



Coach Approach Ministries Podcast

Episode 18: Introducing Coaching into a Fortune 500 Company

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[Intro Music]

Brian Miller: Welcome to the Coach Approach Ministries podcast where we help people find their way with God by training the best Christian coaches in the world. I'm Brian Miller, strategic director for Coach Approach Ministries, CAM for short, and I'm joined here today by Jane Creswell. This is our part two with Jane Creswell. She serves as the Chief Executive Officer for Internal Impact. Ms. Creswell is an innovator and leader in the emerging field of internal corporate coaching. She leveraged 17 years of product development and management experience at IBM to invent the role of Organization Coach and became the founder of IBM Coaches Network, a network of almost 500 coaches in 26 countries. Ms. Creswell has authored two books and enjoys speaking at conferences to inspire other corporate coaches and corporate employees. She is also one of the founders of Coach Approach Ministries which we didn't get to in last week's interview. It's my pleasure to welcome to the podcast, Jane Creswell. Welcome, Jane.

Jane Creswell: It's great to be here, Brian. Thanks for having me back.

Brian: Oh man, I so enjoyed the first 30 minutes, and if anybody hasn't heard the first 30 minutes, they wouldn't have to because we're definitely going to get into, now, the coaching part. We really got into your origin story with IBM and some beautiful stuff about how you became a missionary to the corporate world, and even today, that's just starting to become a thing, but back in those days, it was not a thing.

Jane: Right. That's exactly right.

Brian: And I loved your story. You talked about wanting to be a preacher when you were five, but your mom told you, "But you're a girl," and thank God you were a girl, that you went a different direction maybe because that was exactly, not maybe, it was exactly where God wanted you to go.

Jane: Thank you. I kind of see it as a benefit now, but at the time, I was pretty incensed because I was pretty convinced that I should be a preacher.

Brian: Absolutely. I remember even in the days I was thinking about being a preacher, it was you could be a preacher or a missionary, and I did not want to be a missionary. So I guess I'll be a preacher.

Jane: We're opposites.

Brian: Yeah. There were only two options, and that's insane actually. That's not godly at all. God's got so many avenues for us. So when we left you formally, kind of like Batman, the Joker had you tied up, and we were about to die, and how did you escape? Actually, that's kind of similar. You got a promotion.

Jane: That's why I'm giggling.

Brian: You're going to be a big-wig, but you got to stop the Jesus talk, and you went into coaching. So start there. We may even recap just a little bit. Start with the story about the vacation with your husband.

Jane: Okay. So I had learned a little bit about the profession of coaching, not a lot, but whatever I could find on the web, and my husband and I had already planned on going on a journey, a Paul vacation, that included seven days on the mainland of Greece and then a three-day cruise of the Greek islands, and every day we were talking about what should I do? Should I become a coach? Should I leave IBM? That was a big conversation because that was a big part of our family income, and so this should be a joint decision that we were both talking about, and at the end of the trip, decided... In fact, we were on the back of the cruise ship, headed back to Athens, and we'd fly home from Athens.

So it's the last day of the trip, and it was absolutely gorgeous, romantic view, and you'd see the lights on the Greek islands while you're watching the glimmer on the water, and my husband goes, "Sweetheart, this is what we've been praying about. Do it. Just jump. The Lord is going to help us figure out how to make coaching work if this is what he's calling you to do. So just go for it." So when I got back, I did. I went for it and signed up to be a member of the ICF, and also, I signed up for coach training. Then as a result of that, I got my first client. Oh, and I hired a coach for myself, thinking, "I'm going to learn a ton by watching a pro do this," and I didn't know what in the world I was getting myself into. I thought, "Let me get as much help as I can get to really make this work." All that happened in the space of about 30 days.

Brian: Where did you look for a coach?

Jane: Well my coach training school had a handy dandy list of recommendations. They said, "The people who are the best coaches also are coached, and if you don't know where to find a coach, here you go. This is the list of coaches that we recommend." I picked three on that list. I interviewed them and picked the person that I thought I had the most resonance with. Yeah, I could see me really enjoying... At that time, it was a big trend that coaching conversations happen weekly, and so I said, to have a conversation weekly with somebody? I better enjoy that somebody. So I just went with my gut and picked the person that I enjoyed the most in the interview conversation, and he was my first coach for two or three years, actually.

Brian: There were several keys for me going into professional coaching, but one of them, maybe even the most important one, was hiring a mentor coach. That makes all the difference.

