

The Future of Work podcast is a weekly show where Jacob has in-depth conversations with senior level executives, business leaders, and bestselling authors around the world on the future of work and the future in general. Topics cover everything from AI and automation to the gig economy to big data to the future of learning and everything in between. Each episode explores a new topic and features a special guest.

You can listen to past episodes at www.TheFutureOrganization.com/future-work-podcast/. To learn more about Jacob and the work he is doing please visit www.TheFutureOrganization.com. You can also subscribe to Jacob's [YouTube](#) channel, follow him on [Twitter](#), or visit him on [Facebook](#).

0:05:20 Jacob: Hello everyone, my name is Jacob Morgan, I'm your host today, and I'm joined by Michael Bungay Stanier, he's the best-selling author of a book that I'm sure a lot of you have heard of and a lot of your organizations are likely using called The Coaching Habit. And he's got a brand new book coming out around the same time as my new book as well, and it's called The Advice Trap, and he's also the founder of Box of Crayons. So Michael, thank you for joining me.

0:05:46 Michael: My pleasure. And what's the title of your book? I know there are some people who are watching that I've introduced to the show and I want them to know about what you're up to as well. So what are you writing? Perfect. I love it. The Future Leader.

0:05:58 Jacob: The Future Leader. There we go, yes. So I interviewed 140 CEOs for this one to figure out what is it gonna take to be a successful leader over the next decade and beyond?

0:06:06 Michael: Yeah, perfect. I got to read a preview of that, and like I'm taking notes because I'm trying to figure it out myself.

0:06:14 Jacob: Oh, you gave me a wonderful endorsement, you probably gave me one of my favorite endorsements for that book so I really appreciate it.

0:06:20 Michael: My pleasure.

0:06:21 Jacob: And so perhaps one of the most important things about Michael is that he's Australian. I am Australian although you can tell, he has the cool accent, and I don't. Where in Australia were you born?

0:06:36 Michael: I was born in Melbourne. But...

0:06:37 Michael: Yeah, that's where I was born!

0:06:39 Michael: Wow, it's amazing, we could be... We're brothers from another mother. But...

0:06:42 Jacob: Yeah.

0:06:42 Michael: I left Melbourne pretty early on and moved up to Canberra, which is where I really grew up, so I consider myself a Canberan, albeit born in Melbourne.

0:06:52 Jacob: Very cool. Well, that's one of the reasons why we get along so well, 'cause we're

both Aussies.

0:06:55 Michael: Exactly.

0:06:56 Jacob: Well today we're gonna be talking about your brand new book, which I had a chance to read, which was fantastic.

0:07:02 Michael: Thank you.

0:07:02 Jacob: But why don't you start with why you actually wrote that book? So why even write The Advice Trap, because it seems like The Coaching Habit is still doing pretty darn well.

0:07:12 Michael: It is doing pretty darn well. For those... Everyone who's not an author, which is all of the same people. When you become an author you start tracking obsessive things like where's your book on Amazon and...

0:07:24 Jacob: I don't know what you're talking about.

0:07:25 Michael: Exactly. So if you can get in the top thousand on Amazon, your book's doing pretty well. And my book, The Coaching Habit is still top 1000 on Amazon, almost four years since that came out. So yeah, it's had this remarkable, amazing, thrilling ride. It sold almost three-quarters of a million copies.

0:07:43 Jacob: Oh my God.

0:07:44 Michael: So Jacob's question, which is like why write another book? Why not just surf that wave? Why am I... That's a really good question, because writing books is actually a bit miserable. I'm not sure what your experience's like Jacob, but...

0:07:57 Jacob: It's hard. It's hard.

0:07:58 Michael: It's hard. It's harder than you think. You get to a certain point where you're like, "I don't know why I'm writing this book anymore, I don't like the idea, I don't think it's a very good book. I don't know if anybody's gonna read it." Then you've just got the truth is that actually not many people read books. So there's a whole piece around, what Jacob and I are both doing which is like we have to promote our books and market it, and talk about it and get people to notice it. So why do it?

0:08:25 Michael: Well, The Coaching Habit says here's a way of making coaching accessible, practical, everyday simple. It's like, Here are seven good questions. If you can add these seven questions to the everyday way of showing up, whether or not you run a team, but it's like if you interacted with the human beings, asking them these questions will make for a better relationship, a better outcome, all of that good stuff. And there are some people who read this book and they go, "It's amazing, this is a fantastic book. I'm using the seven questions. I love it, Michael you're a genius." And of course, there's a group of people that I have in my life, I love it when they send me an email or a LinkedIn note or whatever it might be.

0:08:58 Michael: And there's a bunch of people who picked up The Coaching Habit, and they

actually quite liked the book, they're like, "I like the book, I like your style, I like the questions, but I'm not using them. I find it really hard to shift my behavior to become more coach-like, to stay curious a little bit longer." So The Advice Trap is really written at its heart for people who go, "What does it take for me to be more curious, more often? How do I do that shift in behavior so that I can bring my full curiosity?" And what that means is, and this is what we'll get into and send you, I suspect. How do you tame your advice monster? Because we've all got this advice monster that looms up out of the dark, and says "Oh, I'm gonna add value to this conversation, here I go." And that's why I wrote the book.

[chuckle]

0:09:55 Jacob: It's funny because from the CEO interviews that I did, the 140 CEOs, curiosity also came up quite a bit. As did some of the other things that you talked about: Empathy, humility, mindfulness. All these themes came up a lot from the CEO's that I interviewed. Okay. Well, let's jump right in to The Advice Trap and the advice monster. So what is the advice monster? And do you have any examples of how it manifests in the business world?

0:10:22 Michael: Well, actually, I do but let me flip it back to you, which is tell me what of the findings you came across in terms of interviewing the CEO and understanding what it takes to be a future leader. Which of the findings were you perhaps most surprised by? Which were you kind of... What was unexpected for you?

