

# One Knight in Product - E182 - Julie Starr

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## SPEAKERS

Julie Starr, Jason Knight

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Jason Knight 00:00

Hello, and welcome to the show. I'm your host, Jason Knight. And given the topic of tonight's episode, I'm going to start with some personal reflections on coaching. Now, as a coach, myself and founder of a mentoring platform, it would be easy for me to festoon this episode with adverts and callbacks. But I wanted to take some time to express gratitude to my former leadership coach Tracy James, who demonstrated the power of coaching to me firsthand and had such an impact on everything else that's come after Tracy was diagnosed with terminal cancer a few months ago. So I'm not sure if she's around to hear this. But if she is, thank you, Tracy, for everything you've done. And in any case, I hope she would have enjoyed the conversation. On tonight's episode, we go deep into the art of coaching and indeed the art of mentoring and whether it's as simple as saying there are two different things or whether it's a little bit more complicated than that. We also talk about what makes a good coach, whether they need to have industry expertise, or know anything about the person they're coaching, and whether you need to be a wise old owl to be a mentor, or just a little bit wiser than the person you're mentoring. For answers to all these questions and much more. Please join me on One Knight in Product.



Jason Knight 01:13

So my guest tonight is Judy star. Judy is over now and coach mentor, speaker and author who says that in the world of serious business, she turns up wearing high heels and a suitably solemn expression, which means that she and I already have at least one thing in common. Julie is also a published fiction author with lapdog books, but she's here tonight to throw us a bone and talk to us all about the ins and outs of coaching and mentoring. And as he is a practitioner of the Journey method I'm asking you to don't stop believing join this interview. Hi, Judy, how are you tonight?



Julie Starr 01:40

I'm well, thank you. I'm well, I wasn't expecting that. That was delightful. Thank you.



Jason Knight 01:44

No one ever expects the Spanish Inquisition. Alright, so first things first, you are the founder of Starr Coaching, owner of Starr Coaching. Alongside all those lovely books that you've written, some of which are on the shelf behind me right now. But what are you working on specifically day to day at the moment with your coaching practice?



Julie Starr 02:03

We are increasingly focused on mentoring, because of the kind of a rising interest kind of increasing interest in this activity. So the other meeting I had before this one was about supporting a cadre of mentors that have just gone through a mentoring programme related to a government initiative. And it's called how to grow and the people within that have all been using the mentoring manual, we've been talking about how best we can make kind of give them ongoing support, as they mentor. So increasing and my focus is mentoring. It always has been for the last 30 years, I'm obviously also focused on teaching managers and leaders how to coach some I have a brilliant team of people that go in to some lovely organisations and give these conversational skills to managers and leaders who want to be less directive in a kind of engaging in role performance throughout a path a journey of development and learning if you like rather than just smashing people on the heads and telling them what to do all the time, which is increasingly redundant as a style. So yeah, I'm always involved in that I'm always supporting the team to be doing that work. I'm always writing on one thing or another, or speaking, you know, it's a lovely, it's a lovely life, you know, engaged in this one to one work either labelled as mentoring or labelled as coaching, but it's a lot about developing people in the workplace.



Jason Knight 03:32

Yeah, I think it's amazing, actually, one of the things I enjoy most about consulting and coaching and all of that stuff is just getting out and having wonderful conversations with people and finding out their stories. And yeah, doing whatever I can, yeah, in any small way to try and help them along. So I do think it can be incredibly rewarding, but it sounds like you might be working with at least in part, some quite large companies that have big established mentoring programmes or big established teams. Is that fair to say? Or do you also kind of get in with startups and smaller places?



Julie Starr 03:59

I'm never quite sure why we've ended up in larger organisations. So you know, we work in some large law firms we work in kind of the financial insurance type, professional services type sector, we have some lovely clients in luxury retail, so people are self reduce Gucci Burberry, and primarily we're focused on leadership skills, sometimes that's twinned alongside a mentoring programme, sometimes it is part of some push either reorganisation or drive towards talent development, you know, increasing engagement, performance, things like that.



Jason Knight 04:40

But you said that the Taylorist type cliché of you know, command and control management and yeah, telling people what to do and bash them over the head is kind of going about fashion and you know, we all live and dream of the day but how often do you go into a company and that's actually true that it's actually gone out of fashion, versus maybe people are paying lip service to it, but But actually, the behaviours behind it are still pretty much the same. And it's still kind of acting in all those old ways.