Jane: It did because I didn't know how this worked. I guess I had a little bit of a skepticism, but I thought, "Well, I need to move forward myself, so for that reason I need a coach, but I also could just take notes

on what he's doing with me, and maybe that'll work with my clients," and I got both of those benefits and more.

Brian: What were you feeling at that time? Think back. Now you're on the other side of it, but skepticism? What were you thinking?

Jane: I wondered if this was another crazy idea that I had. Now and then my husband will say, "Lucy?" And I thought, "Well, it may be another one of those," but I also thought it was almost this, "What's good for the goose is good for the gander" type of mindset that I have, and that is based on what I'm being taught in these coach training classes about the benefits of coaching, I can't see that you ever outgrow that. It got to a point of, not maybe immediately, but really quickly, I'm going to be out of integrity if I say that having a coach is good for everybody else except for me. Who am I to not need a coach was really the last thought that I dealt with before I just picked up the phone and started interviewing folks.

Brian: And how long did you have that first mentor coach?

Jane: I think it was... Let's see. I have to do a little math here. That was '97, and I started coaching at IBM in '98. He was probably my coach for six months or a year. Something like that, and then I switched coaches.

Brian: I forgot. My first coach was about six months and I switched. That happens.

Jane: People have asked me, "What made you switch?" Again, a gut feel. I want to learn from a different coach. Maybe they do things slightly differently, so I want to do that to learn as much as I coach from multiple coaches, and now I even recommend that because of how valuable that actually was. It turned out to be right because there's this common core of competencies, you don't do them and you're not coaching, but there's a whole lot of style issues that come out where everybody's coaching well. They just do it differently, and I wanted to learn from the style issues as well.

Brian: So your plan was to become a coach and use that to transition out of IBM because they had told you, "You can't share your faith," and you found in your coaching that you could share your faith more easily, but that's not the way it turned out.

Jane: No. That's not what happened at all. So I was thinking it was going to take me two or three years to grow a private practice, and then I would leave IBM. Trying to do this in a methodical way. However, what happened was I started noticing that my private clients, those that I was coaching on the evenings and weekends, starting with the woman who sat next to me in choir, they were making more headway in their careers and in their lives than my employees were.

Brian: Wow.

Jane: And I thought, "Now, that's strange. Same woman. I think I'm doing the same things. I think I'm saying the same way. Same type of coaching approach to managing," and it turns out I really wasn't because I believe managers can use a coach approach to their job as manager, but they never leave that role of, "They are held accountable for the very things that their employees are also held accountable for," and there's this, I wouldn't say it as strongly as conflict of interest, but there's definitely a role

where a manager's responsible for the results of the organization. One way to get these results is to manage people, and I thought, "Hmm. I'm getting better results when I coach than I'm getting when I manage." So I was talking to my boss about this. She was the general manager of the division at the time, and I shared that. I'm making more headway with my private clients than I am with my employees. What's that about? So it was this ongoing conversation for about six weeks. I eventually said a very bold statement. I said, "I think I can give a greater return on my salary as a coach than I am currently giving as an executive on your team."

Brian: That's a big statement.

Jane: It was a big statement, and it's one of those things where you kind of see those speech bubbles come out of your mouth, and you're trying to grab those words and put them back in your mouth. I was like, "I cannot believe I just said that."

Brian: I can hear myself saying words like that and walking out thinking, "I hope that was true."

Jane: I know. I know. There was a big part of me that was saying that as well. I'm a brand new coach. By this point, I've been coaching for all of nine months, and so she said, "Oh yeah right. There's no such thing as an internal coach," and there wasn't. Nobody had ever heard of that. She also said, and please, nobody in HR be offended at this, but she said, "You have a great career in software engineering. Why would you ruin it by doing something that sounds like HR?" I was offended at that. I was like, "I don't think I'd be ruining my career if I'm doing what I'm created to do."

Brian: Ouch. There's Jesus.

Jane: Well I didn't say that out loud, but I'm thinking it. We continued the conversation, but my division that I was working in at the time really needed some help. She came back, and she said, "You know that thing that you said? You could give a greater return as a coach? Here's the deal, I will let you do a coaching pilot in our division. We'll re-deploy your employees and get them other jobs either in our division or in other divisions. You won't have any direct reports, and you can become the coach for our division only for six months."

Brian: That's a big deal.

Jane: It is a really big deal, but here was the deal. The deal was if, in six months, you have done it, you are giving a greater return, we will go together to HR and get this brand new job description created. If, however, in six months you have not created a greater return on your salary, you'll be fired.