0:10:39 Jacob: So I... There were a couple things. So I looked at specifically the mindsets and the skills that future leaders in 2030 are going to need to possess to be great leaders. So I looked at four mindsets and five skills. The most surprising thing isn't what those mindsets and skills were but it's how poorly leaders today are practicing them. So in addition to this survey what we did is we surveyed... I'm sorry, in addition to these interviews, I partnered with LinkedIn and we surveyed 14,000 employees around the world. And we broke this up by seniority level and we asked individual contributors, managers and senior executives, how well are you practicing these mindsets and skills, and how well are your managers and senior executives practicing these mindsets and skills? And the mid and senior leaders consistently said that they were doing a pretty good job. 70% were like, "Yeah, we're very good. We're reasonably well." But the people who worked for these managers and senior leaders were like, "Oh man, these guys are terrible at it." So that to me was the biggest surprise is how far off the perception is between how well leaders think they're doing versus how well people who work for these leaders think they're doing.

0:11:48 Michael: So that... This is the bridge I think between our work, because what I'm focusing on is one very specific mindset and skill within your broader umbrella, which is like, the curiosity is a really powerful leadership behavior, it's a leadership competency. Curious leaders have better teams, have better organizations and more fulfilled and expressed themselves. And there's a gap between how curious people think they are and how curious they really are. So that's the same that you experienced through your big survey and your interviews.

0:12:21 Michael: And that's the advice monster, the advice monster is that thing that keeps looming up going, "No. No. No. I know you think you're curious but let me just pull you back onto the dark side, and have you lurking into telling advice and offering solutions and being the person with the answer." And everybody listening in right now knows this experience, somebody starts talking and you don't really know what's going on. You don't really know the people involved. You

don't really have the context, you certainly don't have the technical specifications required and after about 10 seconds, you're like, "Oh, oh no, no. I've got something to say here. No, no, no, stop talking." And if you recognize that at all in yourself, and you do, you know you do. This is your advice monster. It's the pattern of behavior that has you going, "The way I add value is I jump in and I provide solutions."

0:13:19 Jacob: And how might this manifest in the corporate world? So have you seen this happen, actually, I mean whether it's in a meeting or in a business environment, how does...

0:13:28 Michael: I've not only seen it happen, I've lived it. I've being... It's not like I don't have an advice monster, I have an... We all have advice monsters. We've all had that experience where we've pelt, leapt in and gone, "It's frustrating because I'm full of good ideas and for some reason my advice doesn't land that well, it doesn't actually seem to stick." Do you know what also is frustrating, when people give me this kind of half-baked advice when they don't really understand what's going on, and I'm not really looking for advice, I'm looking for a different type of support. So I'd say it's like it's not hard to find the advice monster. I can walk into an organization and within about three minutes the first advice monster that kind of shows up going, "Whoa-ho, I'm over here." Jacob, I'm gonna say one thing. What I'm not saying here is that all advice is bad, because honestly, that would be ridiculous.

0:14:19 Michael: Part of how organizations work, part of how leadership works, part of how civilization works, is advice and then exchange of advice. I am saying what kills us both individually, on the receiving and giving end of this, and organizationally in their teams, is when advice-giving is our default response. It's our ingrained behavior, it's this deep habit that we just keep defaulting to, and that what's really damaging for our organizational life.

0:14:49 Jacob: I, so candidly, I think I also struggle with this, just even personally like with my wife when... You know, if she...

0:14:56 Michael: Sure. Totally. Wives are the worst, are you kidding? This is the whole thing about spouses, I'm like, "God! I know all this good management process, but I'm gonna jump in and start telling you stuff because we've been married."

0:15:07 Jacob: Blake, ignore anything Michael is saying, I love you very much, you are amazing. But yeah, I mean she'll sometimes share a situation, or something that's happening, and my default is to immediately be like, "Oh, I know how to fix this. I got lots of ideas." And sometimes I'll give ideas and she's like, "I don't really want your advice. I just wanna be able to tell you how I'm feeling." And so I personally struggle with that a lot, because in my mind I'm like, "I know how to fix this, like I got... I know how to get this better for you."

0:15:40 Michael: So here's the three reasons why advice doesn't work as well as you think it does. And by you I'm talking about everybody who's listening to this podcast. The first is this: You're busy solving the wrong problem 'cause you've fallen for the old trap of thinking that the first challenge that shows up is the real challenge and it's almost never is. It's the best guess. It's a stab in the dark. It's a rough articulation. But the first challenge is almost never the real challenge, but let just say miraculously, you've come across the real challenge and you've identified it, and it's perfect. You've got this is the real thing that really needs to be fixed. Well, then the second problem with advice is offering your advice isn't nearly as good as you think it is.

0:15:53 Michael: Now we have all these cognitive biases that keep telling us how good our advice is, but if you go watch a TED video about cognitive biases and you'll just see how lousy your advice is time and time again. Particularly, by the way, if you think, "No, no, no I give good advice." You're like, oh no you are probably the worst. But, okay. Let's just say for the sake of argument. Not only do you know what the real challenge is, but you have a ripsnorting good idea. I mean, it's really a fantastic solution.

0:16:54 Michael: Then your third question is, "Is this the right leadership role? Is this the right relationship role, to give advice?" Because you need to weigh up this. Is this bigger picture solution, is it better if I'm the person who comes in and solves the problem, or is it better if I'm the person who holds the space and allows the other person to find out the solution to their own problem? And even if their answer is not quite as brilliant as your idea, even if their advice isn't quite as scintillatingly awesome as your advice is going to be, if it is good enough, if it's gonna get the job done, quite often the equation is far better for them to have a slightly less good advice of solution to fix the problem that they own, that they self-generated, that they feel confident and competent and autonomous and self-sufficient around and supported by you, rather than you going, "My job is to fix the problem." No, no, no, your job is to hold the space, figure out the real challenge and enable others to fix the problem. That's what leadership looks like.

0:18:00 Jacob: Yeah. I think that makes sense. So what do you do? I mean how... So let's say there are leaders listening to this or even just employees listening to this, and...

0:18:10 Michael: Yeah, this is like... This is a human thing. If you interact with other human beings, you know the advice monster.

0:18:15 Jacob: And so how do you... I guess, how do you identify it, what do you do instead? What if you really do feel like you have great advice, do you just kind of just shut up?

[chuckle]

0:18:27 Michael: Well, taking the last piece first, it is not a bad idea to just as a philosophy to go, "Look, even if I have good advice, what if I just shut up? Not forever, not for days, not for months, but just a little bit longer." That's how we define coaching, or being more coach-like. Can you stay curious a little bit longer? Can you rush to action and advice-giving a little bit more slowly? That's it. It's like coming back to this idea, that there's a time and a place for advice, it's not just as fast as you think it is.