Julie Starr 05:05

It's a really great question, because that's kind of been the lifelong challenge. And I, you know, I talked about this Velvet Revolution, which is, we get to work often within the kind of mid tier of an organisation. So the kind of middle management population, and by focusing on that population, we're accessing the largest influencing element for us, which is, you know, those people have teams of the round that they're driving through coaching, we teach them how to coach upwards, whether we actually get to do what you've pointed out, which is to really shift and shape the culture depends on the engagement of that organisation to rather than just pay lip service to this and do a discreet training programme, or to tackle it at that cultural, everyday workplace conversation. And we're fortunate enough to be working with a very large insurance organisation in the city at the moment. And those guys have really tackled this at that, at that broad tear, you know, so, so kind of 300 plus people across the organisation of Management at that middle management tier. And we are, we are seeing a significant shift, both in what people are doing, and also what people expect from their managers and leaders. So we're going back into work with a discrete group of those individuals at the moment where people are starting to say this isn't being used effectively as it can, they're starting to complain about that, because they're, they're starting to notice, hang on, why? Why is our management team not doing what everybody else is management, so we're kind of going in. So you kind of get this momentum, both push and pull, which is we want this, but also, there's a driving commitment behind it. So I see both Jason, I see pockets where and some some organisations we've worked with, for more than 10 years. So Selfridges, we've had as a client for many more than 10 years, we're still there. And by stealth, we have absolutely shaped that everyday workplace culture. And not just how managers and leaders talk to their teams, but how their teams talk to customers on the floor. So rather than jumping in headfirst with advice, information, or rebuttal, you know, we're teaching people to sit back to listen to ask questions to go into a conversation of inquiry to facilitate some understanding, and produce a different, a different customer experience, but also different, tangible outcome.



Jason Knight 07:45

Where it sounds like you're having a big impact, which is obviously brilliant, again, feels really meaningful. but alongside that big impact that you're making with the companies that you're working with, you've also written the aforementioned three books. Yeah, although in some cases, you've actually written them multiple times each. So you've got different versions.



Julie Starr 07:59

These week

I nave, yean.



Jason Knight 08:00

I've always got one version behind the one that I should have, which is something which I feel very stupid about, but you've got the mentoring manual, you've got the coaching manual, you've got brilliant coaching. And I'm pretty sure we could do an entire podcast episode on each of those things. But you know, maybe that'd be the premium content that we'll deliver at some other point. But in general, on a kind of a helicopter view level. Who do you recommend each of those books to, like, you've got these specific books that have three specific audiences? Or are they all kind of part of the same milieu,



Julie Starr 08:32

they're written for a different intent? So obviously, people read two of them, three of them, one of them. The Coaching Manual is the first book I wrote many years ago, probably 20 plus years ago, it's now in its fifth edition. So I think we, we relaunched that last week and every every time I update it, it goes through this careful careful process because the world of work changes the vernacular, you know, typical vernacular we've got, you know, we've got virtual teams, we've got zoom, we've got you know, diversity and inclusion, all those things have to be laid through as well as the evolution of the work itself and a shift in shaping models and clarity on principles and kind of universal truths. So The Coaching Manual is for anyone that wants to become a coach like a proper coach or to gain some kind of coach qualification so such as ilm, or you know, any of those, that tends to be the core text that is recommended on kind of coach qualification courses. It's less of a bite-sized read. So, it's probably 90,000 words, but it is as with all my books, kind of written in this everyday simplistic language and broken down with hints tips, you know, Breakout boxes that are kind of ideas to action or questions for reflection because I wanted you know, the coaching manual should do what it says on the tin it needs to feel like you are being guided you are being coached, you are being given simple access to the principle, the mindset, the skills, the behaviour, you know, breaks down the structure of a coaching assignments very much, I wanted to kind of give it all away and give people that fast access to what they need in order to stop thinking about becoming a coach and actually understand, here's the distances the journey, and I can get started right now, the mentoring manual is obviously its corresponding kind of twin, if you like that, again, works primarily within an organisational framework. So it's looking at mentoring in the workplace, it's looking at the core distinctions of the mentoring relationship, what's different what how it's different from coaching, or consultancy, or managing all those kinds of other one to one relationships that we might have. And again, might get you know, breaking down, it has all the same visual devices in terms of Breakout boxes, reflection notes case, you know, little stories to tell, you know, visually, I like things to I work hard on the with my publisher, person with the internal layout and design, again, to make it look fresh look appealing look like something that someone can dip in dip bound to, rather than this kind of more serious tone that people have to start at the beginning and get to the end of it's very much like pick it up start where you feel like you're interested and kind of work around it. Brilliant coaching is the third book and that is intended to be more of a bite size easier read. So that's something like how almost well it is half the length of the coaching manual. And that's for the busy manager who doesn't want to be a coach doesn't want to be a qualified coach, you know, doesn't want to rip themselves out and draw themselves again, as a different professional, perhaps, but more they want, again, fast access to the core principles, the ideas, what they need to stop doing, start doing things to try and

everyday conversation and things that they can start from the very moment that they stop reading. So in their next Zoom meeting, and then next one to one in their next conversation with their team, they can start to try different things in conversation. So again, like the other two books are breaking out unpacking these skills in order to make them accessible in the moment. So breaking down things like effective questioning, effective listening, building rapport, how to give constructive feedback of almost basically feedback, looking at both the principles that underpin coaching, but also the barriers to it. So the kind of what I call pitfalls to coaching, where we strategize within a conversation, or we have an agenda for the person, the other person. So looking at what can go wrong, as well as what you know what good looks like.



