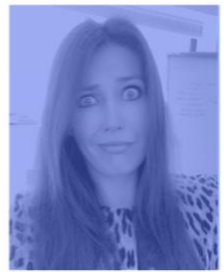
So as an expert, or specialist, or someone who's really good at something... own it. Claim it. If you're listening to this thinking "I don't really know what I'm good at" I get it. I've been there. But think about something you love to do, practice and do well. Something that fuels you energetically. When you're good at something and you know it, and you believe it, you can sell it far more easily and have the impact you want to have.

In light of that, I'm going to talk more to my fellow coaches listening to this podcast and call on my sales training to give you tools and techniques to have influential conversations. I 100% believe that we can all sell. And that we do all sell. The environment that we are raised in, the environment we exist in, whether that is social, professional or personal... all require our ability to sell our ideas, our thoughts, and our beliefs.

So whether this episode applies to you

- **In a conversation**
- **Where you are seeking a promotion**





- **Whether you are asking somebody on a date**
 - **Whether you are trying to convince your spouse to do something or purchase something that you believe is going to make their life better**
 - **You're telling your child that they must clean up their bedroom, or do their homework**
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There is something here for you.

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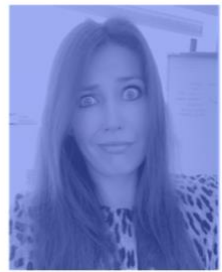
The best example I can give you is trying to sell an iPhone. Years and years ago, I went to a big phase in my late teenage years / early 20s, (yes... ok it was when I started drinking and partying), I would lose my phone. Now when I was 18/19 the first iPhone had only just been released. They were very expensive, nothing's changed there, but they were revolutionary because before that, I had the Motorola flip phone, and the Nokia 3310, which when I lost, I lost all my photos, all my phone numbers and everything that I had stored in my phone. Which wasn't a lot because photos and phone numbers, and texts were probably the only things they had available at that time, but you get the point. Still very annoying.

When the iPhone came along, I could just buy a new one. Yes, it was a very expensive exercise and that part of it was painful but I could just plug it into my computer and all my phone numbers, all my photos, all my data, would reappear, even including the screensaver and settings (like that sound when you push a letter – I don't like that). It was such a timesaver! I was absolutely in love with and very thankful for the iPhone. Fast forward to today, obviously many other phones do this now, but I was always very pro iPhones because they were the first, and for me, they were the best. I did once tried to change to a different brand of phone, I'll never do it again. Anyway, you get my drift. If anyone came to me and said "I just don't know what phone to get", I was like "get an iPhone". And then I will just sell it to them.

I know selling has a bad name. I've worked in sales a long time, and trained people in sales, and so if you're feeling reticent to keep listening right now, I need say that selling only becomes unethical at the point at which you push your agenda onto somebody else. At the very end of the day, you can put a great case forward, the best case ever, and the person you're selling to, may not come to the party. Everyone has freedom of choice and an ability to say no. And we need to honour that. Question it for sure, but honour it.

So next time you're considering why somebody won't do something that you want them to do, there are a few key points to remember. The first is that the assertiveness and conviction, with which you believe that person should do that thing, is incredibly important. Because if you don't believe it, they pick up on it. Today, we have incredible BS metres. We can tell when somebody is lying, even if we can't put our finger on it consciously, we absolutely know that there is something not authentic about it. Our brains are incredibly wired to pick up these cues. If you want an extreme version of





this, check out Lie To Me, the series based on the work of Paul Eckman, it's great.

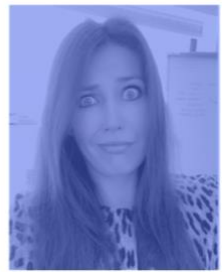
So your conviction matters. Next is that your intention matters more than your words, meaning if you go in with the attitude of you're going to get them to do it for your sake and not for their benefit, that's not cool. Think 1970s car salesman, coffee is for closers and all that.

You don't sell somebody they sell themselves. And if they can't see the benefits of what you're talking about having meaning for them, then why would they do it? If your child doesn't want to clean up their bedroom because they firstly don't want to expend the energy and secondly they're happy with it being messy, why would they clean it up when you tell them to? You need to find something that they care about more so they're motivated to take action. For example, if your child has a fear of cockroaches, or spiders, or creepy crawlies, then you could tell a story, which FYI I don't know if it's factually true, or not, which maybe the caveat, but you could say that by having a messy room, it creates more spaces for spiders and cockroaches and insects to hide, which may bite them in the middle of the night. I know that sounds a little bit evil, and this obviously needs to be used with discretion, but you can take it whatever extreme you need to depending on the age of your child and their sensitivity. And you get my point. They need to be motivated by something that they care about more to take action, especially when it's something that they don't enjoy or want to do.