0:19:01 Michael: Not a bad tactic in general, which is like doing that, but actually the first thing is often just an awareness piece, which is start noticing just how crazily active your advice monster is. And I can give you a specific challenge right now, which is like, when somebody starts talking, make a commitment to go three minutes before you offer up an idea or an opinion. It's like the three minute advice monster challenge. Can you do it? Dum-dum-dum-dum. And here's what I'm gonna bet, after about two and a half minute, your head explodes from just the difficulty of not telling people what to do. I just want you to notice how wired you are to be the solution provider, to give advice, 'cause it's only when you begin to notice that, that you begin to think, "How do I go about changing this?"

0:19:49 Jacob: So what is your advice then? [chuckle]

0:19:51 Michael: Aha! You see my dilemma with this whole damn book. How do I teach people about how to not give advice by not giving them advice.

0:20:02 Jacob: What is your recommendation? I'm gonna try not to use that word. So far what is your recommendation for people? Instead of giving advice, what do you do? So, when the advice monster comes up and you're kind of like, "I know what the solution is. I can fix everything for you." What do you do instead?

0:20:20 Michael: So I can give you a script. So let's imagine this, and people, you can write this down and you can start practicing it and incorporating it into your life right now. Jacob comes to me, he goes, "Michael, I've admired you for years, your charisma, your intelligence, your good looks, your book writing. It's amazing. Michael, how do I... " Doesn't matter what Jacob says. My advice monster immediately is like, "This is awesome." Not only has he flattered my fragile male ego, and of course I'm susceptible to that, but he's actually specifically asked me for advice. And it would be wrong, to, as a leader and as a colleague, and a fellow author and a friend to not give him this advice. I mean it's just... I feel a moral obligation at the very least, is to tell him some of my brilliant ideas, 'cause quite frankly they are brilliant.

0:21:15 Michael: So here's a script. You go, "Jacob, that's a great question, I know you want answers to this, I've actually got some answers, I've got some good ideas, but before I give you my answer, let me ask you this, "What ideas, do you already have? I know you've got a few at least. So what's your first idea?" And Jacob will go, "Oh yeah well, blah, blah, blah, blah." And I'm like, "I love it, that's great. What else could you do?" And Jacob will go, "Oh, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." And I'm like, "Nice. You're in a roll. What else could you do?" "Oh, blah, blah, blah, blah." And then I'll go, "This is great, Anything else that you could do?" And Jacob will go, "Yeah. Oh how about blah, blah, blah?" "Fantastic, these are all great. I've got one or two things I can add to that. How about this and how about that?"

0:21:56 Michael: And now what I've done is I've got the other person to do the thinking, I've got them to come up with the ideas. I've contributed my own ideas if I feel the need to do that or if like Jacob's really looking at me to go, you know, "Give me something here." But I've gone, "Look I'm just trying to stay curious a little bit longer," rush to action and advice, giving it a little bit more slowly, and in doing... Using that script, and it is a script. I've learnt that, it's in my bones now. You can actually make sure that they get what they need, which is a solution, but be rather than disempowering them, you're empowering them by asking those questions.

0:22:37 Jacob: So you're kind of turning it around on them, instead of giving the answers.

0:22:42 Michael: There's a place for your answers, just a little bit later. Get them to do the work. I mean one of the principles... I started a company called Box of Crayons, which is about helping organizations in general move from advice driven to curiosity-led. And we work with really cool companies around the world, Microsoft, Salesforce, Telus here in Canada, and... I can't even remember what I was gonna tell you about. This is the other reason I don't give advice is I have the memory of a goldfish. Like I can't even remember how I started that sentence.

0:23:14 Jacob: Memory of a goldfish, something about Salesforce. It's gonna pop into your mind

in a couple minutes.

0:23:18 Michael: It will, exactly.

0:23:19 Jacob: That's always what happens. Okay, so we talked a little bit about what to do when you feel like you have that advice monster popping into your mind, and I think that's a really good script to have, and I'm trying to mentally just think of like in my mind how I'm gonna replay that in my personal life and in my own life as well.

0:23:35 Michael: When your wife comes and goes, "Let me tell you about this thing, Jacob." And you go, "Well, first of all, I love you. You're awesome. You're amazing. Sounds like this is a really hard thing but I just admire you so much. I bet you know how to tackle it. What would you do?" And then she'll go, "Oh, well, you're awesome, Jacob. Blah blah blah." And you'll go, "Yeah. And maybe what else could you do?" And before you know it she's like, "I have the best husband in the world. This is incredible. He's so supportive, he is so smart. He's so wise."

0:23:58 Jacob: She says that already. She already says how amazing and wonderful I am. She's gonna kill me when she hears this by the way. So for leaders inside of organizations, a lot of them probably feel like their employees want their advice because they're the leaders.

0:24:18 Michael: Yeah, totally.

0:24:19 Jacob: They're, I'm the SVP. I'm the CEO, and an employee wants advice from me so of course I should give it to them. So even in that situation you still recommend kind of practicing this script and turning it around on the employees first?

0:24:33 Michael: Even more so. Are you kidding? The more senior you get the less you know about anything that's really going on and it's not even your job anymore. I mean coming back to Microsoft under Satya Nadella, the CEO, he's made a really explicit commitment to the culture to say we're trying to move from a know-it-all culture to a learn-it-all culture. And they're really putting this idea of the growth mindset at the heart of the work that they do. They're like, the only way we get to compete as an organization is if we bring in this full curiosity. And six months ago or so I had this amazing moment where I was coaching the head of sales for Microsoft on a stage in front of three or four thousand of his colleagues and peers, that is the big sales meeting in Las Vegas for Microsoft. We had this fantastic conversation, and part of what's so cool about it was him being coached by me using the few questions from the coaching habit book on why it was important for him to shift his leadership style from a tell-them-all what to do style to a asking good questions to help them figure this stuff out themselves style. This man had been part of Microsoft for years.