Jason Knight 12:38

Now, that all sounds really amazing, but does touch one point, which I'm very keen to dig into, which is, yeah, there does seem to be out and about these days, certainly in product management and kind of tech circles, because everyone's trying to be a coach these days. Yeah. And I support that. But at the same time, I also feel that there's some ambiguity over what coaching actually means. You touched yourself just now on some of the differences between coaching and mentoring, which obviously we're going to get into as well. But yeah, on a pure, I guess almost purist level, how would you specifically define coaching.



Julie Starr 13:14

So a coach, it's a one to one relationship, where the focus of attention is on the person being coached. And the coach aims to facilitate what I would call conversations of inquiry and insight. So literally, to understand what somebody wants to achieve what they want to shift and shape and change where they want to get to, and then start to understand the journey towards that and start to garner awareness, insights, realisations, perhaps support somebody into decision making an action, and generally facilitate this journey of evolution development, worthwhile change for the individual being coached.



Jason Knight 14:06

I'm gonna check that against the book to make sure you haven't gone against yourself.



Julie Starr 14:11

Well, it obviously wasn't from the book.



Jason Knight 14:14

I can vouch that Julie has not been reading out of the book... that was all off the cuff. I was very, very impressed at the clarity in that answer. But there is some debate in product management circles. So the world that I generally hang out in about whether you need to have industry or functional expertise to be that coach, so like when you're going in and chatting to someone about some of those things and listening to what they're saying and using hopefully

some of those coaching techniques, that actually you kind of have to have been for example, a product manager to coach product managers. Now, do you think that's true? Or do you think that that pushes the relationship somewhat away from quote unquote, proper coaching?

 Julie Starr 14:54

Absolutely not. So so when I look at the exact coaching I do I work in well, all All the you know, I work in logistics I work in luxury retail, I work in professional services law, so absolutely not no. And the only thing that kind of makes me relevant and it's, it's funny that you mentioned it right up front for more than novels is that I kind of look the part so I look relevant. So, you know, obviously, if I went in inappropriately dressed, I think I would lose rapport and lose, lose some respect and credibility because of that. So there is something that says, look relevant and and also have some sense of relationship to a workplace you know, and, and that doesn't take long for any of us to get more it takes longer for any of us to get are the skills and they are real skill. So this isn't knowledge, this is ability are the skills that underpin a good coaches access to be able to create these conversations of inquiry, insight, raised awareness, so and it's too easy for a coach or, you know, Coach/mentor to say, you know, I'm a lawyer, I've left, I've exited now, but I'm going back to coach lawyers, because you know, I've got all this relevant experience. And because I've got this relevant experience, I shouldn't be telling them that and I should be giving advice, and I should be sharing my war stories from where, because that's the expectation, that's not coaching. And in some cases, it's not mentoring, either. It's just somebody using the vehicle of the session to download their own stories and rhetoric. So, and it's all about the outcome, isn't it? So you can put me in front of anybody in any situation. And and this would include something I did last week, which was to have a coaching session with a neighbor's son that was making some career decisions. I know nothing about this individual know nothing about his career decision or nothing about his education, background, anything. But because I have these facilitative skills of effective listening inquiry, ability to use my intuition and insight by now ability to navigate throughout the structure of an effective conversation, I can have that effective conversation and indeed 30 years and 1000s of coaching hours later, I'm pretty confident about my opinion. Now, while it might not be other people's opinion, I do get that this is, you know, based on experience, this is what I have found that sector, that content, that even context to a certain extent, is less relevant than the coach's ability to use the skills of coaching effectively, and not argue against those not use a lack of ability to then justify doing something different in that situation.

 Jason Knight 18:04

Yeah, that's really interesting. It reminds me a little bit of Ted Lasso, I don't know if you've watched the show, but this idea, so he's a football coach that comes over from America, he's got no idea about football at all, but he spends all his time developing the team, you know, kind of on a personal level and on a, an emotional on a mindset level, which kind of again, like he always gets criticised for not being a football man or anything like that. But you know, at the same time, he's working on the kind of the fundamentals rather than sitting there telling the football how to kick a ball.

 Julie Starr 18:30

Yes, completely.



Jason Knight 18:31

But do you think that it can be negative for people to have too much industry expertise then to be a coach? Or is it just about them trying to check themselves.



