

IP Inclusive Podcast Transcript 9 Sept 2019 – Demystifying Coaching

Hello there and welcome to our very first IP Inclusive podcast. This one is about demystifying coaching. It's Monday 9th September 2019 here and I'm Andrea Brewster, the lead Executive Officer of IP Inclusive. With me here I've got Karen Crawley who's an accredited Development Coach. She's here with me today to de-mystify coaching and share how it can be useful for us particularly in the IP world.

Karen Crawley has extensive experience as a patent attorney, she was working in the pharmaceutical industry for 30 years. She's a CIPA Fellow, so she is well aware of the challenges faced by attorneys at different points in their career, and in fact, as she's told me, she's faced many herself. In the latter stages of her patent career, Karen found coaching to be transformational in how she thought and felt about challenges, and to enable her to make faster and lasting progress in tackling those challenges. So, over the past 5 years she has turned her attention to becoming an accredited Development Coach herself. Karen now works primarily with people in the patent and legal professions to identify, and clarify and then achieve their personal and professional goals, and to tackle the sort of issues that are holding them back, which can include: personal perspectives and beliefs, routine behaviours and patterns of thinking, the old treadmill thing that we're all so familiar with.

So I'm now going to hand over to Karen now to start us off.

Karen – Well, thanks Andrea for that introduction, and hello to everyone listening.

So Karen, you need to start off I think by telling us what coaching actually is – can you do this in a nutshell?

I'm not sure I can do it in a nutshell, but maybe we should start with a definition. The International Coaching Federation defines coaching as

'partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential'.

Well let's break it down a bit further.

First of all Partnering – this is a really important aspect of coaching. The coach is not superior to the coachee, it's an equal partnership. The coachee is the expert in their life, and the coach is the expert in coaching techniques. When we bring those 2 areas of expertise together that's what makes the conditions for faster forward movement towards goals. It's a collaboration between equals and therefore is a power-free relationship.

The next part of the definition, that 'thought-provoking and creative process', is really facilitated by the coach's listening and questioning skills. That creates the space to think and pushing the thinking outside of the coachee's habitual thoughts. It can be a safe testing ground for ideas and experimentation. Because, how often in these busy times do we actually pause to really reflect on what it is we want, what the obstacles are and how we can overcome them?

And then finally in that definition, the work 'inspires' the coachee to be more proactive in how they approach achieving their goals. Because it's not enough to want something – you have to take action. Sounds obvious, but we stand in our own way so often. So, the coach doesn't tell them what to do because adults respond well to being told what to do. Coaching works because the dialogue encourages the coachee to design their own solutions and get into action.

Andrea - ok so that's the definition and as we know all legal professionals love a definition, but I presume you as a coach in your own experience have your own pet way of summing this up?

Karen - Well, I like to describe coaching as having your own advocate in your back pocket. Someone who is focussed on and curious about *your* agenda (not their own), will provide support,

encouragement and accountability, and will stretch your current thinking into new areas to enable growth. It's something akin to climbing a mountain with a Sherpa. The Sherpa guides the way, gives you tools to succeed and may even help you carry your baggage. But ultimately, you must walk the path yourself.

Andrea - If the coach is listening and asking questions, isn't that a bit like therapy?

Karen - That's a great question! No! Whilst coaching *can* feel quite therapeutic and generally has a positive effect on well-being, it isn't therapy.

- Therapy looks to resolve a past pain.
- Coaching tends to focus on the present and future rather than the past, and looks to chart a path to reach an identified goal.

It starts, I guess, from the premise that the coachee is creative, resourceful and whole – in other words, they already have everything they need to make progress on their goals. They don't need fixing. The Coach is going to help the person identify and clarify their goals, the obstacles they are facing, and how they want to move forward. And then the coach is going to help them get out of their own way and into effective action. Because there is no change without focussed action.

So what coaching *does* share with therapy, is the absolute confidentiality. The coach never reports back the content of coaching discussions to someone's manager – I mean, this is really vital if the individual is to speak freely and share concerns and ideas. It is a safe space and a creative space.

Andrea - And that's a really important point isn't it, if people are going to feel comfortable about tackling some of the things that have really been holding them back. What kind of goals then do people bring to coaching, what do they want to achieve?

Karen - How long have we got today? In coaching, one of the first steps is to explore what the goals are, and what the measures of success will be. It doesn't really matter what the goal is, so long as there is clarity on it.

