

1 INSIGHT

with RICH LITVIN



Episode 4: "You need to leave Facebook. It's killing you."

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Rich Litvin: Welcome to 1 Insight. My name is Rich Litvin. I grew up in London and I now live in LA. This is a podcast for extraordinary top performers.

Rich Litvin: You see, I've coached some of the most successful and talented people on the planet. I see what most people cannot see, and I dare to say what most people wouldn't dare to say. What I know about success is that on the other side of it, it can actually be lonely. You can feel like more of an impostor the more successful you become. And when you're the most interesting person in the room, you're actually in the wrong room.

Rich Litvin: I coach around insight. Life looks one way, something happens, the world looks different and your entire world changes. It can happen in an instant. This podcast is called 1 Insight because a single insight can change everything.

Rich Litvin: This was a fascinating conversation for me. Dr. Erin Baker is a former director of user experience at Yammer that became part of Microsoft. She's a former UX research manager at Facebook. She's got a PhD in social and personality psychology. This is what we call a high performer and she's transitioned into coaching.

Rich Litvin: She comes in with this distinction around patience versus hustle. Should I practice slowing down or should I be working really, really hard to speed up? I work with her around that distinction. And then I can tell there is something more, so before I take her off the hot seat, I ask her what would really make this an extraordinary conversation? We dive in even deeper to what her big dreams might be. And then I mess with her thinking around big dreams. Enjoy. Hi, Erin.

Erin Baker: Hi.

Rich Litvin: Two seconds ago you said, "Well the thought in my head was, what do I want Rich to coach me on?" Let me ask you that question right now. What can I coach you on?

Erin Baker: I think what's coming to mind that, I'm trying to figure out what's really present with me today, and what's coming up for me is, I've launched my new business. I've left the corporate world about four months ago. I love this quote that you put a lot, Marshall Goldsmith of, "What got you there, won't get you to where you're going next."

Rich Litvin: Yeah, "What got you here won't get you there."

Erin Baker: Yes. "What got you here, yeah, won't get you there." I'm having this sort of moment of I don't really know what the balance is between being patient and letting things unfold as I build my business and what is not hustling enough?

Erin Baker: When I was back in my corporate career there were benchmarks, right. You have a level that you're at, you're an individual contributor, or you're a manager, and here's what it means to be in your role, and this is how you progress to the next level. When you become an entrepreneur, it's a completely different ball game.

Rich Litvin: Yeah.

Erin Baker: I think that's where my mind is right now is striking that right balance, and especially because part of the reason I'm in the entrepreneurial world is to have balance and flexibility and fun.

Rich Litvin: Yeah. Isn't it interesting though, we go into the entrepreneurial world so often out of the corporate world for balance, fun, and often also to get away from some of the most demanding bosses we've ever worked for to discover there is no boss more demanding than the one who sits in our seat. No boss, officially at least, asks us to get up at three in the morning and check email to see if business is coming in, but we feel called to do that, right. Often that world that we leave, there are times when we look back and thinking, oh my God, there is pieces of that that I missed, not everything, but pieces I miss. It can be intense to be an entrepreneur, right?

Erin Baker: Sure. Absolutely.

Rich Litvin: Correct.

Erin Baker: When you're a high achiever and you have high ambitions, it's easy to get sucked into the vortex.

Rich Litvin: Yeah. Here is something I know, as humans we tend to underestimate dramatically what we'll achieve in 10 years and overestimate what we'll achieve in one year. And that gives context to my answer to your question. I wrote down the distinction, patience versus hustle.

Rich Litvin: I teach and coach around distinctions. I look at the distinctions my clients have in their world, but I'm also very comfortable with paradox. There is a paradox that there are times in your entrepreneurial life where patience is going to be called for and much more important than hustle. You hear me say a lot, "Slow down to speed up."