Brian: She said that that clearly?

Jane: That clearly. Yeah, no mistaking. She was a very clear communicator.

Brian: You'll be fired.

Jane: Well because think about it. You worked at IBM. If somebody's going to clear out their department and not have any direct reports anymore for six months, and then it doesn't work, you're not going to go back to those people and say, "Oh, Jane's little experiment didn't work. Come back." There wasn't

going to be a job left for me. It wasn't like you could just make up these positions. So it was if we do this thing, it won't be able to be undone.

Brian: So fear?

Jane: Yeah, there was a lot of fear. So immediately, I go home. I told my husband. I thought I was going to get another one of those, "Lucy's" again, but he said again, "Sweetheart. This is what we've been praying for. Go back and say yes," and so the very next day, I said yes and said, "Okay. I'll do it." I was so scared. I didn't know what I was doing. I didn't know how you do coaching in an organization because there wasn't anybody to mimic or to learn from at the time. So it's like okay Lord. It's me and you.

Brian: And you've got to hope people will be willing to be coached. I assume you can't mandate it.

Jane: That's right.

Brian: And even if you do, they have to open up and trust you.

Jane: Some organizations over the years have tried to mandate coaching. It doesn't work, and we now know from brain science why it doesn't work. Because if people don't have the trust levels and high enough oxytocin levels to trust the coach, then no learning will happen in a coaching conversation, in a learning conversation. It has to be voluntary. Back in that time frame, by now it is the summer of 1998. In the summer of 1998, nobody had done research on internal coaching enough to know that when you force people to be coached inside of organizations, it doesn't really give them the results. All of those studies that have been done since, hadn't been done by then, but it was this gut feeling that in order for this to really work, it's going to have to be voluntary. So yeah, within a week of that decision, I was making a presentation to our entire division about what coaching is and how you can sign up.

Brian: Within a week.

Jane: Yeah, and this was just since I'm learning, Brian. Just in time learning for me, but I'm having a blast. I'm going, "Wow. How cool is this? I'm loving this."

Brian: You forgot your fear to some extent, and you just dove into the excitement of the new field.

Jane: Exactly, and the other part was that calling was still there and very strong. It was like, "Okay. If this is you, Lord," and I was pretty convinced it was a calling that as a 19-year-old, I was very clear that it was God calling me, and I had not had those thoughts to be a missionary to the corporate world. Once my children turned 19, I thought that is very strange for a 19-year-old to think that, and so as time tested this calling, it became even more clear that it didn't originate from me, and that since that was the calling, and since now my eyes had been open that coaching might be a better definition of missionary to the corporate world, that can give you the confidence that is needed. I try to talk to coaches about that, to say, "I hope you're not going into coaching because you think it's an easy money-maker, or it looks like it's fallen off a log. It's just conversations. I hope you're doing it because the Lord is in it, and when the Lord is in it, that can give a tremendous amount of confidence and power to the relationship that you have not only in the coaching that you're doing one-on-one, but also in the drive that you have to get over the tough things that come our way anytime that you're in business and starting out something new even if you're starting out something new inside a company, the way I was."

Brian: That resonates for me. I just a year ago, I left pastoring for 20 years, and I'm sure people today are still thinking, "Oh, he wanted to do something different." However, my calling was so distinct and strong. I had no choice. When I left IBM, my dad thought I was the dumbest person on the earth even though I had a high education. Why would you leave IBM? Why would you leave pastoring? If God's called you, why would you leave pastoring? There's only two choices, and you don't want to be a missionary, but even our tagline says we help people find their way with God by training the best coaches in the world, and I believe that. It's a calling that we have, right? I love the way you're leaning into that. So what's next?

Jane: Well what was next was the six months came and went. Nobody actually paid attention to that day on the calendar except for me because it worked.

Brian: How did you know it worked? How did people know, "Oh man. This obviously worked?"

Jane: One of the things I didn't share. When my boss said, "Here's the deal. You get six months." She said, "And within this first week, you have to tell me how to tell me how to measure the effectiveness of this six months. You can't tell me after the fact. That wouldn't be very high integrity. You can't tell me after the fact what you did. You have to tell me now what you did, what you will do, and how we're going to measure the success of that." Without any ICF Prism Award guidelines, I had not been introduced to Jack Phillips' ways to measure the effectiveness of coaching yet. I just made it up. We already measured to know if our division was succeeding or not, and I said well we'll pick those, and if coaching works, then those things that we're already measuring to know that our organization is successful or not will change, and they'll be better.