Julie Starr 18:40

So a coach's development should include, not just the acquisition of awareness and skills, but also the development of their own mindset and what I call clearing work. So learning about the ego and ego is something I mentioned in all three books. So learning about the ego, learning about our tendency to allow the ego to take control of our behaviours in situations, so to start to trigger unhelpful behaviours from ourselves. And that could be talking too much. It could be trying to control the direction of the conversation, it could be thinking I know best in a situation, it could be trying to look good by either telling fabulous stories or name dropping or all of those things. When kind of novice coaches or even novice mentors, first start to engage in that activity, you are on your edge, you do want to do well, you do want to show value and sometimes the ego kind of gets a bit scared and a bit scattered and start thinking we haven't spoken for a while. We haven't said we need to ask a brilliant question. We need to we need to do something that demonstrates we're fit to coach or you know, especially if you're charging, that can be real trigger. And if you watch it Any experienced highly skilled coach, you'll notice that what they're doing looks effortless, because they tend to speak less. They know where to go in a conversation. So the less is there fluff and guff from, from them in terms of taking the conversation down dark alleys, face tend to stay on track. And on point, even when I'm tracking on point isn't visible to others, it's only in retrospective that we start to look at and think that was really interesting that they took it in that direction. And something was because that wasn't visit that wasn't where we would have taken it. Perhaps sometimes I do demonstrations for conferences and things. And people can get surprised at the direction in which things go, and how quickly I'll switch and do a right angle on a car on a conversation, to go deep dive on something that feels important. And the predicate feeling is important, because what again, what an experienced coach does, and this is, this comes from an ability reference to the intuition. comment earlier, what an experienced coach does is learn to use their body as a barometer in the conversation as much as they do their ears. So rather than listening to sometimes this is for the training coaches, listening or even training, mentors, listening, this might sound contradictory, but sometimes a really experienced coach learns to ignore what they are hearing. But you can imagine how many hours of coaching or mentoring you'd want to do in order to be confident about doing that. Because obviously, what we're taught when we're training is, listen, listen deeper, listening, you know, go beyond cosmetic, listening into effective active listening, all that good stuff. And then let your wisdom insight know, when there's smoke and mirrors going on. I need to stop listening to this because something's missing from the conversation and my gut. And literally my gut, my stomach is telling me when in the wrong territory here with there's something missing in this conversation. So let's restart or press pause.



Jason Knight 22:06

Yeah, it's interesting again, because I mean, I've been coached before, and thinking, I know, I shouldn't have been thinking while you're speaking, because that's not very active listening

shouldn't have been thinking while you're speaking, because that's not very active listening. But it was just bringing to mind that whole idea of like being in conversations with a coach and kind of getting to the end of that conversation, and almost coming to your own solution, by being guided through the conversation, rather than them telling you what to do you kind of get to the end of your life. Yeah. Oh, well, yeah, that's pretty obvious. I should do that now. And you've kind of invented it all yourself. You've just completely Yeah, been kind of steered away from contradicting or confusing yourself, I guess. So it's almost like this, designing a conversation or the idea that you're almost studying the very art of how people think and talk, rather than worrying about whether you're a product manager, or, yeah, somebody who works in a shop or any of those things. It's deeper than that. It's about people being people.

 Julie Starr 23:00

Yeah, and when we... so you're right, and if I haven't, if I haven't been clear, an effective coach can stay in a less directive posture for extended periods of time. So to stay out of advice, to stay out of ideas, giving to stay out of solution making to stay out of strategizing the conversation towards what we call leading the witness. To stay out of doing that and to stay in this open space and have it be created. You know, my job as a coach is to create the context and the space of the conversation where somebody else can have their own realisations. Myles Downey has this brilliant metaphor for coaching which is, you know, those spring loaded plates that you get in canteens where you lift a plate and the next plate comes up, you know, in part a coach's job is you know, if you imagine those plates or somebody's thoughts, somebody's knowledge, somebody's current awareness, a coach effectively, which is the cathartic experience that you are describing, a coach is lifting plates off somebody's stack, so that you know, somewhere in this stack is their moment of clarity and insight, a realisation as you as you said, and you can only do it by this cathartic motion of declutter, declutter, clarify, ask ask what else? What else? And if, conversely, I've made the mistake of putting plates onto your stack. So have you thought about this or that's interesting because I once had the same experience, or I've got a friend that might or you've got this book you should read or perhaps I'll send you a link to this, you might get you know, you might do well to hook on this. If all I'm doing is putting plates on your stack, what's happening to that kind of golden plate that was waiting to surface which was your aha moment, your moments of perfect clarity and awareness, and it doesn't as you rightly say, it feels like there's nothing else you should do. It's like a knowing but the knowing has been surfaced through this process of gentle inquiry, let's help effective inquiry.

 Jason Knight 25:03

Yeah, I really love that metaphor the plates as well I might

 Julie Starr 25:06

It's great, isn't it? I wish I thought about I've been using it for years.