Rich Litvin: There are other times when hustle is, okay. I mean I don't come from the Gary Vaynerchuk school of hustle, hustle, hustle, all the time. That I think is exhausting and overwhelming, and that's his shtick. It's not my way of doing things. But I'm not afraid to work hard and I'm not afraid to hustle when needed. I don't think there is a simple answer to that question, is it one or the other? I think just like you said at the beginning, you got present. I felt it. What's the question I really need to ask in this moment rather than the one I prepared? I think patience versus hustle is a moment by moment decision.

Erin Baker: Yeah. I think what's coming up for me right now is that I haven't built that intuition yet of when to be patient and when to hustle.

Rich Litvin: That's a great insight.

Erin Baker: It is.

Rich Litvin: How do I build that as a skill? Because it is a skill and it can be learned. Some of that also is around making sure you have the right people around you to support you with that. You had that in the previous world you were in [crosstalk 00:06:15] because there were benchmarks, there were managers, there were reporting dates, there were deadlines.

Rich Litvin: When it's just me on my own in my office, well how do I make sure that I'm doing what needs to be done or doing even doing what I want to do? Because I can find easily ways to excuse myself from doing it. I'm afraid of doing something. Do you have a community, and individual, a support network?

Erin Baker: I do. I do, so I am apprenticing with a coach, Christina Berkeley and I have a community through another tribe that I reach out to. That tribe is not necessarily from my same background, so they may not have the same level of understanding of the hustle I have come from. I think that's also a piece for me is developing an intuition.

Erin Baker: I used to work at Facebook and then I was at Microsoft for a year, and both of those companies are at warped speed, and so I've lost touch with my own internal compass of what's reasonable.

Erin Baker: I've also moved back to the Midwest from the Bay area, which was also a very chaotic high energy place. What's happening right now is I don't have a calibration and I don't have a community other than my, when I coach, to really understand what is hustle and what isn't.

Rich Litvin: That's great. This is, you've nailed it, a calibration issue.

Erin Baker: Yes, totally.

Rich Litvin: I'd say for a while I would keep a journal.

Erin Baker: Okay.

Rich Litvin: I think it's a journal where you're actually making a notation of a number of things. So maybe if there was a scale from patience to hustle from zero to five or something like that, like where do I feel today? I'd map against it your happiness. Maybe a smiley face, a sad face or a face with a straight line in the middle, just a little bit simple. Something simple so you can watch what happens. Oh, I noticed that the more down I feel, the more in hustle mode I am, or is it the other way around, the more I'm in hustle mode, the more sad I feel? But there is somehow there is a connection there that's worth noticing or whatever else you might see. Look, you're going to look for patterns.

Erin Baker: I like data. That appeals to me a lot.

Rich Litvin: Of course, it's your background, right, from Facebook?

Erin Baker: Yes.

Rich Litvin: I would look up what the data I want to collect, patience to hustle scale, the emotional sadness to happiness scale. I would have something like, in my words, I'd call it a white space scale, so space is where miracles occur. My job is to create as much space as I can for myself and for my clients because that's when extraordinary things happen. So the opposite of a white space is when my calendar is jam packed.

Erin Baker: [inaudible 00:00:09:19].

Rich Litvin: Could you have a scale like that that you're looking at on? Some of these are daily, some of them are weekly, right. You know, there is no point in measuring your body fat on a daily basis. That doesn't make sense, but tracking your body fat is useful if you're working out and want to have one measure of progress. So I think this would be really interesting and fun and valuable for you to pick a number of items for this scale that you can track.

Erin Baker: Yeah, the white space one is one that it's a really interesting piece for me because it's something I crave is that time to be creative and be thinking, and there is a piece of me that struggles internally with you should be doing something, which it is something I'm doing. But I haven't recalibrated my mentality from that world where I was literally as in my last year as a manager in meetings all day every day. There was no white space.

Rich Litvin: Yep.

Erin Baker: I was miserable. There is that shifting of the mindset of this is a good thing. Remember you didn't have that.

Rich Litvin: Yeah.

