

# 1 INSIGHT

with RICH LITVIN



## Episode 11: “Hell yes. Hell no. Maybe.”

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Rich: Welcome to 1 Insight. My name is Rich Litvin. I grew up in London and I now live in LA and this is a podcast for extraordinary top performers. 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. 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: Today I coached Catherine. Catherine's a member of 4PC. She is a top performer. She's an estate attorney by background, has a business that makes millions really making an impact in people's lives, helping them create an amazing future for themselves and for their children. And she's had this taste of coaching and loves it. And she's sucked in to those things that drain her of energy and her business. So I teach her a tool that I call hell, yes, hell no, maybe. And it will transform her business. It will transform her leadership team and it will transform the life of all of them as they get more and more away from the hell nos and more and more into the hell yeses for their life and for their business.

Rich: I tell her a story too, about another tool called the Avoid at all Costs lists, which is a game changer. And she has this insight that has her say, "Wow!" And then we're there. Enjoy. Hi Catherine.

Catherine: Hello Rich.

Rich: Hey, why did you say yes to coming and joining me? You're a member of 4PC. You're up to some really fun stuff. You have a business in the legal profession and taking care of people and their needs into the future. Why do you say, "Yes" into coming in this conversation?

Catherine: First of all, I make it a policy never to turn down an opportunity to spend time with you. Because I get something from every opportunity to be in your presence in some way. And I'm moving closer and closer to where I want to be spending my time in this chapter of my life and I'm not quite there yet.

Rich: So what would make this a valuable conversation?

Catherine: I was about to say if you could help me figure out... If I could figure out how to stop buying into the excuses that I have made over the last few years to not fully spend my time in my zone of genius.

Rich: Hmm. Okay. That was a long way of saying, "How can I spend more time in my zone of genius?" Right?

Catherine: Right.

Rich: Okay. What's your zone of genius? Tell me, what's that thing? What I call zone of genius comes from the book *The Big Leap* by Gay Hendricks. Those things you do that energize you and excite you, what is it for you?

Catherine: It really is seeing people, holding space for people deeply, and helping them discover what's between them and what they want in life. And I've been able to do a lot of that through my work as an estate planning attorney. And, increasingly, I've been able to do that as the owner of an estate planning law firm, as the entrepreneur working not very much in the business anymore. And yet I'm still doing a lot of things that aren't that.

Rich: I pause to check in, because the thing about this magical thing we do called coaching is that can often be so many different places to go. I'm pausing for a moment to see what might be valuable. Well, let me ask you, after you just shared, is there an insight or a thought that comes after that?

Catherine: No, not yet. I'm still stuck in the challenge of the latest version, the latest iteration of, there's some reason why I have to spend more of my time working in my business. And right now it's because we hired an attorney, actually, at the beginning of the summer, who's-

Rich: I'm going to pause you. What you're about to do is try and enroll me in a story that you believe in and I don't have to. Here's what I noticed. Super successful people are often over obligated and under committed. You know what commitments means. Commitments means, if someone I love is in trouble or has a problem, I drop everything to make sure that's taken care of. That's a commitment. Obligations are things I think I ought to be doing. I should be doing. It's the thing that you're supposed to do. But the moment something happens, you know what a commitment is and you understand what the distinction between an obligation.

Catherine: Yes. And so I see that this is just a story and I'm still having a hard time getting out of it. Getting myself out of the story in my head.

Rich: Well, what we need to find out is what you're committed to. I know you're committed to your husband, to your kids, to your grandchildren. No matter what, you'd drop everything for any one of them.

Catherine: And I have had the opportunity to do that a number of times.

Rich: Yup. So we know, there's evidence that you're committed to those things and those people.

Catherine: Right, no matter how much the business "needs me".

Rich: Yep. I had a client who was about to begin as my protege. That would be working me for an entire year. It was a hundred thousand dollar investment. And she called me a week before, left me an email and it said, "Hey, Rich, I'm really sorry I can't make the first session we're going to work together, but we're about to sign a multimillion dollar deal with another company and my team can do this without me." So I wrote to her. And I challenged her and I said, "Hey, you know, it doesn't mean anything if you miss the first session, we'll just start one session later. But I don't believe you. I don't believe that your team couldn't do this without you. So I wouldn't be a powerful coach if I didn't challenge you in that thought. And I wonder whether this means you're not as committed to the coaching work we're intended to do together as you thought you were. And whether maybe this is not the right time and I should send the check back and maybe we shouldn't be working together right now."

Rich: She wrote back to me a while later and said, "I'll be on that first session." She said, "I went to see my team, after I got your email, and said, 'This is what you guys are doing. You can handle the deal. You've got this.' And they were really furious. 'What do you mean? You're the one who does all this. We can't do this. They were so upset with me that I said, 'I won't be there. I can't be there.'" She came on our call. We did our coaching session. Two weeks later, whenever we spoke next, she said, "Rich, we signed the deal. And my team was so excited and so full of energy. They said, 'We couldn't believe we were mad at you, but you trusted us.' And they rose to the occasion and they did what looked impossible." I could see the insights happening. I wanted to finish the story, but I know you've got there before I even finished the story.