0:25:50 Michael: So he grew up under Bill Gates, but particularly under Steve Ballmer who was very much a kind of hierarchy and shouty and kind of make it all happen type of CEO. Satya Nadella is just radical higher, so different and really re-inventing the culture. And what was so cool with Jean-Philippe was this commitment to change his leadership style, because as an SVP or a CEO or any middle-ranking manager, you either can take on the responsibility to have all the answers yourself, which as soon as I say it you go, "That's ludicrous, how could you have all the answers?" Or you could say my job is to grow my people, so that I help them find the real work to be working on, the real challenge to be dealing with. And I help them to come up with really brilliant ideas, because that's why they're on my team because I want their potential, I want all they

can bring. And of course contribute some of my wisdom and experience as well. But my job primarily is to be an enabler of people and a focusing of talent rather than being the person who can quickly provide the wrong answers, because that's what you're doing right now.

0:27:03 Jacob: I suppose that a part of this is also for leaders understanding that their role is different, because if you think about sort of the definition of leaders and managers over the past few decades, it was very much about command-and-control, I tell you what to do, I make the decisions, you follow them. So is a part of this... Maybe even like the first step just understanding that your role as a leader is not that anymore.

0:27:24 Michael: Well, what did you discover when you talked to your CEOs in your interviews around that shift in the mindset and what you need to be as a leader in 2030?

0:27:34 Jacob: Well, so the really interesting thing is from the 140 CEOs I interviewed, I asked all of them, how do you define leader and leadership? And I got a 140 different responses. And some CEOs, for example, like the CEO of Verizon, Hans Vestberg, would say he defined leadership as achieving the missions of the organization, all else is footnotes. That was his direct quote. And then when I interviewed somebody like Ajay Banga, the CEO of MasterCard, he would go into the importance of caring for people and diversity and inclusion and being human, and it was just really interesting to see all these different definitions of CEOs. But interestingly enough, they all run multi-billion very, very successful companies, but their cultures are radically different. So it's tough because you can't really say who's right, who's wrong because Verizon is super successful, MasterCard super successful. So it's tough to say like, "Who's right, who's wrong, what's better? What's not better?"

0:28:37 Michael: Well, I think that for me that's quite liberating, which is like everybody's got different ways of framing or articulating their purpose. But when I go, "What does an organization require to be successful?" It needs to have a direction it's heading in, it needs to be productive, so it needs to have a degree of efficiency in terms of producing the goods and services they're putting out in the world and the better they are the better for the bottom-line. And you need to have people who are smart and engaged and committed to that organization. And if you have fully engaged people and you have efficiency and productivity and impact so kind of engagement and impact then that's the formula and whether you go I'm focusing on the vision because in that mission of the organization is built in impact and engagement, or I'm mostly focused on engagement and the people because culture eats strategy for breakfast. So you gotta build your people so they can deliver on whatever the plan is. They're using... It's the same recipe, they're just using a slightly different ingredients.

0:29:53 Jacob: Yeah. Do you ever get leaders who say, "You know what, Michael? I like these concepts, they're interesting, but we need to move quickly. I don't have time to ask them these questions."

0:30:04 Michael: Totally, it's the number one objection to coaching is who has time for this stuff.

0:30:09 Jacob: Yeah, I just want them to do it. I gave them a task, just get it done.

0:30:13 Michael: Yeah, and the starting point is to say there are times as a leader where your job is to give them a task and their job is just to get it done. So let's not take that off the table or say,

"That's wrong." That is the appropriate style of leadership some of the time, just not all of the time. And people who tend to believe... They're like, "Just to give them the task and get it done." Tend to default to going, "And this is how it should be done, all of the time."

0:30:38 Michael: So there's a couple of things to say. First, on the coaching side, it's worth breaking down the myth that coaching takes a lot of time. Actually coaching can be a far more efficient way of leading than telling people what to do. Because you can either quickly tell people to fix the wrong thing, 'cause you haven't figured out that real challenge, or you can quickly give people the wrong idea because you don't know what you're talking about, and that creates an illusion of speed, but it's more haste than actual speed. Or you can coach, and I believe that if you can't coach in 10 minutes or less, you don't really have time to coach, so you can coach in a really fast efficient way. And I think...

0:31:18 Jacob: 10 minutes?

0:31:18 Michael: Yeah, our basic belief is that to overcome most objections in an organization, you have to make the promise that you can coach in 10 minutes or less. And when Box of Crayons is teaching managers and leaders to be more coach-like, we'll show you how in five minutes you can radically change a conversation just by staying curious longer. So yeah, speed is essential. Just don't think that staying curious up-front actually slows it down, it can rapidly accelerate what's getting done because you have people who are more self-sufficient, more autonomous, more focused on the right things, and that just speeds everything up.

0:31:58 Jacob: Yeah, it's sort of like looking a little bit longer term. So you start this five, 10 minute process and then the longer and you're gonna like you said, employees are gonna be more autonomous, they're gonna make decisions themselves, you just gotta put a little bit of that effort to kinda get that going.

0:32:12 Michael: Exactly.

0:32:13 Jacob: So now that you mentioned coaching in five or 10 minutes, I'm sure there are lot of people watching and listening, who are thinking, "Okay, so how do I do that in five or 10 minutes?" Any suggestions?

0:32:23 Michael: Yeah, you ask your question then you shut up. [chuckle] It's a simple and as difficult as that. It's staying curious. So part of why The Coaching Habit has sold three quarters of a million copies is it's kind of... It liberates people to be really efficient in their coaching. And also quite frankly just to make coaching a little less weird for people because most... There are some people in this world who love coaching, I'm one of them. Anybody who's a professional coach is one of them. People are basically going, "No, I get it, I love it, I'm all in on coaching." And I don't need to convince them about coaching, 'cause they're already there. There's a whole bunch of people, probably the majority in most organizations that go, "I don't know, coaching, I've heard of it, and I don't really know what it is. It feels like it's some HR touchy-feely thing. I don't wanna be a coach, I just wanna be a normal person getting my stuff done. So what's this really about? Isn't this just a waste of my time?" I'm like, "No. No, coaching is not some weird HR thing. It is an essential leadership behavior. It is an under-utilized leadership behavior."

0:33:30 Michael: And if you can add it into your repertoire and make it a regular part of how you

show up and how you lead, it's not the only way, but it's an essential way, then you get to be more efficient around how you work, you get to have more impact in the work that you do, you get to create engagement and autonomy in the people that you lead."