Erin Baker: And enjoying that things are not so overwhelming right now that I have to say no to time for that.

Rich Litvin: This is good.

Erin Baker: Yeah.

Rich Litvin: I feel that shift in you, that realization because you've got to look back to that world. I spent some time on your website before this conversation and I read the words that your wife said to you, "I think you need to leave Facebook. It's killing you."

Erin Baker: Yes, it was and I had no idea.

Rich Litvin: Yeah.

Erin Baker: I think that piece is a fear I have as I go in this... on this entrepreneurship journey is that I will get lost in my vortex of just when I get really excited about things I go. I think part of the fear of patience versus hustle is that I don't want to get back to that space again where I'm burnt out, where my wife is telling me that I have dark circles under my eyes.

Rich Litvin: Right.

Erin Baker: And that my whole identity is wrapped... My whole identity was I am a Facebook research manager and I don't want that for my business because my business is me. You are your business as a coach. There is so much more to me.

Rich Litvin: I'm going to riff off what I know is the thing that you love, this use of data. I don't know why this flashed into my mind, in Star Trek, the panels, everyone is looking at the spaceship. Someone is tracking every little part of this spaceship. Someone has a panel that's tracking warning signs.

Erin Baker: Yes.

Rich Litvin: Engine temperature. I haven't driven a spaceships, so I was thinking of how much gas is in there, whatever fuel, right.

Erin Baker: Right.

Rich Litvin: You need a dashboard and you need a system with early warning signs with a check engine light. We need to work out, what is that? Okay, so dark circles under my eyes is a great one, and it's your wife who's checking that one.

Rich Litvin: What other ones can you have? Some that you're checking some that your partner is checking, some that your coach is checking some are that your family or, community are checking, so you've given these early warning signs out there to others more than just you. It's hard to catch it because the problem is, you can plan it all now, but your energy is up here. As your energy declines, your vision fades. You're unable to see things around you, so you're going to miss those signs that you need to be paying attention to, so outsource them.

Erin Baker: Yeah.

Rich Litvin: Make a list of the early warning signs or ask the people who love you and know you're the best, what do you think? Look back at those. Five years ago, what were the early warning signs that you saw that I couldn't even see? Because they saw them, I promise.

Erin Baker: They did. It's funny, I did have about the last four months I was at Facebook, I had a daily tracking system of my own that was around, should I, when I hit this threshold I have to leave. But it was very clear that my own tracking system was failing me because everybody else was seeing things and I'm like, but my data shows everything's fine.

Rich Litvin: Yeah. Not only that, I think the criteria when it hits here I have to leave, it's like you know in the car that level on the gas when the light comes on and you're almost out of gas?

Erin Baker: Yeah.

Rich Litvin: Now, they deliberately set that a lot higher because they know that most people once the light comes on are going to let it go and go and go.

Erin Baker: Yeah.

Rich Litvin: So, most people won't actually run out. You set the bar too low so, you've got to set a lot higher because the challenge of being a one person business is that you are the most important person in your business and as much as you love your clients and eventually your team, you are more important than them.

Erin Baker: Yes.

Rich Litvin: Because without you nothing happens, so it's really important you put recreation on your calendar, re-creation.

Erin Baker: Yes.

Rich Litvin: It's time for you nurture yourself, so you can get back into doing what you love and serving others. I'm sure this is your gift because it is for me. I'm really good at helping others take time for themselves. But I have to know that if I don't, I can do that even less.

Erin Baker: Yes. Yes, and I think that something that was coming up for me is especially some recreation that's social is also a really great time to meet interesting people and find potential clients, and I had this heart palpitation around. I don't want my fun time to now become, oh, but I have to think about am I meeting interesting people from my business, so if I can create some space where, you know what, this particular place, this particular thing I'm doing, doesn't matter how interesting these people are, I'm not there to make a client.

Rich Litvin: Yeah, yeah.

Erin Baker: I'm there to go play Frisbee or do whatever.