 Jason Knight 25:09

or at least I'm not sending it from your window two miles down a golf lesson. Right? So we've



solved coaching. How about whatever dance around the thing that lots of people think is coaching but isn't really coaching. Okay. And that's mentoring. So how do you specifically define mentoring?

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Julie Starr 25:28

Okay, so let me say it first up that what we do not do, what I don't encourage is that anybody tries to understand the difference of mentoring and coaching at behavioural level. And what I mean by that is statements like a coach does this, a mentor does that. So, you know, statements like a coach always asks, and a mentor always tells, because that's not true. And clearly, if you start to try and ring fenced this at behavioural level, you kind of end up with this Venn diagram that depends on people's skill levels, it just ends up all being the same sphere. So it's less helpful. And yet, I can't seem to stop the world from doing it, it's less helpful to identify columns of behaviours that says, oh, a coach will do this, and a mentor will do this, and then never the twain shall meet. Because it's not it's not true. When I went into inquiry on it to understand, Okay, what's more helpful to help somebody understand this difference in activity. In common terms, they're both one to one relationships. The other thing that they've got in common is they are both intended to support another. So they're both operating from a paradigm of interdependency rather than independency. So they're both support that both kind of learning and development focus even evolution, let's say shifting, shaping, mindset and behaviour. So again, a behavioural level is, it's less, less helpful. The thing that's more helpful is to look at the difference the distinction of the relationships. So if we can, this is where the mentoring manual starts up front with these parallels drawn in film and fiction and fable because we all understand intrinsic level, what a mentor has been for us. So we all understand that favourite uncle, that favourite arm that manager that we used to have that we still keep in touch with because there's just so sage like we just love to spend time in their company. And if we look at and again, around us in film, fiction and variable, you've got really obvious characters that anybody would recognise as a mentor, such as, I don't know, Mr. Miyagi, and the Karate Kid or Professor Dumbledore and Harry Potter, or even things like Mary Poppins, mentoring those children. Of course, those are mentoring relationships, but then when you start to try and unpack that, what are the distinctions of that relationship and the key ones that I seem to be able to rest with and clarify where this was this distinction of an exchange of benevolence and respect. So the Netherlands on the part of the mentor towards the person being mentored and respect from the mentee to the mentor so if you think about Harry Potter and professional Dumbledore did Professor Dumbledore always tell Harry what to do? No, he didn't. Did he absolutely feel compassion and generosity and benevolence towards him? Yes, he did. Was the dynamic of influence the fact that Harry Potter respected Professor Dumbledore? Yes, it was, you know, he looked up to him, he respected him. And did he teach him? Principles of life principles of thought principles of, let's say, integrity, or honesty, truth? What you service? Yes, he did. How did you do that? It's sort of indiscernible throughout the book. And yet you you know that by what Dumbledore is saying the stories Dumbledore is telling the example he is being for Harry Potter himself, that becomes a guidance in itself same as any of those the relationships that I've mentioned. And again, there's 1000s, probably of you know, Hollywood is full of them. And, you know, this archetype of the mentor is as old as the hills literally. And I think that's the better place for people to go to not only because it helps somebody understand what's wonderful and magical about mentoring, but also helps them understand the mentors in their own life and start to confirm that and then start to realise where they might already be a mentor for other people. And it isn't about being a perfect example. It isn't about being super experienced, super expert, super successful. It's simply about embodying something that is relevant for somebody else. And the synergy of

benevolence and respect I think is really helpful. What I must add to that is obviously, the combination that has happened by putting mentoring within organisations because clearly with every adaptation of the mentor, the pure essential mentor archetype, you know, of your favourite teacher, your favourite aunt and uncle or whatever, with every adaptation of that ancient archetype comes a compromise. And I understand why that happens in organisation, it has to, because depending on the agenda the organisation has for mentoring, that could be, we need to develop talent, or we need to retain talent, or we need to accelerate someone's trajectory in career terms. So all of these agendas, struggle, objectives, goals, on behalf of the organisation for that, that relationship, kind of dilute the potential of that relationship. But that doesn't, that isn't necessarily a bad thing. Certainly not wrong, because mentoring in organisations is a hugely worthwhile and good thing. But we have to be cognizant of that. Because where I've seen things go off the rail is where that has been, there's been too much adaption of the roll to the point where it's corrupted the wrong. And an example with that would be of a large organised global organisation there tech firm that we're moving to a matrix management. So people would wouldn't have line managers. Instead, they give them mentors, and then they started to involve the mentors in the performance appraisal process. So obviously, there's a corruption there. And it's a small city rather than a big city. But there's a corruption there that says, when I'm having a conversation with you, my mentor, I'm also cognizant of the fact that my performance rating evaluation may be at stake here. So there's a little bit of trust a little bit of a subtle agenda that again, it just derails it potentially for me. Sorry, that was a huge answer.



