



Coach Approach Ministries Podcast

Episode 92: Mel Uses a Coaching Consulting Hybrid

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Brian Miller: One of the toughest things for new and not-so-new coaches is finding paying clients. You need paying clients to get better as a coach, and especially if you want to be an ICF-certified coach. People don't always realize that bartering is an accepted form of payment by the International Coach Federation. That's why we put together the Coaching Exchange. The Coaching Exchange is your ticket to paid coaching hours with really good clients. In the Coaching Exchange, you get 40 hours of paid coaching experience, and you help other coaches do the same. Experience matters. Go to coachapproachministries.org/coachexchange to find out more. coachapproachministries.org/coachexchange.

[Intro Music]

Brian: I'm Brian Miller, Strategic Director for Coach Approach Ministries, CAM for short, and I'm joined here today by Mel Ming. Mel has served as a pastor, a missionary, seminary and university administrator and professor, and denominational district official. Mel was the founder of the doctorate program for the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary. Mel's the founding partner and coach consultant with Leadership Development Resources. He created and directed the Doctor of Ministry degree for the Assembly of God. I have mentioned that already. He served as Professor of Leadership and Organizational Development at the Assemblies of God and also at Southeastern University and Northwest University. The only thing I don't see on here, Mel, is your IMDb, what movies you've acted in. I don't see that.

Mel Ming: Well, that's a little out of my skill set.

Brian: What's not in your skill set, my friend? You've done about everything, Mel, and I'm sure I didn't mention this, and I'm sure this probably the most important thing to him, is his wife, Martha, and he have two married daughters, and at least at last count, four grandchildren.

Mel: Absolutely.

Brian: And where are you located, Mel?

Mel: I live right out of Spokane, Washington. Which is in eastern Washington. When I decided to retire, I told my wife I just need an airport, and she needed grandkids. So that's where we are.

[Transcribed by Danelle Miller](#)

Brian: Awesome. And so, just give us... Where did you hear about coaching?

Mel: Well, actually, I got involved in it in the year 1980s, and at that time it more called consulting. The idea of coaching, as we know it today, was still not developing, so I was basically a consultant, a leadership coach, a leadership consultant, and then when we got into about 1990, we switched the word to coaching.

Brian: So many times, today even, people call themselves a coach and they're, they're purely a consultant. Do you still see that?

Mel: Yeah, I think that, you know, at different levels. Sometimes you're pure, sometimes you're a pure coach, sometimes you're a pure consultant, but a lot of times with working in enterprises, I find that you end up wearing both hats at different times.

Brian: Oh, yeah, yeah, absolutely, and we're going to get into that a little bit. So, right now you're working with a coaching consultant firm. I mean, I love that you're being really clear that you do both coaching and consulting. How did this get started, this new firm?

Mel: Well, actually I established it in the 90s. I was having so many requests for people to get my coaching that I decided the only hope was to train some other coaches, because I was, you know, somebody would call me and say, "Hey, I want you to coach," and I would say, "Hey, it's a year before I can get to you." Well, nobody wants to hear that when you're ready for a coach.

Brian: Right. They wait to the last minute.

Mel: Yeah.

Brian: They're ready right now. So, you started it for that reason, and then started bringing other coaches on alongside.

Mel: Right, and the idea was, in a sense, to just multiply what you were doing and to create access. You know, when you coach, especially very large churches or businesses, there's a certain expectation, but there's a whole lot of small churches and small businesses that need a coach that probably couldn't afford if you would say to hire somebody that's in the "Big Leagues," but they still need it, so you're trying to find a way to get coaching to them.

Brian: What have you found the difference between coaching a small business and a larger organization. What do you need to be thinking differently about as a coach?

Mel: Well, I think one of the big things is just the complexity. A lot of small businesses or small churches are highly relational. Everybody knows each other, so there's a clear understanding. As the enterprise gets bigger and bigger, the complexity grows, and the communication is harder, and the systems have to be more complete. So, when you get to a large organization, you have to have an enterpriser systems view that can really go through multiple layers.