Catherine: Yes and no. I still have... Yeah. The story is still speaking loudly to me. And so I go to figuring out what would it look like. Because we've put a lot of time and money and energy into getting to the place where we have a lot of people who want our help and we're short an attorney right now. And so, my other attorneys can only do so much, I'm thinking. And we have a set number of expenses. So my brain was going to what am I not seeing in that? What are the ways that... Okay, what are the ways that they can multiply their time? What are the ways that they can offload the things that they don't have to do, that could be done by somebody else?

Rich: That's a great catch. So zone of genius works all the way down. If you're not modeling it for them, they don't know how to do it for themselves. I do this on a regular basis with my team. We look at what are those handful of things that energize us, excite us, fascinate us. That we'd do them, even if we weren't being paid. And how, every quarter, can we remove anything but those. Sometimes it takes longer than a quarter. Sometimes we're doing those things for a while until we can get rid of them. But I do it every level down in my team, taking away the things that don't thrill us and motivate us because someone else could be doing them.

Rich: I remember saying, so we have a woman who sometimes cleans our house, sometimes takes care of the kids, and I said to her once, with my coaching hat on secretly not realizing it, I said, "Do you love what you do?" And she said, "Oh my God, Rich. I love what I do." She said, "I go to my friend's house and I tidy up. The pictures are not straight. I can't help. I love to tidy people's homes and I love children." And I realized, "Oh." I secretly had a hat on thinking if she doesn't love what she does, I can help her and... She's in her zone of genius. Thank God. Because I sometimes need help with my kids and I don't want to be tidying the house.

Catherine: Right. And so if I walk in my commitment to... Because it's been years and years and years, but there's always something that comes up that I think I have to fix. If I really walk in my commitment, no matter what's going on, then other people have the opportunity to get creative. And one of the things that remains very important to me is coaching my leadership team. And so I can coach them on how to do that.

Rich: Well, let me give you an exercise you can use immediately, both for yourself and with them and every layer down in the organization. Hell yes, hell no, maybe. Is the exercise. So for... Catherine knows it, but those of you who are watching or listening, take a piece of paper and draw two lines to create three columns. The column on the left is hell no. The column in the middle is maybe, and the column on the right is hell yes. And you put down every project that you're working on, every activity you do, into one of those three columns. It's a hell, yes if it fascinates you, if it motivates you, if it fills you with energy, excites you, that's a hell, yes. If it absolutely drains all the living soul out of you, it's a hell, no. And if it's a, "Okay, you know, I can do it all right." It's a maybe.

Rich: And then, once you've got that list, you have a look at it and see which of those hell nos is a hell no for me but might be a hell yes for somebody else. And who could we create that might want to do that? And then over time you remove the hell nos. Over time you

remove the maybes and eventually you're just left with the hell yeses. But you do that once a quarter, once a year, to fill more and more of your time with more and more hell yeses and remove more and more hell nos.

Rich: Look, you're in a new business, you're bootstrapping, you're doing all of it. You got no choice. But as time goes on, you have to move more and more of that stuff away. One of the members of my team said to me the other day, "Rich, I noticed that you're signing all the checks and making all the payments. Why don't we have that taken away from you? We'll have a limit on how much can be spent, but after under a certain amount of money, someone else on the team can handle that kind of payments without you being involved." I said, "You know what? It's not that big a deal. The bookkeeper comes twice a month. I sign checks when she's there. I've got an app on my phone." But she called me. She said, "Every time you do that, that takes some of the energy away." I said, "Oh, you know, you're right. It's not those few moments of time. It's the energy I'm holding to do all of that and if I could let that go, there's more energy here."

Catherine: That's a funny story because my leadership team just proposed to me this week that somebody else be a signer on our account.

Rich: That was not even a hell no, right? It's a maybe. it doesn't feel like much of a big deal, but it does hold things up and become a bit of a bottleneck sometimes and it does take a little bit of energy away from me. But then what are the hell nos? What are the things you do that actually drain you of energy, that maybe you don't need to do? So we have two types of team meetings in my team. We have strategic team meetings, we have action meetings. Strategic team meetings I love. We're thinking about the future. We're dreaming, we're planning, we're scheming for a year, two years', five years' time. Action team meetings are going through, "What are the things you've done? Where do you need help?" And it dawned on me about two months ago, "I don't need to be at those action team meetings." And I told the team and they were like, "No, no, no. We think you do." I said, "Well, I'm not coming." In a kind of nice way. And they haven't missed me. No one's ever said, "Why aren't you there?" It just goes on without me.

Catherine: Yes. I have delegated a lot, and just this week I experienced more things. I had two meetings yesterday that I could say right now, something like that is an absolute hell no for me. Especially now that I've had a taste of really going deep with someone as a coach, that's where I want to be spending my time. With my team, with private clients. Anybody can sign the checks.