Some examples might include:

- Building presence and impact
- Self-confidence
- Maybe, tackling Imposter Syndrome (that's when, the feeling of not being adequately qualified or experienced despite many successes and evidence to the contrary, and it's the fear of being 'found out')
- Then there's overcoming procrastination – even in this deadline-driven profession of ours in the patent world

Andrea – I would think especially in this deadline driven profession of ours, we always leave things til that last minute don't we!

Karen - We absolutely do, but why do we put off tackling that big task until the last minute, despite that pressure, and how can we manage this better? That's a common coaching goal

- Maybe you want more effective communication either with your direct reports, you might be a new manager or you might be a manager whose been working for a long time and wants better communication. You might want to liaise better with your support staff, with your manager, with senior executives, or with your clients. There are quite a lot things you can work on in the communication context with a coach.
- Then there's transitioning effectively between positions, so you might have Newly Qualified to Associate or, Senior Associate to Partner role transition and how can you manage that to be at your best.

- And finally, I'd say perhaps, feeling lost in your career and wondering what's next for you, or maybe how to re-engage with your career.

Andrea – and building on that point, do people sometimes come to you with that feeling of being a little bit trapped perhaps, in their current role?

Karen - Yes absolutely, that as well. So what's that feeling of trapped about and what is they want, and trying to really resolve that so that they can move forward.

Andrea – so do you sometimes find that clients come to you with one goal and then during the course of the coaching a different goal emerges?

Karen - Yes that often happens in fact. So the client identifies an initial goal and through the coaching process something else is uncovered that's important to the client. So it's absolutely fine to establish the new goal as a goal. So you can change or add as appropriate.

Andrea – So what I'm hearing is that coaching can be very flexible then? I've heard people say that they think coaching is for people who aren't performing well. So they don't want a coach because they don't want other people to think they are struggling or they've failed. What would you say to that, it doesn't sound to me as though that's what you're talking about?

Karen - Yes, that's a common misperception! If I asked you to think about other contexts of the term coaching, what might come to mind?

Andrea – I'm thinking probably Sports coaching – that's an obvious one?

Karen - That's a good example. Great athletes and sportspeople always have a coach to help them define their goals and make progress towards them more quickly than they might on their own. That doesn't make them a poor athlete. It makes them focussed, determined, and open to feedback and growth. Let's just take a quick example and think about Andy Murray. He was progressing well in the tennis world, got to several Grand Slam finals but wasn't getting over the finish line. Murray switched coaches to work with Ivan Lendl and focus on his goal of winning a major. He then won Olympic gold, the US Open and Wimbledon during two years with Lendl from 2012 to 2014. Would he have accomplished that if he carried on doing what he was already doing? Maybe. Maybe not. Ivan helped Andy clarify what he needed to change in order to gain his edge over the competition and so achieve his goal of winning. Part of that was about what Andy *believed* was possible. Not what he wished would happen, but what he truly believed would happen. And that was the difference.

Andrea – and part of that also seems to be tied up with finding the right coach. You said Andy Murray switched to Ivan Lendl as his coach.

Karen - Yes, absolutely. So different coaches bring different perspectives and it is important to find a coach with whom you feel comfortable and who you feel can help you with the particular goals you have.

Andrea – ok well I'll return to that later about how you pick the right person for you. We've talked there about the sports coaching example. Who uses coaches in the business world then typically?

Karen - I think it might surprise listeners to know that in the Corporate world, almost all CEOs and the majority of Vice Presidents, work with a coach to help them transition into stretching new roles, or when they are facing particularly challenging situations. In fact, many companies are now bringing the advantage of coaching to first-line managers and to directors in order to help them develop more quickly. Managers are now also expected to adopt a coaching approach with their own direct reports to help maximise the performance of individuals in their team. So a great way to develop your own coaching skills is to have coaching yourself.

It's also becoming, to turn back to the legal world, becoming more common for new partners in the legal profession to have a coach. And I would say there are several key stages in a legal career where coaching can be highly beneficial. These would be the transitions from Newly Qualified to Associate, from Senior Associate to Partner, and from Partner to Senior Partner for example; times when you might be feeling stuck or unclear about the direction you want your career to take; and maybe when you have received feedback that you feel you want to work on but can't see a way forward.

