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**SPEAKERS**

Zoe Hawkins, Jo Wheatley

**Zoe Hawkins** 00:03

The Coaching Crowd podcast is for compassionate courageous leaders, HR professionals and high achievers, people who are passionate about helping others to find alignment in their lives through coaching, and do a thinking of training and developing as a coach. Hello, and welcome to the coaching crowd podcast with me Zoe Hawkins and my friend and co host, Jo Wheatley. Hi,

**Jo Wheatley** 00:24

everybody. Welcome to today's podcast episode. Today, we're talking about replacing managers with coaches. We love the title because we thought it was a little bit bold. And we're in that kind of an energy today. But really, this topic idea came from an article that came across, I think, was being circulated on LinkedIn. And it said that a company replaced all of its managers with coaches, and employees became 20%, more productive, and much happier. So we thought we'd we talk about that topic today. And, you know, for those of you that are listening, maybe you aren't a trained coach, yet, maybe you are a manager, what are your thoughts about, about coaching? If you think about what are the reasons that as a manager, you're interested in training to be a coach, do you recognise something within this article in this title that that you're already aligned to?

**Zoe Hawkins** 01:16

I certainly remember from my corporate days, the impact that managers had, on my experience at work, the work was actually never an issue for me. I chose a job because I was interested in the stuff that I was doing, right, so I had an HR career. And I always found my work fascinating. Of course, there were times when I started to maybe grow out of interest with a certain topic, but then I'd be able to find different projects and assignments. So for me, the work was never a challenge. But I definitely even from my very first role, the success of my enjoyment at work was very much down to the manager that I had supporting me. So I can see how if you had a coach, you know, somebody who had done self development, understanding of themselves understanding of their own sort of triggers and responses and needs, how that could have a very, very different impact on the experience that I may have had at work at any different particular times. How about you, Joe? What's your reflection? Yeah,

**Jo Wheatley** 02:24

I think for me, my experience of having a coach is that they're there. For me, when I think about my experience of having a manager, I feel that they're there for the organisation. And I really feel that so if, in this example that we're talking about, if actually, I was working in an organisation and my manager, you know, they're not there to manage me, I mean, to think of the wording that we have of these titles, but instead, they were there to coach me and maybe a blend of coaching and mentoring, depending on their, their level of experience, I personally would enjoy that dynamic, much more. And so some of the figures that were created in this article were that according to Gallup, employee engagement dropped to a seven year low. Last year, only a third of workers reported feeling engaged at work with 18%, describing themselves as actively disengaged. And, you know, we've heard terms like the great resignation, and what that has meant is, you know, people leaving organisations in droves, and we know that COVID has had a big impact where people have been shifting their ways of working, you know, lots more people working from home or hybrid working, which really suit some people, but it's a harder adjustment for others. But the main reasons that were driving that trend, were employees not feeling valued by their organisation, so 54% of people identified as feeling that 52% identified as not feeling engaged or valued, not feeling valued by their manager, and 51% not feeling a sense of belonging at work. So, you know, when we talk about coat, you know, managers having coaching skills, it's really, it's moving away from the telling, you know, approach not all managers tell, obviously, but when we think about coaching approach is asking more open questions, you know, helping the client to explore their strengths in relation to their goal or the challenges that they're feeling. Being able to trust that there's value in their experience of learning along the way. Some people need to learn through experience, you know, others learn in different ways, but helping I think the individual to also learn about how do they learn best? Yeah,

**Zoe Hawkins** 04:47

yeah, the manager has a huge influence on the experience isn't as you were talking there as kind of thinking well, you know, the organisation doesn't value me well. The organisation is made up of people, you know, so that again, for Sighs as the importance of the people that you have in your system, and so how do you create an environment where value is an inherent part of your culture? And I guess this proposal is that you bring coaches to the mix. But if we take it back from like the utopia, yes, great, let's all become coaches. In reality, there are times when people will need to be told what to do, because a coaching approach isn't going to work. Like you can imagine somebody's brand new to a job who's never sort of done this task before. And you're being presented with well, how do you think you should approach it? I really don't know. That's why I've come to ask you, I'd simply don't know where to get started. Well, where could you get started? I really don't know where to get started. Like, there are times where some direction can be really, really helpful. And as I've been listening to some of the things you were sharing, I was like, Is there a continuum in this organisation, we don't know, because it's a case study, where there is active mentoring. And then at the other end, active coaching, and we know through, you know, training and development, it is quite hard to dance that continuum, you tend to have style, you tend to veer towards somebody who is a mentor who likes to give advice, and likes to provide solutions and share their experience. And obviously, at the other end, you've got the non directional coaching, which is, you know, the client has all of the resources and the answers. And I think both are really important in organisations, you know, you it's a utopia thing to just have coaches. But I think we also need to honour and respect that there will be times in situations where direction is useful to the client. So you need some highly skilled coaches, I think, to be able to dance that continuum successfully, and judge the moments where mentoring could be more valuable than coaching. And of course, the way that you do that is contracting with the person that aware that the time like what would be most helpful to you right now.