Rich Litvin: You'll be surprised how much more likely it is that those people will show up because you're not looking for them.

Erin Baker: Right, right.

Rich Litvin: We're here, right. The insights you needed are there. You've got them in the first few minutes of this conversation, so because my sense of you is that, I mean you're sharp, you're fast, you get things quick. We could be complete and say we're done and this distinction would really serve you for the rest of your life. You created a credible business from this place, this distinction, these tools we've got, but there is something more. What is it? How could I serve you in a way that's absolutely extraordinary, Erin?

Erin Baker: I think your super power of dreaming big because I think one thing that I know very... I know a lot about myself and my skills and what I love to do. I generally have a sense of my zone of genius. I still feel like I don't... When you said earlier this idea that we underestimate what we can do in 10 years and overestimate what we can do in one, the what's happening in three years question always stumps me.

Rich Litvin: Yeah.

Erin Baker: I could use some help, yeah, crafting what does that vision look like? Some of the questions I ask myself that I would ask my clients haven't quite nailed it for me in my own coaching.

Rich Litvin: Yeah.

Erin Baker: So someone coming at me from a different angle would be really helpful.

Rich Litvin: Here's what I get about you, I'm reminded when I first started coaching almost 15 years ago and all my money fears came up because I used to work in organizations where I got a paycheck at the end of every month, not even a paycheck, just wire it into my bank account, and I was a hard worker. But it didn't matter that people in my organization who didn't work hard, they got paid the same as I did, so suddenly it was just me worrying about all the money.

Rich Litvin: The coach who was working at the time said, "You know what I get about you, Rich? What I get about you is even if all the money ran out and you literally became homeless and had to go and live in a hostel, I give you about two weeks before you'd be running the hostel.

Erin Baker: That's about right.

Rich Litvin: So I [inaudible 00:18:09] Oh my God, yeah, he's nailed me. I could see the signs I put up on the wall with the rotors of who'd be doing what. This is just who I am. I see your smile when I say that. What lands for you when I share that story?

Erin Baker: No matter what I do in life, I find myself doing it well and doing more than I ever thought I could. It's definitely, a mindset that I've noticed about myself and I constantly check it, is this idea that because I'm in uncertain territory doesn't mean I'm not going to actually go do some really killer things. I just don't like that I don't have the certainty right now.

Erin Baker: What's resonating for me is that great things are going to happen, and it's okay that I don't have a concrete picture of what that vision looks like. I think for me, longer term, I want to be pushed to continually push my boundaries because I've been so good at everything I've ever done. I'd like to get to a place where, you talk about impossible goals, where I'm really doing something that does feel

impossible. Right now, I'm afraid, but it doesn't feel impossible. And that fear is what keeps me going.

Rich Litvin: Yeah. My sense is that now is not the right time for me to draw out from you an impossible goal.

Erin Baker: Right. That makes sense.

Rich Litvin: Your challenge right now is to practice living in uncertainty. There will come a moment when either you're go, oh my God, Rich, I think it's this, can I talk, or oh shit, Rich, this really scares me. Can we talk? But something extraordinary is on the way.

Rich Litvin: Your job right now is to sit and live in uncertainty and see what... Because that's not been something you've felt for a long time, I don't think. It's a muscle to build. It will really serve you into the future, your ability to stay in discomfort.

Erin Baker: Yeah. I have not been in this level of uncertainty in a very long time. I used to be one of those people, but not so much anymore, but I used to have to have a plan. I'm not feeling like I need a plan right now. It's just, it's hard for me to be just in the moment to moment letting things unfold.

Rich Litvin: I have to model this right now because it's really cool, especially this is an episode for a podcast rather than a private coaching session where I get this big boom moment of insight and someone says, wow, where everyone can see this thing is going to change. So am I able to be in the tension of, well, there is no special [foreign language 00:21:14]. There is no special moment of insight other than, okay, it's time to stay in the discomfort and I'm okay with that because I've practiced that.