0:33:49 Jacob: I know this is touching on some of the content from your previous book, but how do leaders become more effective coaches? So if you had to give maybe a couple practical or tangible things for leaders to do 'cause you said it's an important leadership skill, so how do you practice it, how do you develop it, how do you become that great coach as a leader? And actually, why do you even need to do this?

0:34:11 Michael: Yeah, well I think why build on what we've been talking about, which is going... I can refer you to Daniel Goleman's study back in 2000. He wrote an HPR Article about it called, "Leadership that Gets Results," and he did this interesting piece of research and he found that there... And this will probably replicate some of your research too Jacob. He said, "Look, actually there are six key leadership styles and each leadership style has it's moment. Each leadership style has its pros and cons." He found coaching was one of the six leadership styles, he found that's one of the least utilized even though it had the most obvious connection to profitability, and building a strong culture and engagement and all that sort of good stuff. And he's like, "The reason people don't coach is they just don't have time for this." So a part of our mission at Box of Crayons is to break down this barrier that says, "Coaching's weird, Coaching's HR, coaching takes too much time. Coaching is not for me 'cause I'm just trying to do a good job being a business leader."

0:35:16 Michael: So where would I start? Well, first of all, let's start by just acknowledging that coaching can be helpful, not just to the people you lead, not just to the organization that you're part of, but it can make your life better because if you're more coach-like you get to work a little less hard and have more impact. So if that sounds interesting to you then being more coach-like can help. And then I would say pick one of the seven questions from The Coaching Habit and start going, "How do I make that into a habit?" Now, you don't even need to buy the book, you can Google the seven questions, they're everywhere.

0:35:46 Jacob: Can you give one or two of them?

0:35:46 Michael: Sure, let me come to that in just a second. And if you're wondering, "Well, how do I make it into a habit?" 'Cause the book's called The Coaching Habit. Well if you go to thecoachinghabit.com, you can download the first, I think it's like third of the book. So the first chapter is all about here's how you build a habit, and you can start incorporating that into the work that you do. So Jacob you're asking for one or two of the questions. Let me give you the best coaching question. Think it's number two in the book and it's a three-word question. The acronym is A-W-E so it's literally an awesome question. And the question is and what else. And what else? Here's why it's so powerful. It recognizes that their first answer is never their only answer and it's rarely their best answer.

0:36:44 Michael: So whatever you've asked, whatever conversation you're in, whatever they're telling you about there's more, and if you're willing to go, "Great, I love that. And what else?" Not only are you taming your advice monster, but you're enabling them to go deeper and smarter and wiser and further and you become a more effective leader. Well it's also cool about anyone else is they don't even realize you've asked a question, it's just like "No, you're just kind of facilitating the conversation and you're just helping me be smarter the job that I do."

0:37:16 Jacob: What else? I like it. So somebody comes to you with an idea or something instead of critiquing it that's sort of your default response to ask for more.

0:37:23 Michael: Oh yeah. They come and they go, "Hey, I got this idea on how to fix this thing, what do you reckon?" And I go, "Brilliant, what else could you do?" And then, "Oh great, this is nice. What else could you do?" "Well, I love it. What else could you do?" "Fantastic, is there anything else you could do?" And suddenly they come up with six ideas, and when you get six ideas you're much more likely to make a better choice as to what the best idea is than if you come up with one idea.

0:37:48 Jacob: What if you are not in a position of leadership, and leadership meaning that you are not responsible for other people. Can you still... I'm assuming The Advice Trap is still relevant for you regardless of what your seniority level is, but what about the coaching aspect, can you still coach others?

0:38:03 Michael: So, my personal belief, and of course, this is biased because this is the drum that I bang and the flag that I wave, is that this is not a leadership skill as much as it is a human skill. So if you interact with other human beings being curious a little bit longer is pretty helpful. Jacob you're talking about conversation with your wife before. I promise you, you being a little bit more curious in that relationship will make for a better relationship. And one of the ways to dismantle this is to stop thinking about coaching as representing a formal relationship. "I only get to coach the people that I lead who are assigned to me in the org chart." I'm like, "You can be more coach-like with your boss and with your colleague and with your peers and with your team and with your vendor, and with your customer, all of these relationships benefit from you showing up with just a tad more curiosity."

0:39:10 Jacob: How do you define or explain curiosity, what does that actually look like?

0:39:15 Michael: Oh, that's good. No one has ever asked me that before.

0:39:19 Jacob: Like what does... 'Cause this was one of the things that I had to try to figure out when I was writing the book as well is a lot of people would say curiosity, but they would say different things that meant curiosity or they would explain curiosity in different ways, and I think a lot of people just think of curiosities is kind of like tinkering, exploring, trying new things.

0:39:46 Michael: Yeah, what... Of the various definitions you heard, which one felt most useful and most interesting for you? Did one stand out?

0:39:54 Jacob: So I really struggle with this. So I interviewed... There is one of the world's leading researchers on curiosities Dr. Todd Kashdan and...

0:40:02 Michael: Oh I know Todd, yeah. His book is called Curious, and it's a great read.

0:40:07 Jacob: Yes, yes. So I interviewed him and we talked about curiosity, and he basically identified these four layers of curiosity. I think the first one is joyous exploration. And joyous exploration is what most people think of when they think of curiosity, it's basically tinkering, exploring, playing, like it's fun. Then there was the second layer... I don't know if I know them in

the exact. The second layer was deprivation sensitivity.

0:40:32 Michael: Oh that's interesting.

0:40:33 Jacob: And the deprivation sensitivity stage of curiosity... Or these were characteristics I think of curious leaders. Deprivation sensitivity is when you understand that there is something that you want to know and you don't know it, and you recognize that there is a gap and you try to close the gap. Then there was another one which was stress tolerance, because a lot of people forget that sometimes being curious is stressful. Now, when you're learning something new...

0:41:00 Michael: It totally is...

0:41:01 Jacob: Yeah, it can be tough, like writing a book about a new topic or...

0:41:05 Michael: Or just sitting in a place of ambiguity and uncertainty.

0:41:08 Jacob: Yeah.