When you're telling somebody information, nobody cares. This is called info-boothing. As an example, an iPhone is X inches tall by X inches wide, it has X capacity and has a battery life of blah. Nobody cares. They will care right before they buy because specifics and information matters, but in that initial conversation where they're beginning to consider how this thing will benefit them, they don't care about the detailed information. Why would they? Stories are what sell - the pain that will be solved in their life is what they care about initially.

For my coaching listeners, it's the benefits of what that coaching program offers your client, the thing that your client will have at the end of the coaching program. That's what matters to them right now. My partner Damien is an incredible weight loss coach. He works with both men and women, predominantly women. I've done a lot of his work and one of my favourites is his five in 28-day challenge. You can lose 5kg in 28 days - obviously depending on your current habits and your commitment to the challenge. And if you follow the program and what he says you'll lose weight and more importantly feel better. And let's be honesty, it's a quick 28 days, nobody cares about 28 days, anyone can be uncomfortable for 28 days, so it's really, really great and it's clear what you're going to get at the end of it. If he went in saying week one you do this and week two you do that, week three is this... the person that may have been interested is no longer interested. Like I said, they're going to care about that at the end right before





they agree or buy, but they're not going to care about that initially. That is not what's going to initially sparked their interest and get their attention. So they must realise what's in it for them and care about it.

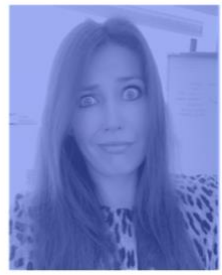
The second point is using open and closed questions. And in any conversation you have, the way you use open versus closed questions is incredibly important. The timing and sequence with which you use open and closed questions matters. What do I mean? in what I've designed for my clients called the flow of the converting sales conversation, initially you're asking quite closed questions. And in a sales conversation, you really want to make sure that you can anticipate the answer of a closed question. For those of you who are like "what is she talking about", open questions have any possible answer. They're incredibly 'pie in the sky' like "what would you do if you could?" Or and "how do you feel about that?" Or "what's your plan next?".

These are all open questions. They have long-winded answers and the answers are highly subjective. Close questions have a definite answer, yes or no, black or white, light or dark, night or day. And with closed questions you need to be very careful when you ask them because they will stunt a conversation, they will stop it dead in its tracks and you'll need to be creative on-the-spot to pivot around it, which with the speed of our pre-frontal-cortex can be difficult, or closed questions will really create momentum and flow in the conversation because they'll get to the point and enable you to move onto the next.

In every conversation when you're trying to influence somebody, you're going to maybe start with some close questions, which hopefully you'll know the answer to ahead of time. This is to ensure you're both on the same page, that you're within the same context and that you discount things immediately before spending time in a whole conversation. For instance, if you're speaking you're your boss about a promotion, then you may start getting to the point (i.e. building momentum) after the introductory and customary small talk, with some closed questions like "are you happy with how I'm performing?" They're going to, essentially, answer yes or no. "According to my last performance review, I met every KPI, that's correct isn't it?" Again, the answer will be yes or no and obviously, given how pointed these questions are, you will have worked this all out ahead of time to ensure you know what your boss is going to answer, and therefore be able to refute anything they say to the contrary. "I actually exceeded expectations... you mentioned it in that conversation we had a few weeks ago by the water cooler that I've been doing an excellent job, and have been going above and beyond in my role. Do you remember that conversation?"

So you're actually reminding them of conversations you've had and getting that yes or no answer to make sure that you're on the same page. You just calibrating information and making sure you two are on the same page at this point.





Then you're going to go into the next section or phase if you like, of the conversation which is going to be a series of open questions. So let's continue with the 'asking for a promotion' example.

The more open questions serve two main purposes. 1. You get an understanding of how they really feel, what they value, and their point of view when it comes to actually giving you what you want. And 2. It gives you additional information that they may not intentionally give you, to use as leverage. So pay attention.