Brian: Do you do that by coaching one person, or coaching a team, or coaching multiple people?

Mel: With most of the clients that I work with, it's a combination. I usually do some coaching with the Leader, the Executive Leader, the CEO, the Lead Pastor, whichever word it would be, but I'm also,

almost always, coaching their top team, and they go by different names. It might be an Executive Team, a Strategy Team, but I'm usually coaching the entire team because what I'm usually helping them do is develop a strategy that moves them significantly forward.

Brian: Okay. Yeah, so you have the opportunity to coach multiple people. What kind of obstacles do you find as you're keeping confidentiality for each individual? What are some of the obstacles you find of coaching multiple people on the same team, yet individually?

Mel: Well, I think it's imperative, just from an integrity standpoint, that right from the start, everybody understands the rules. So, for example, when I coach a church, I have to have... we establish, "Am I being hired by the church, or am I being hired by the Lead Pastor," because if I'm hired by the Lead Pastor, then my coaching is filtered through that one. If I'm hired by the church, it could be the Lead Pastor is the problem.

Brian: I see. Yes.

Mel: And so, it's very important before you ever start, you understand who's doing the hiring here.

Brian: We were talking a little bit before we started recording, and you said that... Well, I'll let you describe it. So, when you get a call, we'll say in this case from a church, what kind of things are they looking for from you?

Mel: Most of the ones at this point are looking, when they call me, they've hit a wall, or they've gone as far as they can go in their organizational structure, and they don't know how to change their organization to grow to the next level. So, they've grown from 2000 to 3000, but they have no clue how to grow from 3000 to 5000. So, most of the time when they call me, they've either hit a wall or they're at a growth plateau and they're wanting to know how they move to the next level.

Brian: With coaching you try to draw things out of folks, but they may just not know how to grow to the next level. They may not know what systems are required. They may not know, and so you bring some of that information with you.

Mel: Yeah, and here's where I think, and I know this isn't the pure form, but this is where I find that you blend coaching and consulting. I'm never going to know their people and their organization as well as they do. So, when we start designing this system to go forward, they're, through coaching questions, we're going to bring out who's the player that could sit on that place on the bus. I'm not going to bring that. They're going to have to discover that. What I might bring to them is, "Here are some..." and, hardly ever would I ever tell somebody, "This is the way to do it." What I would often say is, "Somebody at your side is going to the net. Here are three possible ways that other people have done this. Which one fits your culture and DNA?"

Brian: Yeah, that's great. I like to talk about, even in a concise statement, you can say a lot of things to your client, even in pure coaching, as long as what you're saying is simply truth and not a solution. So, you're walking a really fine line there as you say there, "The truth is that other churches that have gone past this, have used this approach, or this approach," but where the fine line is between saying, "Here is the solution for you," is the point of saying, "I would suggest you go with this one." I bet that's... I don't know about you, but for me that would be very difficult not to want to weigh in.

Mel: You know, it is, but I would say probably because I've done it so long, I take the advantage, or take the approach, that they have to find... I mean, I can give them viable options. I can get on a whiteboard and show them, "Hey, here are three ways this could happen," but ultimately, they're going to have to find the one, one, that they can own, and two, fits who they are. For example, right now I coach several clients that are similar size, they're between 3000 and 6000 in attendance, but their DNA is so different. What would work for one would not work for another, and what I would do personally, wouldn't fit any one of the three because their gift mix, their strengths, their history is unique. So, by giving them some options that they probably don't know about, then allowing them to process which of those would be appropriate, I find moves them ahead the best.

Brian: How do you keep your head about you? Did you make some mistakes and learn? That's one way I learned, was, I learned that when I let them come up with their own solution, it's better than the one I thought. That's the way I learned it. What do you keep in your mind as you approach this hybrid between consulting and coaching?