0:41:08 Michael: Because one of the seductions of advice-giving is it just feels good because you're creating certainty and you're creating direction, and you're creating authority and you're creating status, it just feeds a whole bunch of things that our amygdala, our lizard brain really loves. So even though you're like, "This advice is wrong and I'm solving the wrong problem, but I feel good about it." As opposed to going, "You know what? I'm being curious, I'm giving up power, 'cause I'm empowering other people, I'm not sure about where the conversation is going. I'm not sure about what the answer is." You have that uncertainty and discomfort of ambiguity so for sure.

0:41:44 Jacob: Yep. And then the one that I missed on here... And these were actually [0:41:49] with the greatest potential to innovate inside of an organization have these four characteristics, so joyous exploration, deprivation sensitivity, stress tolerance and openness to people's ideas was the fourth one. So that's... At least that's how I tried to look at curiosity is explaining it in those four areas.

0:42:11 Michael: Yeah, what I like about that is the richness of that definition. Because you can imagine and as you think about curiosity, for whoever is listening at the moment, it's a kind of, it will be some combination of those four things depending on the circumstances.

0:42:26 Jacob: Yeah.

0:42:27 Michael: I will say this, I've seen research from Liz Wiseman, who of course wrote Multipliers and generally just... She's just generally awesome and she... Just looking this up in the book myself, 'cause I wanna get this right, she did a little research around the key characteristics of multiplier leaders. The ones who kind of have an exponential deeper greater effect on that through their leadership than others. And she says, "Of the 48 behaviors I assessed multipliers and diminisher leaders against, I found that intellectual curiosity was the characteristic that most distinguished multiplier leaders from diminisher leaders. So that really supports Todd's work as well around high performance has the ability to imp... Have the capacity for curiosity.

0:43:22 Jacob: Yeah. And it's also partially because the world is changing so quickly that we need

these types of curious leaders who are willing to challenge ideas, explore new things. And it's funny, I was actually just flipping through my book and I realize I have a whole chapter in there called The coach.

0:43:38 Michael: Oh, that's perfect.

0:43:41 Jacob: Because that was one of the most important skills that the CEOs identified. And actually a lot of the CEOs I interviewed, well, maybe not a lot but a handful of them actually said they do work with coaches.

0:43:52 Michael: I would be very surprised if most of them didn't work with coaches. If you run a board for a... If you've got somebody who's running a multibillion-dollar company, that is really hard and really lonely and isolating and confusing and it's not like people can just go, "Well, I run Visa so let me run up my dude friend over in MasterCard and go how are you dealing with this?" It's hard. What I think coaches often do is they just provide a spot for you to not know because what a CEO does time and time again, and you know this better than I do, Jacob, is to go, "Look, all the hard things come up to me." If it was easy it would have been solved in a different layer of the organization. And so I spend my whole time trying to make tough decisions about ambiguous uncertain things. I mean remember Barack Obama talking about I only get the 51% decision which is like it's 51% one way, it's 49% the other way you make the final call. So yeah. You need a coach.

0:45:00 Jacob: Yeah, it's tough. And there's a lot of... I think being the leader is probably the hardest thing to do especially now and in the future 'cause you have more spotlight on you, more scrutiny. It's, things are changing quicker. It's not an easy, easy job at all. So it's tough. One of the things that you talked about in your book, you have these three personas of the advice monster?

0:45:23 Michael: Yeah.

0:45:24 Jacob: Tell it, save it and control it?

0:45:25 Michael: Exactly.

0:45:26 Jacob: So can you talk about each one of those?

0:45:28 Michael: Sure. And to the people listening in I will say this, theadvicetrap.com is the website of the book and we're still tinkering around with it, but when the book goes live on February 29, there'll be a questionnaire where you can actually figure out which of these three personas is kind of the strongest in you, it's like the force which is the force that has your control. So I'll share these three personas. Tell it; tell it has convinced you that the way that you add value, the only way that you really add value is to have the answer, your job is to have all the answers all the time, if you don't have all the answers, you fail. The second Persona is saver, save it puts its arm around you and going, "Look, you're responsible for everybody, you can't let anybody fail, you have to rescue anybody who's stumbling, confused is in a hard... If they fail, you fail."

0:46:25 Michael: And then the third Persona is control it, probably the slipperiest of the three. It's convinced you that the way that you win is to always be in control of everything, never lose control of what's going on. Always be the person who shapes the conversation, shapes the outcome, is always in charge. All three of those have served you well in the past, it's been helpful for you to

have the answer. It's been helpful for you to be supportive and support other people. It's been helpful for you to hold control, and there's a limit to that as well. And if that becomes your default response, so that becomes your everyday response, then actually you end up crushing those around you and crushing yourself as a result of that.

0:47:14 Jacob: Yeah, it's not a... Well, I don't know, is it an easy thing to master?

0:47:25 Michael: Well, I think for some of us it's easy-ish. And this is why I wrote The Advice Trap, which is for some people the coaching habit was a book where they just went. "Oh, no, I get it. I love it. These questions are amazing. I'm on it." And people write to me regularly going, "These seven questions, I'm using them. They're perfect." And there's a whole bunch of people going, "I didn't get it, it's too hard. I like your book, I just don't ever ask any of these questions."

0:47:51 Jacob: It's tough. Yeah.

0:47:52 Michael: And that's in some way the... What it means to take on taming your advice monster, which is this is the hard change to kind of think differently about who you are and how you show up and where your value is in the organization and to actually do things differently as a result.

0:48:08 Jacob: So people who have a hard time... So as leaders who have a hard time coaching others, do you think that one of the biggest obstacles, the biggest roadblocks or challenges for why they have a hard time coaching others is because of the advice monster?

0:48:23 Michael: Yeah. And behind the advice monster is an obvious reason why people like giving advice which is I just spent a lifetime practicing that, that's what they've been trained to do and told to do, or rewarded to do for years, which is have the answer, make sure that's your job is to come up and tell people what to do. But what we're doing in peeling back and revealing the advice monster and tell it and save it and control it is the kind of the deeper way the ego and your self identity is wrapped up in being the person who provides the answer. And really what you're, the challenge is, it's like for you to get to that next level of leadership, you have to actually do some work on you on how... What you stand for, on what it means to be you and you're trying to tame your advice monster, so you can move from...