You don't know what the answer is going to be and it's important to get as much clarity as possible and hitting those deeper layers and levels by asking and prompting with additional questions. So you could say "As you know, I'm really looking to be promoted to general manager. I believe my performance over the past 18 months, my relationships and my work ethic stand me in good stead to be promoted into that position. What more do you feel I need to be doing to reach that level and be offered that role?" In that conversation, you can ask or gather your thoughts on any additional questions you may want to ask, you can slow and speed up the conversation with more closed questions, and you can also ask more open questions to gain more context and clarity around what it is that they're saying. Because if you're not going to get what you want, you at least want to know what you need to do to get it, or the reasons why you aren't getting it now.

So the sequence will matter depending on the outcome that you're looking for, and what's going on in the conversation and when you're the one that is very aware and strategic about what questions you're asking... and at what point in that conversation, and the outcome you're looking for, you have the power and the control. There is always a power balance in conversations. Somebody always has more power than the other person, it's only really in friendship and partnerships when you get that even balance but even then, depending on who's driving the conversation and asking the questions and being inquisitive, is usually the one with the power in that instance. I haven't thought that through too much so start to observe your conversations at home and see what you come up with – let me know if that's true, I'd love to hear from you.

Conversations are directional. And when we ask questions, we can ask questions that will direct the flow of conversation. There are also questions that have no direction, and I tend not to use those, especially when I'm in a sales conversation or when I am trying to be influential quite strategically. So if you are looking for more detail, you can go into that by asking about more specific information that you're looking for. For instance a business owner I was coaching was talking about the fact that he didn't have oversight of the way his customers found him. And when he initially said that, I had no insight as to what he was really talking about. So I said "what do you mean specifically?" and he said "well I know we have multiple





advertising channels and I know what they are, but I don't know what the favourite is by our customers or which is the most cost-effective for the business". When I got that piece of information, I was there able to ask "how does that create problems for you, specifically?" Once we'd covered that, and I had fleshed that out so I really understood what was going on and what his concerns were, I was also then able to go in the opposite direction and say "well in an ideal world, what would your preference be and what would that give you?" So you see those different questions are directional. Around the nitty-gritty detail is, in my mind, down. Specific. Detail. And then there's the overarching purpose, the aims. This is up, higher.

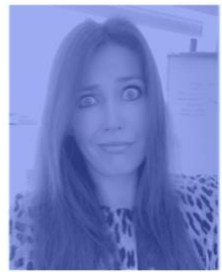
Both give you really great insight as to what matters to that person, and how you can use that to help them get out of their own way and move forward while also giving you what you want. Which is selling. There are other questions which help you flesh out context, but lack direction. Things like "and what else", "tell me more", and "how so?". They will give you more information, but they don't really have direction, and when you ask questions like that too much, you can end up going in circles or you get answers you weren't anticipating. In a sales conversation we always want to predict, as much as possible, what's coming to give ourselves the best chance of overcoming it.

No matter what, all my clients come to me in the current state, and that current state is causing them some dis-ease, some discomfort or a lot of other negative emotions. They're not happy and want to change. And once I can gain context around what's going on for them right now, as I mentioned in episode one, at point A, their current state, and I gain all my understanding around that, then I can flip the conversation and go all in on how they'd like it to be instead, (Point B) and how that looks. The key lies in the gap between Point A and point B.

Why aren't they already at point B? What's blocking them or stopping them, preventing them, deterring them from getting to Point B, where they want instead. And it's digging around there so if you're in a conversation with someone about a promotion, as in, you're the one, wanting the promotion, it's I'm here right now in this role, but I want to be promoted into that role. My blockers are... What can I do to overcome those blocks and to get that promotion, to get to Point B? How are we going to work this out, so I can get there? Do I need more information so I know what I need to do and therefore the action I need to take to get that promotion?

Are your kids not cleaning their room and you're sick of nagging? Current state - messy room all the time, you're sick of nagging. Future state they clean their room autonomously - they do it without you having to ask. What is the block in the middle? The block is it you don't want to be the one to do it, you want them to do it and take pride in their room, take initiative, and just want it clean, right? What can you do to incentivise them, intrinsically motivate them and create the regular habit as part of their routine, to clean up their own room?





Your partner keeps complaining that their phone is glitching and slow, and not working the way they need it to work. Current state is that you are sick of hearing them complain about it. They are sick of the phone glitching. They're frustrated. Ideal state is that they have a phone that works effectively and in a way that they can use it easily and seamlessly. The gap between now and ideal state is that they may be a tight a double-ss and they won't pay for a new phone. Are they out of contract? If they're not out of contract how long do they have left to go? Is it worth just reviewing the contract, or getting a new phone? Do they use their phone for work? Is there somebody else that can pay for it? Is there an insurance claim? What are the work-around to get past the blocks to get to future state? How can you influence them to make that decision so everybody is happy?