Jason Knight 32:00

No, I was doing my best not to interrupt as well, you know, because I want to be a good coach and mentor too. But an interesting question there, though, is whether the best mentors are always somewhat outside, certainly outside of your work, you kind of just touched on that corruption yourself. And, again, I'm sure these people are trying to do some good work, and I'm sure they're having some effect. Yeah. But do you think that the best mentors are always somewhat abstracted from the people that they're mentoring?



Julie Starr 32:28

I don't think they always are. But I can see definite benefits to it. And it is just that objectivity? And also, where we get hooked on this question of what's the difference between mentoring and coaching? Actually, it's not the most important question or relevant question for an individual starting to mentor because more often than not, when somebody doesn't understand what it means to be a mentor, and they get lost and start to feel a bit adrift, they won't stop coaching, they'll start managing, because that's what they know how to do. So that tendency would be reduced if I weren't in your organisation, or even your sector. However, if I'm in your workplace, if I know exactly what you're doing, if I know your boss, let's say, there's a real tendency for that a climatization. To mean, you know, I lose track of where it was, you know, how what the distinctions of this relationship are, I haven't been equipped with that clarity and that understanding of the skills of facilitation, and therefore, I'm going to start managing you. I think that's less facilitate says different that's a definite advantage. And I think there is just an objectivity and disassociation and a freshness, both from the mentor to the mentee, but also from the mentee to be interested and engaged in you know, you've come from this sector, I'm

in here, I'm interested to understand more about you. I'm finding this quite stimulating, use look different. You sound different. I think, you know, for me as a mentee, that would be very engaging.



Jason Knight 33:55

Absolutely, but some of the examples that you gave cinematic examples, for example, Mr. Miyagi, Dumbledore, and he had sore from homeland in the book as well. These are all substantially older people that have been around the block a few times and have survived the school of hard knocks a few times, or in Saul's case, been kidnapped and mock executed a few times as well. So that only feels like that happens in some companies. It doesn't normally happen in companies. But I guess that archetype does pervade of the fact that a mentor is a substantially older person. There's been there for a while. And it's kind of the wise old owl that can kind of hand down all of their life story to try and help you understand yours. Yes, yes. Do you think that that's a fair place to look at the relationship? Or do you think that really anyone could be a mentor as long as they have some relevant experience that the mentee could draw them



Julie Starr 34:49

So... really good point, touches on the adapt, you know, for every adaption there's a compromise potentially, and you are absolutely right, but When you look at what does an older person have, what does a more experienced person have? A lot of what they have that we call wisdom is actually life skills, perhaps some shedding of former, I don't know, illusions, fixations, things that they use to make important, they've realised aren't important that that that whole kind of only life teachers and you know, only through that journey themselves have they realised how to declutter how to focus on what's important, how to disregard those things that formally we get upset about, you know, like, what people think of us, or what will somebody say if we screw up or all of those things. So some of that does come, and also this benevolence point, you know, as I've worked with senior people that enjoy mentoring others, there is a sense of a natural sense of compassion for the younger people coming through, and benevolence towards that. And this tolerance, you know, there's tolerance that says, I can watch you getting things wrong, I can watch you ignoring my advice, I can watch you having to learn the hard way, and still maintain this posture of compassion, benevolence, unconditional positive regard, because that's where we get to. So yes, it's a lot easier if you're older, wiser had been around the block. However, what that so when we perhaps compromise that in an organisation and say, Well, I'm sorry, we've got 30 Somethings coaching teenagers, or we've got 40 Somethings coaching 20 Somethings or whatever it might be. And that's just how it has to be, you know, in in, you know, in today's, especially in the kind of tech industry, where there's one company we're talking to at the moment where it's the youth managing the youth, basically. So how does that happen? Then let's accommodate the adaption support that by giving people the skills of awareness, mindset principles, and and, you know, effective conversational skill. So support that to enable something different to happen, rather than just saying, oh, that's tough as motion. Well, you know, that could be a bit car crash, but let's just say, you know, let's do a, an uncontrolled experiment and see what happens. So I think, and some of you know, if you give 1000 young people out there, because you've also got this thing called reverse mentoring, where it's younger people coaching older people. But that's, again, that's kind of a recipe for potential disaster, but also it could be end up beautifully. And you're

going to find, you're going to find all of that happen within the same frame like you, but but it will be the youth that are more emotionally mature, that have respect for other people that have learned conversational skills. You know, there's some youngsters I know that you wouldn't, you just wouldn't, you wouldn't put them near people in organisations because it can only get you know, they're angry, disenfranchised, they're resentful. They have got this whole entitlement thing going on. And that's not going to end well. Is it?



Jason Knight 38:06

You've obviously my my kids. But the obvious question off the back of that, though, is whether if we kind of play that through, so you said, for example, there's going to be big advantages to having maybe more mature, yeah, potentially older mentors that have developed some of those skills. But then also, maybe there'll be some younger people that maybe give you some different takes on things or different angles? Yes, completely. So is it fair to say that it could be beneficial to people to have multiple mentors at one time? Or do you generally recommend they kind of just chat to one person?