**Jo Wheatley** 07:03

And there's, I think there's a big part of this, which is, of course, just, you know, we say, you know, this is the title, is it replacing managers with coaches when his article that that alone is not going to be the change? Actually, where this came from, is the organisation surveyed the people that they were recruiting and asked them, What did they want from a manager, and the approaches that they were listening, if the organisation felt were more aligned to what you'd expect from a coach than you would traditionally expect from a manager? And so they didn't only, you know, replace the managers with coaches? And what does that mean? Does that mean the job titles, does that mean giving them additional training, you know, so there's more expression of that, but it's really it's a cultural shift, I think that we're looking at, and ideally, cultural shifts, I think, are stimulated from the workforce rather than a top down approach. So you're exploring, I think it's ideal to just constantly be in conversation with the workforce about the emerging needs, you know, and once. And so in this particular organisational case study, you know, they gave people an allowance, a monthly allowance for courses, and, you know, they supplemented it in other ways. And so, as you were describing in the exam compensation example, you're giving say, was like, well, in employees don't always know how to be a coachee, how to be coached. Because if they've always worked in organisations, where they're expected to go to their manager at certain points and for certain things, and then the manager makes the decision, and all of a sudden, they're faced with a dynamic of, without even being told, actually, you get to make your own choices, I'm here to support you. It's okay. If you make mistakes, we'll support you to learn from it. That can be quite a shock to the system. And it could also have not managed well create a culture of distrust and feeling that things that will things have changed so radically, are they going to change again, we're always changing things. So I'll just wait until it's all you know, settled down. So how, how do we support the conversations in organisations? We know one size does not fit all for any thing in life. So as you were saying, How I think the question is, perhaps more? How do How can organisations support all of the people in the organisation to be able to learn about their own needs, and be able to engage in productive conversations with those that they're in contact with about how to how they can best support each other to be successful? I also saw something recently and it reminded me of things that I had talked about in organisations I've worked in before. So somebody posted a picture and he had, let's say, eight different a4 sheets like next to his computer on the wall. And it had basically information about how that person liked to be engaged with you know how to get the best out of me. And so that's a useful reference point then for the individual if they thought, well, I need to, you know, work with this person, or we need to achieve this together, rather than just thinking, Well, I'm just gonna go and we're going to work together. And that'll be I'm not going to give much thought to it, it's being able to reference and say, Ah, this person would really appreciate that. And so I'm going to think about that, as we began working together on this, and it got shared so many times 1000s of likes, and I thought, yeah, you know, I've worked with managers in the past, where we've, you know, doing team development activities. And when you start to invest it, you realise how little not only do people realise how little do they know about each other, and the way they like to work together, but also how little they really know about themselves, because they haven't given opportunities to either think it's important, or to really get to the heart of, of what makes them uniquely them.

**Zoe Hawkins** 10:49

I've worked with managers in coaching or leaders in coaching, who work for organisations, you have software, where everybody does some personality, profiling, and talks about their values and what's important to them. And that's uploaded to a central system. So a line manager is able to log in and have a look at, oh, look, you know, Joe Smith's values are this, that and the other, you know, Mary's values of this than the other. And this is how I need to be working with them. And it gives the opportunity for people to express this is how I like to work. I suppose the challenge with that is creating the time and space then to be able to genuinely use it, because what we see in many organisations, is managers don't really have just a management role. They have their day job, where they need to do all the doing, and they need to manage the team. And I suppose what we're talking about here, in the context of putting a coach in place is that coach has the time and the space to dedicate to the team. That's how I certainly imagine the role of a coach anyway, as I'm a coach, my sole purpose is to be there and motivate and engage and support and guide through coaching. The people who are doing the job well, if you took all the day job away from the managers, and simply enabled them to have time and capacity to have regular one to ones and follow ups, and, you know, development sessions and support, probably managers could do an amazing job of that, too. So it's it. It's a little bit of everything, isn't it? And what you said very early on in this conversation around a coach is there for me, and a manager was there for the business. I was like, I wonder if that if you we lived in this utopian world where managers were replaced with coaches? Does that create a conflict of interest? And who is the organisation? Who is the business? I don't have the answers to those questions. I was just kind of surfacing in me. If there are coaches purely in the role to lead teams who were there for me, is that a conflict of interest with the business? And I don't know who their business is, maybe its shareholders, not sure, well,