Rich: Yeah. There's one other list that you need and it's called an Avoid at all Costs list. Let me tell you a story. Warren Buffett bumped into his pilot. And his pilot has worked for him for 10 years and he said, "Oh my God, I just realized you've been over 10 years. I haven't really been serving you because you're still doing the same job you were doing 10 years ago. Would you like some help with creating an amazing future?" And the pilot said, "Oh my God, Mr. Buffet. That would be amazing." "Okay, here's an activity. Make a list of the top 25 things you'd love to do in your life and then come back to me." A couple of days later the pilot comes back and says, "Here's my list, Mr. Buffet. Top 25 things I want to

accomplish in my life,." And Buffet says, "Okay, well out of those top 25, what are your top five? Come back in a couple of days with that list." Two days later, he sees him and says, "Here's my list of the top five." And Warren Buffet says, "What about the other 20 on your list? What are you going to do about them?" And the pilot pauses for a moment and says, "Well, maybe my spare time. Maybe on the weekends or in vacation time, holidays, I'll work on those other 20 things."

Rich: And that's when Warren Buffet got serious and said, "No, that's your first mistake. Those other 20 just became your Avoid at all Costs list.

Catherine: That's a struggle for me. I have a number of projects that excite me, to which I bring something unique that feels really fulfilling.

Rich: Well that's amazing. That's in your hell yes list. But anything other than those projects becomes a hell no. Becomes an Avoid at all Costs. I was so proud of myself, a couple of years ago, my computer printers, something went wrong with the wifi, that printer and I called someone in, I used a website called TaskRabbit. Booked someone to come and do it. I was proud of myself like, "Oh, I shouldn't be fixing this. I know it's well outside of my zone of genius. Happy to pay somebody 20, 30, 50, whatever it is an hour to get that handled. And then something went wrong with the scheduling on it. The guy made a mistake, he couldn't come and I'm going back and forth on this TaskRabbit thing trying to schedule it. And I realized, "Oh my God, I shouldn't even be the person organizing this because anything to do is scheduling drains me. And I just need to tell someone who is great at scheduling, 'Hey, I need someone in my house on this day, this time to fix a printer. Please organize them.' Maybe I don't even need to be there."

Catherine: That is the next evolution for me. [crosstalk 00:19:56].

Rich: Don't worry about the how to. Well, don't worry about the how to. I think you're going into how to, that's why we get stuck. Start with the exercise. And do it with your team. Model for them how challenging it is. "Hey guys, we've got to cut our first coaching exercise as a leadership team. It's called hell yes, hell no, maybe. Make a list of all the things that you do and now put them onto one of these three categories. They have to go somewhere. Either it fills you with energy, it's kind of I could take it or leave it, or it drains the living soul out of you. Put it on one of those three things. And then let's just have a conversation. Don't try and do anything. Don't try and fix it. For now, just have a conversation. And then over time you can look at what would happen if each of us removed the hell nos, removes the things that suck the living energy out of us and wonder what would happen." You have to know how to, you don't have to take any action. Just have that wondering conversation with them.

Catherine: That's easy. The conversation.

Rich: Yup. Know why it's easy? Because it's in your zone of genius.

Catherine: Right. Yes. And then praying not to have to figure out, especially not ahead of time, what happens next and how to get the things off the list.

Rich: Oh, tell you what happens next. You say to them, "okay, by the time we meet next, have a think about how you could remove one of these things from your list." Give it to them. You don't have to do it for them.

Catherine: That's a new practice for me. Not being the one to fix everything for them.

Rich: Well that's empowering, not to solve their problems.

Catherine: Right, right. And they appreciate that.

Rich: I think we're there for this moment, Catherine.

Catherine: Yeah, I do too.

Rich: Let me tell you one more story. I think this might be interesting. I had a client a few years ago, she was in her early thirties and had built a \$30 million business. And she came to work with me because she was tired and bored and frustrated with the business. She wanted to sell it and she wanted to become a professional coach. I challenged it because I saw something that she hadn't seen. That the most amazing clients were this close to her. They weren't out there in the world where she could try and do all that was needed to be done to get clients. They were her leadership team. And if she put her attention on these people and served them and coached them and challenged them and inspired them, her entire business would change. She wouldn't be the kind of business owner she used to be. And she'd be using this very coaching skills that she wanted to put out into the marketplace, except she better take a \$30 million business that she created by the age of 33 and who knows what she got to do with it next once you brought a culture of coaching into the organization.

Catherine: My leadership team has recently asked me to go deeper in coaching with them. And I still had a limited vision of what that looked like until you were just speaking about that and I thought about the coaching proposal that I'm about to make to a private client and all that that would look like. And why would I not be doing some of those things with my leadership team?

Rich: Cool. You have a business that makes millions and every moment you spend coaching those people, not just the financial impact it will have on you and them, but the impact in the world. Because in the world of estate planning, you create safety for people. You allow them to make an amazing future occur for them and for their children and for their children's children. The impact will be huge, every hour you spend coaching there.

Catherine: My vision just got bigger.

Rich: Yeah.

Catherine: Wow.

Rich: And that wow is sometimes the sound of insight. We're there, thank you, Catherine.

Catherine: Thank you, Rich.

Rich: For most of human history it wasn't called coaching, it was called leadership. and 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](http://richlitvin.com/1Insight).