Mel: Well, some of it comes back from... My early background was in teaching, and my goal was always to train students who went further than I ever went. So, I was always trying to look for their unique potential and then help them release it where they reached it. I think I do the same with my clients. When I go in my idea is not to tell them or even guide them but to open up possibilities, to help them find some clarity, and then find something they could own and implement. It does me no good to present a solution that's beyond their skill set. On the other hand, most of the clients I teach are going to actually be bigger than I ever was personally.

Brian: So, you even know that that's not your situation. It reminds you you have a chance to go where you've never gone before as well.

Mel: Yes, absolutely, and one of the things I find is, like many of the leaders I coach, are, I mean, these are highly visionary, entrepreneurial leaders. They're driven, they have great communication skills, and a lot of them are ADD, but what they often... What I can bring sometimes, is the systems approach, I have the ability in a complex situation, to see how all the dots connect, and sometimes, by my questions and the process, we can help them connect the dots so that they're able to get a solid foundation under their vision.

Brian: Something I have ran into with high vision, high D on the DISC, HDD, is that they aren't always willing to relax into the coaching conversation to let awareness come. They really just want you to tell them the solution. Do you find that, and if so, how do you get them to enter into the conversation?

Mel: You definitely do find it, absolutely. In fact, I would say more of my clients than not, they would rather I came in and just said, "This is what you need to do," and I won't do that.

Brian: Right.

Mel: Which frustrates them sometimes.

Brian: Yes.

Mel: But I have found that if they don't process it, they don't own it.

Brian: Yeah.

Mel: One of the things I bring to the equation is I can facilitate them processing it. Now, with some of them, we'll process it, I would say, in a faster way than I would prefer, but I make sure that they design systems that, with their people, especially their second, third, fourth-level, that they process more systematically.

Brian: Yeah, so what's something you would say to the CEO that is just saying, "Mel, just tell us what to do. We don't want to go through this process." What's something you say to that person to settle them in? This is something I just find our coaches have a problem with all the time, is they're not sure what to say.

Mel: Yeah. I would come back and say to them, "You know I could give you the answer, but you would never own it, and if you don't own it, it will not change your organization. You're going to have to come to the point that you have conviction, not just accepting that I know it. You've got to own it, and you can't own it if you can't understand it."

Brian: We'll be right back after this brief message. Coach Approach Ministries is like that roast beef sandwich shop, "We have the meat!" In April of 2018, we're offering three high-level coaching classes for coaches who are ready for what's next. *Coaching and the Brain* introduces you to the neurological dynamics involved in learning. You'll learn about the five brains and how to take advantage of all those good chemicals floating around in our brains. *A Coach Approach to Evangelism and Discipleship* gives attention to how a dialogical approach can be effective in evangelism and discipleship. My partners, Chad Hall and Bill Copper, literally wrote the book on this subject with *Faith Coaching*, and if you love assessments, you'll want to take *Using Assessments in Coaching*. You'll learn the when, who, and how of using assessments to promote effective client engagement. These are all online classes which start in April of 2018. So, go to coachapproachministries.org/coachadvance to sign up now and keep your coaching skills sharp.

[Intro Music]

Brian: Have you had situations where they came up with something, and you're thinking in your mind, "Oh man, that's not going to work?"

Mel: Oh, I think you run into that. In any process of complexity, you're going to run into it, but there's where your coaching comes in because I can almost always come back, "Have you thought about this?" "What would you do if...?" "Could you see an alternate way..." You know, there's where your coaching skills and your coaching questions help them, hopefully, see the blind spot, and then self-discover.

Brian: So, in those situations, it's more of a team coaching. You're facilitating the team. And then in another situation you're coaching individuals. Are there other scenarios there where you coach, that would look different than either of those two?

Mel: You know, often, again, it's a blend. Like with one client I was working with, for example, we identified a strategy for very significant growth, but that strategy demanded that some of their key people develop new leadership skills. So, we set up a process over a period of weeks, working individually with those people giving them a skill that would enable the overall plan to happen. So, it was

a combination, if you will, of group team leadership and individual.