0:49:15 Michael: And in the book we talked about the difference between present you and future you. We're like I'm trying to get you to be a future you leader, the best version of yourself, the rewired version of yourself.

0:49:26 Jacob: The future, the future leader.

0:49:29 Michael: That's exactly...

[vocalization]

0:49:31 Jacob: Those of you who are listening to the podcast and not watching it, you're not gonna to see any of these references that Michael and I are making, but if you're watching live you're gonna see all that.

0:49:39 Michael: We're showing each other the covers of our books here because we're connected. The work I'm doing is trying to be the bridge to one of the characteristics that Jacobs talks about in his book around the future leader, which is like, okay, it's hard to be curious, it's like we all get it intellectually, but in practice it's hard. How do you do that in practice? Well, that's what The Advice Trap is about.

0:50:05 Jacob: Now one of the other things that you talked about in your book and actually somebody left a comment in here and they said this as well and I write about this in my book is empathy.

0:50:11 Michael: Exactly.

0:50:13 Jacob: So how... What's a simple way for people to understand empathy because empathy and sympathy are obviously not the same thing and I feel like in our organizations we're pretty good at the sympathy part, "I'm sorry you feel that way, blah, blah, blah." So how would you explain the empathy piece and any suggestions on how to practice that as a leader?

0:50:34 Michael: Well, people know my bias from listening to us for the last 45 minutes, but I am committed to curiosity being this essential leadership behavior, and as I did this work and figure this stuff out and wrote this book, I saw three leadership characteristics emerging from leaders who were deeply based in curiosity, there was empathy, there was mindfulness and there was humility or being humble and each one of those gives you access to greater knowledge. Empathy is greater understanding of the other, humility is greater understanding of you and mindfulness is a greater understanding of the situation.

0:51:24 Michael: When you're more mindful, you're more in the moment, you get to see more, you get to notice more, you're actually a little better connected to the truth. When you're empathetic you actually get to understand a little bit more about what's going on for that other person, and you're a little bit more connected to the truth. When you're humble you get to see more about who you are and all your messy glory and you're a little more connected to the truth, and when you had the three of them you have this kind of combined way of seeing reality that makes you smarter and wiser and less easily triggered and less easily kind of pushed down patterns of behavior that no longer serve you.

0:52:05 Jacob: So mindfulness, humility and empathy.

0:52:06 Michael: Yep, those are the three.

0:52:07 Jacob: And then how do you go about practicing or implementing these three things as a leader or as an employee? Are there any... I don't know.

0:52:17 Michael: You know honestly...

0:52:18 Jacob: I don't wanna say simple things but just practical things.

0:52:20 Michael: Well, I feel like I'm banging the drum, so forgive me if I keep saying the same answer, but I do think by staying curious longer, these three things open up for you. Because when you're curious longer you actually get to understand that other person a bit more, you stop just

going, "Yeah, okay, shut up, Jacob let me just tell you the ideas." When you're curious longer you get to find out what's really going on and stay a little more grounded and what's going on. When you're curious longer you actually get to see what drives you, and who you are, as a leader so you get that kind of humility of being your feet kind of on the ground 'cause you have that connection.

0:53:00 Jacob: And you actually wrote in the book I remember there was... I'm looking at it right now, you have one big page and you wrote, "Your job is to stop seeking the solutions and start finding the challenges."

0:53:10 Michael: Yeah.

0:53:10 Jacob: And in that section of the book, you talk about Six Foggy-fears...

0:53:14 Michael: Six Foggy-fiers yeah.

0:53:16 Jacob: Oh fog, okay.

0:53:17 Michael: Yeah, I know it's...

0:53:18 Jacob: I feel like a schmuck that I just say. Six Foggy-fiers."

0:53:21 Michael: Yeah. No, no. Foggy-fiers, it's a confusing metaphor. Here's where it comes from, when... We've been teaching this over the years, we talk about the importance of getting clear on the challenge, it's a really essential part of the courses that Box of Crayons teaches. I'm like, "Okay, what's the opposite of clear?" Whereas I've got this metaphor of the the mist and the fog rolling in, so I'm like, "Okay, what are the six Foggy-fiers that we need to blow apart so we can see what's really going on?"

0:53:47 Jacob: Yeah. So can you touch on some of them? I don't know if we have time to go through all six, but whatever maybe some of your favourite ones.

0:53:55 Michael: Yeah, let me give you a couple of them. I really love... There's one that I see all the time and you would have seen this in your interviews with your CEO, Jacob, I call it, "Big picturing." So when you ask people what's going on, you go, "Okay, so what's on your mind?" They go, "Oh well, as a CEO of a billion-dollar company, I've got China and the virus and the money market and the shift and the digitalization and this." And you're like, "This is really interesting insight, really big, interesting themes coming out." Then you're like, "But wait, what are we talking about? Why are we... This feels like a Harvard Business Review executive summary of something, not an actual real conversation."

0:54:39 Michael: And big picturing is when things stay a bit general and a bit abstract, and sure there's a place for that, but not really, it's not usefully in a kind of a real conversation about what's going on. So what the foggy-fiers is like, "How do we make this real? How do we breakthrough the generalization of the big picture and get into the what's the real challenge here for you?" 'Cause you could go, "Why is it hard to be a CEO, blah, blah, blah? Okay, in your job right now, what's the real challenge here for you? No, but what's the real challenge? No, but what's the real challenge here for you?" It'll be this kind of shrinking down in terms of the focus that the conversation will have.

0:55:23 Jacob: Somebody asked in the chat, "Are these three things, do they work in a crisis situation or just in the development phase?" And I'm assuming she's referring to the humility, empathy...

0:55:37 Michael: Empathy and mindfulness. Well, here's how I would frame it. If you're in a crisis situation, of course, when you're in a crisis situation your little lizard brain goes, "Panic. Panic!" You kinda literally the blood drains from your prefrontal cortex, everything becomes more black and white, you're kind of more committed to your own way of seeing things, you're less attuned to the subtleties of the situation, you're kind of like you're in tunnel, you literally get tunnel vision. And you could ask yourself, "Would it be useful in a crisis situation to feel more grounded, to feel more aware of how you're being triggered and how you're reacting, to feel more empathy for the other people involved in the room, to see a greater sense of the truth of what's really going on?" Given the choice between that and being in panic-trigger mode, what do you think is gonna get the best result?