Julie Starr 38:38

And you could ask the same question about coaches? Should I have more than one coach at a time? And I guess, if you it depends on you, the individual and what you're up for doing. And if you're the kind of person that likes to be challenged, like stimulating conversation, then kind of why wouldn't you? I could imagine over time that could get a bit busy in terms of a split attention and a split focus. So sometimes, I don't like to give black and white yes or no answers, as you've probably already gathered. But that at some point, you've got to think, why would I want to have potentially contradictory conflicting, and maybe you would maybe for you, that's creative chaos. For me, personally, I would work tend to work with one practitioner at a time rather than multiple, where they're all doing the same thing. It's not the same as you know, having a chiropractor and a reflexologist and a herbologists. It's not it's kind of not the same thing as that. It's more I've got one person telling me how to build my business. I've got another person telling me slightly different maybe that would work for somebody kind of wouldn't work for me.



Jason Knight 39:47

I'm gonna head off to my platform are not the maximum mentors number back down to one then.



Julie Starr 39:51

No, please don't!



Jason Knight 39:55

But one of the things that can challenge people that maybe want to get into a relationship either as a your mentoring, maybe even paid for one, as you touched on earlier, is that and as

either to AS your mentoring, maybe even paid for one, as you touched on earlier, is that and as you say in your books, actually that the impact of coaching or mentoring is somewhat unmeasurable. But that it doesn't mean that it doesn't exist. And I agree with that. 100%. But some people may be skin. Flynn's or sceptics might sit there and say that's the sort of thing that someone who wants to charge loads of money for coaching and mentoring might say, if they wanted to keep getting paid for it, whatever the result, because you can't measure it. So just keep paying me. So is there any way to measure or evidence the impact at all? Or does it all have to be basically taken on trust or kind of qualitatively, potentially, if you just ask someone how they're doing after they've had that mentoring or coaching?

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Julie Starr 40:42

So I think I think it's in the mentoring manual that I say that not everything that counts can be counted. And not everything is counted counts. And I think that is true. So were you were you think about your own mentors are the people that affected you most positively, you kind of wouldn't spot when that happened. So if I think about one of my mentors, was the John Whitmore, the coach that passed a number of years ago, he wrote a wonderful book called coaching for performance. And what he did for me, without a doubt, was to give me the confidence to speak and speak my truth and encouraged me to get out there. And and I don't think he ever has actually said that to me. So it for me, it's measurable. It's tangible, it's tangible. In that I feel it, he made a difference. He made me feel differently about me, which was incredible. How would you measure that? I don't know. So that's kind of what I mean about not everything that counts can be counted, because that for me counts a lot, a lot more than, you know, did my hourly rate double over the time period that he was mentoring me? Is? I don't know. So I've seen I've seen people try and measure it. I've seen you know that there's one really good question that I work in a large law firm. And one question that they often ask, the people that have been coached, is what has happened, since the coaching that would not have happened without the coaching have taken place. And that's when you start to bring it into sharp relief. And that's when people can really draw their focus on to the real difference of coaching for them. So there is real testament to you know, the things that people say at that point are incredible, because literally, it's I quit my job, or I had a really tough conversation with somebody who was really scared of or I approached, somebody made a request for something that I would never have done. And, and you kind of can't, you can't get that from a standard questionnaire. So it can't be measured easily. It doesn't mean to say it's not everywhere around us in terms of people's anecdotal experience, all of my exact coaching work is by referral. So it's people telling people the impact that the coaching conversations have had. And literally people use the word life changing regularly, like life changing conversations, they use that regularly. And I think it's, it's simply because of this unit, you know, to bring us full circle back to what makes a coaching conversation effective is this that unique focus on an individual to the point where they really gain, you know, accelerate their own self awareness and insight, and are able to take that into meaningful action, to start to shift who they are being in the every day. And so, and again, it's not what they're doing, because and some of it is at the doing level. But when you start to work more deeply with people and this far in myself and everybody else's, that's, you know, 1000 hours or more, and you tend to work less on actions and activities and more. You're working on beliefs, you know, what people believe to be true, what principles people are operating, from, how they feel about what they do, who they feel they are, what they feel their contribution to be see working, you know, in Robert Dilts terms, you're working more of that identity level, who people feel they are in the world and what their contribution is. And that sense of interdependency with people rather than, you know, how many hours a day I put in my diary to focus on whatever.