Brian: So, we might call that “leadership development,” in a sense, where you bring some training but then you also coach that training into place. How do you bring that mix of training and coaching to that individual in a leadership development situation?

Mel: Very rarely, I think, is a skill learned through a presentation.

Brian: Yeah.

Mel: A presentation can motivate. A presentation can inspire. A presentation can reinforce, but if we’re talking about an actual skill, like a skill like, “How do you recruit and develop leaders of leaders?” You’re going to have to work with them in bite-size elements that they try, they develop, they add that to their skillset. Then you add another bite. Then you add another bite. Then, all of a sudden, after we’ve added enough bites, they have the skill and they own it, but very little of that is going to happen in a public presentation.

Brian: Yeah. That’s, that’s what really has leaned me in to coaching as well, is you go to a conference, you have a speaker who says some things you feel is right on, you go home, you can’t do it. You don’t... even if they wrote the book, you can’t implement it. You have to find a way to think about making the connections for yourself, and coaching is high successfully at that. That is such a good statement, but at the same time, you also bring some content, which every coach we have would like more clients. That’s the number one thing we’ve found, and when you try to sell absolutely pure coaching, it’s harder to sell, I think, to be honest. So, this idea of bringing some content. I’m curious, you talked about bite-size pieces for that leadership development. Do you go in with a list of bite-size pieces or do you coach that out and then use your experience to say, “Here’s a bite-size piece that I think would work well for you today?”

Mel: Yeah. If we’ve identified a skill that needs to be learned by a particular person, I generally will process and create a scope and sequence. What are the logical bite-size steps they should need to develop this skill set. Now, I don’t necessarily show them that, but I would have a process. So, on the one I just mentioned, for example, we were teaching them how to recruit and lead leaders of leaders. I identified 13 bite-size skills that they could learn, and we would do 1 or 2 every coaching session, but then they had to put those into practice before we went to the next one. You were building, if you will, their skill set. So, I generally do have a scope and sequence in my mind, but it is always going to change by their process. You know, some of them would have natural skills that lean into it, and some of them, they’re learning something that’s foreign to them. Well, they’ll process differently.

Brian: You have a list for yourself for this individual, that you’ve created, and then, do you... I’m just curious about the nitty gritty dirt of this piece. So, do you start out with your client that first time and say, “I know here’s what we’re trying to get across overall, to develop this particular skill.” Do you start with your first micro-bite, or do you just start letting them talk about it, and then seeing in the moment which one of those bites might be best for today?

Mel: Well, here again, I think it depends on how your coaching practice is. In almost all of mine, I’m going to know these people already. We already have rapport. We already have credibility. We already have a history. So, I don’t need to do as much front end rapport building as if you would if you were

talking with a brand new client, and I would say because of that, I'm almost always going to give them the first couple of bites, because I want them to experience some immediate success, and if they see that these bites work, all of a sudden, they're much more anxious for the next one.

Brian: I love that. I teach a Coaching Church Planters class, and that's a piece we put right in for the coaches, is the first thing I would want to give a church planter is something that they can get a win with easy, so that they begin to lean in and trust the process. Is that what you're describing?

Mel: Yeah, absolutely. And I would normally say to them, depending on the skill set we're working on, I might say, "We're going to plan on five meetings. At the end of five, we'll make an assessment. If we've got the skill, there's no need of us going further. If you haven't, we'll talk about what we didn't get."

Brian: I like it. That's a check-in. It's just another coaching technique again, "Let's check in and see where you're at on your agenda, on the agenda." So, we're not going too slow; we're not going too fast. It's a great piece.

Mel: Right.

Brian: So, you also talked about that you started this company in order to train others up. I suppose, without throwing anybody under the bus... I don't want you to name names or anything, but what are three or four things, bad habits, that people you train to do what you do, need to be broke. What are some bad habits that people have, coaches?