**Jo Wheatley** 12:57

kind of just exploring that. I think it's about whether you're engaged as an employee or not. So we know that if yes, you might want to have a high level of retention in your organisation. But if you're retaining people that don't really want to be there, it's not a healthy place for them to be anymore, whether there just isn't a values alignment, or it doesn't fit in some way. And if things can't be adjusted, then that can reduce productivity. So for me, it's like if you're there, for me, as my coach, I'm there with the energy of I want to do my best for the organisation for my peers, and I want a role that's going to enable me to live my best life outside of work, and I'm going to give you 100% In my working role in our roles as external coaches in our terms and conditions we talk about, we cannot predict the outcome of coaching and it may result in the coachee leaving the organisation is not the purpose of coaching but just recognising that that isn't outcome in in many cases, but often is about how to support people, if they decide that they want to leave because they're discovering there isn't that fit anymore, they get to leave well, you know, and and focus on on those things. I was thinking earlier about, like the role of a project manager so I'm, I've been coaching a client who is a project manager. And the client has been bringing some of the challenges in the relationships with with the people on the project, but also with peers around it. And you know, the topic of not being an expert in the thing. So you're, you're responsible for this project, you've got a number of individuals delivering on it. They are subject matter experts, and your role is not to be a subject matter expert, but it can be disempowered feel disempowering for the project manager, because individuals on that team are subject matter experts that are so versed in their field, their language that they speak in their fields. And what happens when the project manager is asked questions and they don't know the answer to it and How does the individual cope with that? What beliefs does that activate or trigger how does the individual wants to show up in those situations and you know, I've been in a in a similar role in the past too and and it can be challenging because you are there for your people management or your your coaching skills, as well as your technical organisation skills as well. So again, there's me we've got that blend of like the day job, but also the fundamental people skills.

**Zoe Hawkins** 15:31

That's where my thinking was starting to go. And I was reflecting on clients that I've worked with who are stepping into very senior leadership roles, who have come through the organisation, perhaps, or certainly through that career trajectory, where they've had individual contributor roles become known as an expert, and then they step into this leadership role. And suddenly, they need to be an expert, they need to rely on the expertise of the team beneath them to know what is going on through the organisation. That's a significant transition from being all over the detail and all over everything, to a couple of steps on in your career, and just having a high level strategic view of the organisation. And when I think about coaching, and I think about those engagements that I've had, where I've found myself working with people in an industry that I know nothing about, there is that moment of like, Oh, this feels very unusual, like the content free sort of angle of coaching and corner of coaching, where you don't need to know anything about the story, the data, the detail in order to be able to coach the person and the impact and the challenge that they are experiencing. That's a radical change in thinking for organisations, who typically will appoint based on experience, you know, there, there are times when my husband was transitioning from the military, and he was looking at different job adverts, and most job adverts still look at X amount of years of experience in, you know, they are hunting out deep expertise. I don't see anybody hunting out pure leadership, pure coaching, you know, and thinking, Oh, we can train the technical side if we need to those roles, I think are very, very rare.

**Jo Wheatley** 17:19

While there are some great head of coaching roles, and Well, that's true,

**Zoe Hawkins** 17:23

but you still need expertise in coaching to be ahead of coaching.

**Jo Wheatley** 17:27

Yeah, and I think it's easy to say, Oh, we want you to take a coaching approach. But how how, as an organisation supporting individuals, and that's really where we got to designing our programme, which is to support leaders to step into and develop a coaching skill set. It's not to say they don't already have a degree of coaching skill set. We know all of the learners that come on to our coaching qualifications, let alone this leader, as coach training programme, have those skills, you know, they've brought them to it, but it's about how can we support people to deepen their expertise. And that involves working on self as well as developing that skill set. And it's the combination of those two things that I think really make the difference. And we always provide demos of conversations, because we know it needs to make sense in the context that leaders are working in rather than from a purist teaching approach. So all of our demos are giving a rough drawing on either a current or a previous experience, or examples that come up in our work regularly. And so they can see those conversations and how to put the coaching approach into practice in those everyday scenarios that

**Zoe Hawkins** 18:36

crop up. Yeah, and that's a programme that we currently run internally for organisations, we create an ability to take units of different coaching trainings to design bespoke facilitation, maybe add on coaching, you know, it's a very flexible programme. So if you're listening to this, and you're an HR decision maker or leadership development decision maker, and you've been thinking about putting in place some leader as coach training, then feel free to reach out to our team at info IG company dot code at UK and we'd be happy to talk you through how that might be a good fit for you. So thanks for listening to this podcast. We hope you found the topic of replacing managers a fascinating one. I think in conclusion, there's no risk that all managers are going to be wiped out from organisations yet. But I do believe there is a strong case for managers gaining coaching skills, certainly for their everyday roles and we love welcoming leaders on to our coaching train the fully fledged coaching training qualifications for those who are deeply passionate about supporting people both inside organisations and beyond organisations in that transformational learning space. So do get in touch if that's you. Thank you for listening to the coaching crowd podcast with Zoe Hawkins and Jo Wheatley. We'd love for you to join our inclusive community to learn and grow In the coaching space go over to Facebook and search for the coaching crowd to be in good company with other aspiring coaches