Jason Knight 44:27

I must say, I do love that kind of whole concept of working on the principles and the beliefs it does, because you notice the old idea that so powerful, well, 100% and it's just this idea that you can change the surface or you can kind of go deeper into people and kind of then people can then affect their own change to everywhere else if you just work on those fundamental beliefs, but a lot of what you just talked about and the kind of the interpersonal connection as well does kind of touch on the need for for empathy and human contact and how that can be so powerful. So I do have to ask in this day and age of chat GPT and AI and all of the core technical advances that are out there these days, I'm already aware of a bunch of different products out there that are claiming to take humans out of the loop and be able to train and coach and teach people, whatever they need, on demand at scale, at a fraction of the cost. Do you think that any of these AI coaches will ever replace the real thing?



Julie Starr 45:23

No, not at all.



Jason Knight 45:24

Obviously, it is a black and white question, by the way!



Julie Starr 45:27

It is a black and white question. And I don't believe it can unless unless you get a sentient being. So unless, unless AI go sentient, and then maybe if we look at what makes a great coach, a great coach, it is it's not functional in those terms. It's not behavioural in those times. It's, it's the embodiment is the personal development that that individual has gone through to be able to get themselves out of the way in a conversation and to declutter and access their own wisdom and their own insight. And it's a mind body spirit practice, you know, to have a coach be effective. There's an awful lot in play, you know, when I watch a really great coaching play, it's a lot about the identity of that coach, and who that coach has become, and also what that coach has let go off over the years in terms of fixated behaviours, agendas, things like that, and yet always with that humaneness to empathise, to relate to notice, you know, to notice nonverbal behaviour, to notice the energy of an individual, to calibrate even to someone's tonality. Can we teach that within with tonality? Maybe you could. But again, it's, there's an awful lot involved there. And you're not actually just using tonality? Because when you ask a coach, why did you pause there? Why did you stop? Why did you recap? Why did you go back? Why did you repeat the same question three times? Sometimes they almost can't say why they did. But there was only that, that they would do, and there was nothing else that seemed appropriate. And yet, if you unpacked it, it would be that they had harnessed this embodied sense of the situation that in you know, it literally involves your body temperature, your you know, the chemistry of your body, as well as what your mind is thinking, not thinking, as well as calibrating people's musculature, you know, facial musculature, all those good

things. There's a there's an awful lot involved. And it's it, it is it. This is why coaches love to coach and never want to stop coaching. Because when you get good, it's a joy. It's an absolute joy.



Jason Knight 47:45

Oh, absolutely. Well, it looks like we're safe for now anyway, but watch this space. And we'll keep our eye on the tech news, just in case some idiot product manager like me goes and ruins it for everyone. But where can people find you after this, if they want to find out more about either not getting you as a coach or finding out how they can be a good coach, a good mentor, or find out a bit more about your fiction, and whether Jessie makes it to Memphis?



Julie Starr 48:06

Oh, Jessie did make it to Memphis and then it got really exciting. So all the books are on Amazon or wherever you buy your books. And there's five of those three in business by Pearson and a couple of novels, Truth Keeper and Magic to Memphis. I have two main websites, I have Starr Coaching, which is kind of my company brochure site for people that want to engage with us professionally, and bring us into either support mentoring programmes, or teach managers and leaders how to coach so that will be started coaching, I have an online learning platform called LearnStarr.com. And stars got to ours. So it's Lone star.com. And on Learn star, that's where I sign all the free downloads from the coaching manual and the mentoring manual. There's free stuff to read free stuff to listen to free stuff to watch in terms of videos, there's stuff that people can download, both to support their studies within the book, or just to support them to coach or support them to mentor. So there's things like an overview of of mentoring and overview of coaching that you can take and you can give to a potential client or, you know, there's an agenda for our first mentoring meeting, things like that. So I do love to give stuff away. Because whilst most of my work is within organisations, I also want to support the individual who perhaps doesn't have those resources, but does want support to learn to coach or to learn to mentor. So yeah, we've also got a YouTube site as well, with lots of stuff to watch on there.



Jason Knight 49:34

Well, there you go, we better get started and click through and start adding stuff to our playlists. But in any case, I'll make sure to link all of that into the show notes, and hopefully you get a few people. Thank you heading over into your direction to find out more wonderful. Well, as we mentioned earlier, we could probably talk about this stuff all day. But I'll spare you that ordeal for now and simply take the opportunity to thank you for your time and spending your valuable time talking about some fascinating and important topic. Pitzer, certainly I'm very passionate about as well. So I'll probably go and have a listen to this afterwards and see if I can learn anything. Hopefully we can stay in touch. But as for now, thanks for taking the time.



Julie Starr 50:09

Thank you so much.



Jason Knight 50:13

As always, thanks for listening. I hope you found the episode inspiring and insightful. If you did again, I can only encourage you to hop over to <https://www.oneknightinproduct.com>, check out some of my other fantastic guests, sign up to the newsletter, subscribe on your favourite podcast app and make sure you share with your friends so you and they can never miss another episode again. I'll be back soon with another inspiring guest but as for now, thanks and good night.