Mel: Well, I think the first one is a lot of people in church circles I work in who want to go into coaching, want to be tellers and want to be experts.

Brian: Yeah.

Mel: And because of that, it hinders the whole process.

Brian: Yes.

Mel: You know, we have to teach them, you know, yes, you may need to bring some information, but you bring it in the process of this relationship, and as a peer, not as a superior.

Brian: That's hard. People have to have that broken out of them.

Mel: Yeah, and I think that, especially for a lot of ministers, who make their living, if you will, telling, it's a new skill set.

Brian: And, often, the client's saying, "Tell me."

Mel: I think related to that, by the way, I find that some people who came to me early for coaching... This would have been especially true in the late 90s, who wanted to learn be a coach, what they really wanted to learn was to be an expert, and it was an ego thing. They didn't have what I would call a servant heart, and I think that got in the way of the whole process.

Brian: So, a servant heart, a realization that you're not the expert, you have some information, but you're limited to that and let them be the expert of the information you even bring. What's another thing you find with coaches you train that kind of needs to be broke out of them?

Mel: Well, I don't know if I'd say "broke out of," but in coaching organizations, a lot of coaches don't have enough exposure to know even the questions to ask, and they actually need to get more exposure with the kind of clients they're going to coach. You know, if you, all your life were in a company that had 40 employees, but now you're trying one with 1000...

Brian: Yes.

Mel: You're out of your skill set, but you still... You're not going to be an expert, but you need to have enough exposure, you know, what are the issues of this middle-sized company?

Brian: And how do you find that out? How do you expose them?

Mel: I think that if there's a variety of ways. One is, you know, just become a student of the kind of organizations that your clients are going to be part of. Very few of us can be what I call "all things to all people." We have niches where we can really excel. So, for example, I have some coaches that I've trained, that they do fantastic with churches under 300.

Brian: Yes.

Mel: I have another coach who does fantastic with churches maybe 300 to 1500, and then, you know, there are some that could feel very much with the megachurch, but you better know the environment you're going to coach to, or you won't even understand the questions you should ask.

Brian: Oh I see that at conferences all the time, and it seems to me like most conferences won't let you speak unless you have over 2500 people in your church, and then they're speaking to all these pastors of 50 to 200 people, and it doesn't translate because if you know what needs to happen at 1500+, that probably tells me you do not know what needs to happen at 200.

Mel: That's right, because it's been so long since you've been there, you won't even remember it.

Brian: They don't.

Mel: I usually tell any of my clients, "Who you need to be looking at is somebody twice as big as you, not somebody 10 times as big as you."

Brian: That's good, good advice. Mel, we're out of time. I have so thoroughly enjoyed this. I definitely want to come back another time and find out what you don't remember about the early days, when you learned so much about coaching and were a pioneer for so many people like me. You've laid out a lot of groundwork, and I so appreciate the work and the time you have taken to develop others into this model through the seminaries, and through your own work. If people want to get more information about you, Mel, where can they find you?

Mel: Well, they can get me at leadershipdevelopmentresources.com, ldrteam.com. But at this point, I would say I'm pretty well retired, and there's a lot of great coaches out there that, hopefully, they can plug in through Coach Approach Ministries.

Brian: Oh, well thank you for that plug. We appreciate that. So, thanks, everybody, for joining us today. Don't miss any of our podcasts. You can subscribe at iTunes, Overcast, Stitcher, Google Play by searching for Coach Approach Ministries Podcast. We'll see you next week.

[Outro Music]

Brian: Want to know more about how coaching enhances discipleship? My partners, Bill Copper and Chad Hall, literally wrote the book on the subject with *Faith Coaching: A Conversational Approach to Helping Others Move Forward in Faith*. We are hosting a free webinar on Thursday, April 12, 2018, and even if you can't attend the live event, register now and we'll send you a link to the recording afterward. To register for this free webinar, go to coachapproachministries.org/freewebinar.

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