Brian: What kind of increase were you looking for?

Jane: I didn't know.

Brian: A percent or just...?

Jane: It was like percentage of revenue. The things we picked were revenue, retention, and recruiting. Those were critical measurement factors to know if you were going to be successful in software engineering. So I picked that. I said I'm going to pick revenue because that's the hottest thing that we need to deal with, and I'm going to pick retention and recruiting because that's people related, and coaching is people related, and so those numbers were already up in six months. I was, in my mind, I'm going, "How do I know that coaching did it versus something else did it, or maybe just..."

Brian: I was wondering that just now.

Jane: Yeah, I was racking my brain going how am I going to answer those questions because as you know, it is a tough world at IBM. You don't get a buy just to say, "I think we did that." I'm trying to figure out how to answer those questions, and fortunately, on that day, of the six-month mark, I was not asked. Because I would not have had enough of an answer at that point.

Brian: But they were convinced.

Jane: But they were convinced. Nobody even cared that it was the six-month mark because it was working so well, but two years later, I was asked to speak at a conference about coaching within IBM. It was two years after I started coaching, but it was in 1999. The fall of '99, I was asked to speak about what we had done and what the results were and all of that. It was then, and not until then, I'm putting together my charts for what I'm going to say, and if you're representing the IBM corporation anywhere, speaking about anything, your slides have to be approved to be presented. So I was going through that process. I couldn't put numbers on the chart. I couldn't put actual revenue figures on the chart, but I could put a line graph showing revenue growth without the numbers filled in. So I did that. I also placed on that same line graph the coaching initiatives that I had started and when I had started them. So you see this line graph that keeps going up and up, but it's not a straight line.

It goes up a little bit, and it flattens out. It goes up a little bit, and it flattens out. When I also plotted on there the coaching initiatives, I started like coaching individuals, and coaching managers, and coaching skills for managers, and coaching teams, and coaching cross functional teams. I plotted those dates on that same juxtaposed with the revenue growth, and sure enough, it was roughly, not an exact science, but roughly about three months after I started each of those initiatives, we got a revenue bump, and it was so consistent.

Brian: You could see it then.

Jane: You could see it. Even without the actual figures on the chart, you could see just the slope of the curve had been impacted.

Brian: So the first one could have been lucky. It could have been something else. Who knows? Could have been some technology improved, but after seeing over two years, three months after each initiative, there was a significant bump in revenue, that was proof.

Jane: Right, and that kicked off this firestorm of interest of what we were doing in coaching at IBM.

Brian: So as we close up this time together, Jane, I just think it's so significant for organizations, and I don't think it's just Christian organizations that listen to us, but any organization is thinking about adding coaching to improve their success. What are two or three things you would encourage someone to think about? Whether it's the leader, or maybe it's someone like you that's in the organization at a different level that would like to introduce coaching to the organization.

Jane: Organizational effectiveness happens through people, and unfortunately, you can't reach inside their head and get them to think differently. Can't get them to change what their motives are and why it is that they operate the way that they do, but what you can do is focus on what they are created to do, and when we do that and figure out how that's going to become what they contribute to the organization, whether it's a ministry organization or a corporate setting, then everybody wins. Not only that, it is a worship experience to do what our maker set out for us to do whether we acknowledge it or not, it is. It is this acknowledgement that there is a maker, and there was a purpose, and when we're doing what that purpose is, everybody wins. The individual wins, the organization wins, and everybody around them actually is inspired to do those kind of things, and for me, coaching was the vehicle to have those discoveries, to figure out what people were created to do, and it seems like a big investment. It seems like, I'd rather have what are the 12 steps to effectiveness in an organization, and unfortunately,

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that's not how we're made. We're all unique. We're all individual, and it's a discovery process to figure out what it is that we're to be doing with our lives. So having some kind of way of getting at that will be a solid investment.

Brian: Jane, I want to thank you for joining us for this two-part podcast. It's been inspiring, encouraging, and informative. I appreciate it.

Jane: You're welcome. Thanks for listening to me for two parts of this and giving me the opportunity to speak about my calling and the things that really are what I'm supposed to be doing. So thank you for that. I'm a winner today.

Brian: You're welcome. You're welcome, and let me thank the listeners. Thank you so much for joining us. You can find out more about us by going to www.coachapproachministries.org and downloading our free eBook, *The Beginner's Guide to Christian Coaching: How to Have Powerful Conversations That Really Make a Difference*. See you next week.

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