Rich Litvin: And I say to my clients, "I'm not attached to what you achieving what you want in the timeframe that you've got. I know what you want to create as on its way. I have no doubt about that. But when it happens or how it happens or what it looks like or whether it's even different from the way you thought it would be, I'm okay with that too." And so this is one of those what I call hot seat moments where I take you off the hot seat and I let you simmer, let you simmer in the not knowing because it will really serve you to be in this place.

Erin Baker: Yes. I sense the discomfort. I'm feeling right now very lucky that I don't have any rush. I've got plenty of time. If I had needed money I wouldn't have left my job, so this is a good reminder to me of part of my intention was to spend some time simmering. I think there is just a little high achiever in me and it's like, okay, you've simmered long enough.

Rich Litvin: Yep.

Erin Baker: And maybe that means I haven't simmered long enough.

Rich Litvin: Make that your practice. Make that your practice. The invitation from me is, when you know, let's speak again.

Erin Baker: Okay.

Rich Litvin: When there is something that scares you, then it's time for you and me to talk.

Erin Baker: Okay.

Rich Litvin: Now, I said that quite deliberately because you've always had success or whatever you put your mind to, and so what I put to you next is the thing that you know that, oh I could make this one be successful. That's not the one. It's the one where you have doubt. It's the one where you have imposter syndrome. It's the one where you think, who me? How could I possibly do this? That's the one where I'll sit down and I'll talk to you and I'll help you dream big.

Erin Baker: There is a sense that that's coming. I don't know what that is, but, I very confidently feel there is something extraordinary on my horizon. I've just not been patient to get there.

Rich Litvin: Yeah.

Erin Baker: Yeah.

Rich Litvin: It brings it right back to where we started.

Erin Baker: Right.

Rich Litvin: Patience versus hustle.

Erin Baker: Yes.

Rich Litvin: In place and this moment, there is a place for slowing down to speed up.

Erin Baker: Yes. For me, I'm an extreme action taker, and so I think it's about knowing when the action will help bring some things and let them unfold and when inaction will bring things and let things unfold.

Rich Litvin: For you, err towards the side of inaction for now.

Erin Baker: Right.

Rich Litvin: Sit with the discomfort because it's not your default place. You know how to be in massive action and when it's needed you, that will kick in and an instant.

Erin Baker: Okay.

Rich Litvin: Build your muscle on the other side of the spectrum because then you'll have range and the wider your range, the more your power. You're already an incredibly powerful person, Erin. Your power will build when you lean into the side where you don't have much range right now.

Erin Baker: That makes sense. I think there is a lot I can just sense as I get uncomfortable, there will be a lot that comes up around limiting beliefs. There is a story in my head of if I don't have it figured out now, I never will. I know that story is not serving me, so that it'll be good for me to see how those stories come up as I sit in the discomfort.

Rich Litvin: Go back to where we began with this dashboard for you where you're tracking things.

Erin Baker: Yeah.

Rich Litvin: As well as quantitative data, track some qualitative data.

Erin Baker: Yeah.

Rich Litvin: Today, this is my level of happiness from a scale of one to five, or the smiley face scale. This was the number of actions I took, whatever it is you're tracking and underneath and some qualitative data on that page. These were the thoughts in my head. These are the emotions I was feeling. These are the sensations in my body. Two or three lines, that's it. Track some quantitative and qualitative data. You're the data person.

Erin Baker: Yes.

Rich Litvin: You'll watch for the patterns you must keep.

Erin Baker: Yeah, and that sounds like a lot of fun.

Rich Litvin: Erin, thanks for playing.

Erin Baker: Thank you.

Rich Litvin: For most of human history, it wasn't called coaching, it was called leadership. It's what I love to do, to coach people, to lead people and to mess with people's thinking. If you'd like more of this, or if you'd like to learn more about our community of extraordinary top performers, go to richlitvin.com/1insight.