0:56:30 Michael: Now I get that curiosity always feels like a luxury in a time of crisis. But the science would tell you that curiosity is needed even more in the time of crisis because otherwise we just go down the path that we've already gone down before.

0:56:49 Jacob: Yeah, I think, and actually, we see this in innovation circles too, right? Usually when a company struggles and when they're underwater that's when the CEO does the all-hands meeting and says "We need some new ideas, we gotta be innovative."

0:57:03 Michael: Right.

0:57:05 Jacob: But the best time to do that is actually when things are going well not when you're struggling and you kind of wait for things to... So I agree, practicing these things, don't wait for the crisis to practice these things, practice them when things are going well."

0:57:16 Michael: The best way to do it is to go I'm constantly on a day-by-day basis building curiosity in the way we work as a team or the way we work as a unit so that when things are going well, you get to be curious, and when things are hard, you get to be curious because what we do day-to-day is what makes the difference year-to-year.

0:57:37 Jacob: Yeah. I'm actually curious to ask you this question now, how do you define leadership or leader? You know what, what you just gave me, is the most common response that all the CEOs gave.

[chuckle]

0:57:56 Michael: It's hard.

0:57:57 Jacob: It's a hard question. It shouldn't be hard but it's actually a really hard question to answer.

0:58:05 Michael: I think it's providing the appropriate mix of encouragement, direction, vision and hutzpah, that enable a group of people to go in approximately the right direction and arrive approximately intact.

0:58:26 Jacob: I like it. I like hutzpah in there, we need a little bit of that.

[chuckle]

0:58:30 Jacob: We just have a couple of minutes left, so maybe to wrap up, towards the end, well, actually middle-ish of your book, you start talking about how to practice master class, and you had some sections where you talk about sealing the exits, repetition, repetition, repetition. So, for those watching or listening that want to start practicing some of these coaching skills, being aware of The Advice Trap, what are some things they can start doing right after they finish listening or watching this?

0:58:58 Michael: Sure. So what I think has worked least successfully is when people go, "That was an amazing podcast. Michael and Jacob, two smart guys. I'm sold, I buy into this whole idea of coaching, I'm just trying to be more coach-like," and then hope that something good will happen. It rarely happens like that. What I would suggest is you get smart about building a small, simple coaching habit. And what I mean by that is like pick a person, one person, that you'd like to be more coach-like with. Pick the situation with that person, where you've got the best chance to be more coach-like with them, maybe it's where your advice monster goes crazy, maybe it's where your advice monster doesn't go crazy.

0:59:43 Michael: Then pick a question, just one question. You can pick one of the seven from The Coaching Habit book or you can pick a different one altogether, I don't care, but it's like you build this muscle slowly and through repetition, and through commitment. You don't... The classic, it's like going to the gym, you don't go to the gym and suddenly start bench pressing 500 pounds or whatever heavyweight is, you go and you go "Right, first visit to the gym, I'm gonna pick up a light dumbbell and throw it around a few times and just get into the swing of things." And what matters more is how often you go to the gym, not how much can you lift on the first time.

1:00:22 Michael: So start small, pick a question, pick a person, pick a moment, try it out and then repeat it an hour later, and then repeat it an hour later, then repeat it an hour later and then a day later, and then a day later, and that's how you start building a coaching habit.

1:00:37 Jacob: So, a moment that could be something like... I'm trying to think of a...

1:00:41 Michael: Yeah. So this, the download people can get at thecoachinghabit.com is the first part of the book, and that first chapter is about what a habit is. And there's a formula, the new habit formula, when this happens instead of, I will. So when this happens, when I have my one-to-one meeting with Jacob and he starts complaining about life, 'cause he always does, instead of jumping in to fix it for him, which is what I always do, I will ask him this question, "Jacob, what's the real challenge here for you?" So you can see I've got this really clear definition, it's like a two-minute shift in behavior, but it...

[pause]

1:01:27 Jacob: Oh, I lost you for a second.

1:01:30 Michael: Oh, yeah, I think I'm back.

1:01:32 Jacob: You said, clear shift in behavior and...

1:01:36 Michael: I can't remember, it was awesome though.

1:01:39 Jacob: So yeah, I think doing this, I think the point is, if you do this on a regular basis, you will see that clear shift in behavior.

1:01:45 Michael: Exactly right.

1:01:47 Jacob: And then last thing I wanted to mention, you have something in the book you say "give as much as you can," which aligns very well with, you have to... As a leader, I think you need to understand that your job is to help make other people more successful than you, which is essential. Well, Michael, we are at the end of our time. Where can people...

1:02:05 Michael: That went fast.

1:02:06 Jacob: Yeah, it did. It always goes fast, everybody always says that. But I'm sure a lot of people watching, listening are very, very interested in some of the resources in the book. So anything that you wanna mention for people to check out, please feel free to do so.

1:02:18 Michael: Yes, I will. So look, if there's one place to go, it's mbs.works. Mbs.works, that's my new umbrella site.

1:02:27 Jacob: Mbs.works.

1:02:27 Michael: At the moment because it's before the book launch, this is our pre-publication special, so there's a bunch of bonuses you get if you buy the book before February the 29th because... And Jacob would agree with me on this, it's helpful as an author to have people buying your book early, it kinda gets the buzz going. So if you go to mbs.works or you go to theadviceatrap.com you'll see good stuff there for you to grab.

1:02:52 Jacob: Very cool. So that's the one place where people go to check out and then the book is coming February 29th?

1:02:58 Michael: And your book is coming?

1:03:00 Jacob: February 26th.

1:03:01 Michael: Perfect, we're gonna be partying the same week.

1:03:05 Jacob: Yay, exactly, exactly. Well, Michael, thank you so much for taking time out of your day to join me today.

1:03:09 Michael: My pleasure. Thanks for having me.

1:03:10 Jacob: Of course, and thanks everyone for tuning in. My guest, again Michael Bungay Stanier, best selling author of The Coaching Habit and the brand new book, The Advice Trap,

which I recommend that all of you check out and I will see all of you very, very soon. Bye-bye.