Are you starting to see how this formula works? It's even when you want to go to a specific restaurant for dinner and your friends are tossing up which one to go to. Same thing - current state: you don't know where you're going to eat out together, or someone's decided on a place that you don't particularly like, are sick of are don't want to go to. Future state: you want to go to the Thai restaurant. The block is to getting everyone to agree to the Thai restaurant, as you have a friend who is adamant that you go to the restaurant that you're all about to go to. What can you do to get that person to change their mind and go to the Thai restaurant instead? You can outnumber them, you can incentivise, you can manipulate, you can, divide the group, you can not go, there are many ways to get what is that you want, it just depends on what you want more - the meal, or the social time. As one of my favourite business-owner clients said, "there's more than one way to skin a cat". A yucky expression yes, and I've never really thought about it too much, I don't really want to. You know the expression I'm talking about. There are multiple approaches you can take, is the nicer version. Sometimes, we just need to get a little bit creative.

Once you've pitched the idea to your child, your boss, your spouse or whoever it is that you're trying to influence, it's important to gauge their reaction because their reaction is going to be one of three things. It's going to be a baulk. They'll look at you like you are from Mars and as if that is something that they would ever want to do. Or they're going to be fairly neutral and keep their feelings quite close to them, so you're not really going to know truthfully about what they're feeling or thinking unless you dig a little deeper and ask. Or lastly, they're going to be really eager and keen. An easy sell. We always hope for the last option, and we always prepare for the first option.

When you get a reaction that you don't hope for, it's simply a matter of asking the questions. If you've elicited their desired state fully and completely, and you really understand and comprehend the purposes for which they want something, and the value it's going to add to their lives, you can use that to your advantage to explore a little bit. If they're coming across is not so eager, it's important to understand if you get a no, or a rejection of





an idea, or anything really, it simply means there's more to learn and more to explore. It's never a reflection on you, your worthiness, your value, or even the thing you're trying to get them to do. As I said at the beginning, everyone has the freedom of choice and to do what they want to do. Everyone has their own brain and can make decisions for themselves. So to some extent, you have a limited opportunity to get them to do what you want them to do. All you can do is put forward your argument and then use what they want, to help them. Give them the opportunity to see that what you're proposing actually benefits them, why and how, and will help them achieve what it is that they want.

When we talking about them selling themselves, that is when you have married what it is that they really truly want, with what you're offering them, and them seeing that for themselves and taking the action that follows. If we're talking sales then obviously there's a whole payment and transaction discussion to be had which I'm not going to go into because I'd rather talk about this as an influence of ideas instead of a monetary exchange or sale of something.

So... thinking back to conversations where you haven't had the outcome you were hoping for, think back to what you did, how you conducted yourself, and how you felt at the end of the conversation. Conversations where we sell happen every day but some need some pre-thought and some strategy. And that pre-thought and strategy is not to manipulate and not to be unethical, it's for us to be able to manage our emotional state in the conversation because we're prepared, especially when the stakes are quite high for us personally.

For instance, if you are going for that promotion the stakes are high. Specifically if you're getting up into those echelons of GM-type ranks, there's a lot at stake. Financially, influentially, power and decision-making... and you need to be able to conduct that conversation with professionalism and integrity and, well, strategy. And if you've gone in a little bit blind thinking you can wing it, chances are something will happen that causes you to be emotionally triggered, which means you will walk out of that conversation feeling like you blew it and you were unprepared and blindsided. And that's when we, mere humans, behave in an impulsive or reactive way, when we end up turning around after the fact and saying or thinking "I wish I'd said..." Or "I should've said...". And then you'll beat yourself up about it. It may, or may not degrade your confidence a little bit and have lasting impacts moving forward. But you never know and you don't want to leave it to chance.

Whereas if you go in with a strategy even if it's a loose one, you will walk out feeling proud of yourself and like you put your best foot forward. You'll feel that way because you will be able to create emotional stability and keep a level head, enabling you to intrinsically to any feedback you're given, get those lessons and work out your action plan to move forward towards your goals.





Don't fear having big conversations, prepare for them.

See you next week, my friends.

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