Andrea - So, what I'm hearing then is that coaching is not for poor performers at all really?

Karen - No. It is not a replacement for effective performance management of staff by their managers. Coaching is an effective way to help motivated people raise their game and achieve their focussed goals more quickly.

Andrea – so Karen, going off script a little bit, should you wait until that transition or should coaching be introduced earlier on in someone's career almost to pre-empt the difficult times?

Karen - I think the thing that defines the right time to work with a coach is when you've got a defined goal. So if there's an area that you feel you'd like to pay particular attention to and you want some support with that then consider working with a coach. I think it's more about do you have a defined goal or at least an area that you can hone in on with the coach.

Andrea – some kind of problem or do you say goal that you can articulate and then make that the basis for the coaching.

Karen - Yes.

Andrea – So what can you tell us about practical aspects of having a coach, because I think a lot of people would want to know this. What's the time commitment, the likely cost, how do you actually find a coach?

Karen - Well, coaching engagements are finite, not an on-going situation – you agree a goal, or set of goals you want to work towards, and decide on a coaching programme that will support you in that. Each programme has an associated cost. So typically, one might have coaching sessions bi-weekly for 3 months for a short-term goal, for example, or monthly for 6, 9 or even 12 months for longer-term goals. And the duration of sessions can also varies. I would say typically, 30 minutes for bi-weekly sessions, and 1 hour or 90 minutes for monthly sessions works really well. So there are a few parameters that need to be discussed and agreed, but once that's been done then you've got a finite period of time to work on that goal.

Andrea – and I think that will interest people to hear, that you know that you define at the beginning how long you're going to spend and therefore presumably how much it's going to cost so people have an idea before they start of what the commitment will be.

Karen - Yes, that's absolutely right. But in terms of the time commitment, it's more than just attending the scheduled sessions. There will be agreed actions to be worked on between sessions and so you should be prepared to set aside some time for this, and also some time for reflecting on your progress ahead of each coaching session itself. Successful outcomes really depend on the coachee doing this work.

Andrea – It's very much a collaborative process then, you're saying?

Karen - Yes that's right. And where we set the goals at the beginning we also determine some measures for success so we can check in, how we're doing, are we making progress, what more do we need to do in order to get where you need to be?

Andrea – So it seems to me that it's going to depend on finding someone you gel with, someone you feel comfortable talking to, someone where that chemistry's there as there was with Andy Murray and Ivan Lendl. How do you find the right coach for you then?

Karen - Well, I would recommend meeting with 2 or 3 coaches before choosing who to proceed with. It is important that you feel comfortable with your coach. Most coaches will offer a free chemistry session in which you can get a sense of rapport and how it would be to work with them. This is also the time to discuss the conditions for working together. Recommendations are useful. If you know someone who has had coaching, ask if they'd recommend their coach. Also, some firms have a number of coaches they have worked with in the past, so your HR manager could be another source of contacts. But if you don't have any leads, a good place to start is the ICF website which provides a list of accredited coaches, who have all been through stringent training and examination.

Andrea – a request to people in the IP Inclusive community – if you've had some coaching and you liked what you saw, then please do feed back to us so we can share recommendations and contacts. Karen, to finish up, what would you advise anyone who's thinking about having some coaching themselves or thinking that coaching would be useful for their team?

Karen - I would say, find a coach and give them a call and I'm sure they would be happy to talk through ideas and questions and to discuss what kind of coaching programs they can offer. If you think coaching might be useful for a person other than yourself though, do talk to that person about it first, engage their interest. A coach can't successfully coach an unwilling coachee.

Andrea – That sounds fair enough. I know when you said give a coach a call, that you'd be happy to be that person that they did call?

Karen - Yes, sure

Andrea – so if anyone in the IP Inclusive community is interested in speaking with Karen about what she can help with and whether she might be a good coach for you, you can contact her through her website which is karencrawleycoaching.co.uk and she has said she would be happy to help people in IP Inclusive as indeed she has been very kind giving her time here for this podcast today.

As a follow-up to this podcast we will be posting some more links to interesting articles and useful resources so keep an eye on the Resources page of the IP Inclusive website for those. In the meantime thank you very much Karen Crawley for joining us in this podcast.

Karen - You're more than welcome!

Andrea – It's been great to talk to you, and I hope it's been useful for you, the Listener.

Karen - Thanks Andrea.

Andrea – Goodbye.