

# 1 INSIGHT

with RICH LITVIN



## Episode 8: How to take a scientific approach to becoming world class

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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. 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 imposter the more successful you become. 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.

I'm a scientist by training. I've got a joint degree in biology and economics. That background in biology meant that I spent hours and hours at the early part of my life studying, researching and experimenting in a laboratory. The Latin origin of the word laboratory literally means to work, labor. The word experiment comes from the Latin meaning to try and to risk. The word research comes from Latin, too, and it means to wander hither and thither. What we call science literally means hard work, taking risks and not really knowing where you're going.

Most of us don't know that world-changing scientific discoveries are often a complete accident. There's a Russian chemist who found the artificial sweetener saccharin when he forgot to wash his hands after a day's work. Percy Spencer created the microwave while researching radar when he accidentally melted a chocolate bar in his pocket. Wilhelm Röntgen discovered X-rays while working with a cathode ray tube. When he placed his hand in front of the tube, he noticed he could see the bones, and the image was projected on the screen. After a hike in the Alps, George de Mestral noticed that the small burrs that stuck to his clothes were covered in tiny hooks, and they inspired him to create the fastening system we know as Velcro.

Science is often far less scientific than you'd imagine. All of the following were discovered by accident. Vaseline, safety glass, superglue, Teflon, corn flakes, vulcanized rubber, insulin, strikeable matches, gunpowder, anesthesia, Viagra, penicillin, dynamite, Play-Doh, LSD, nuclear fission, synthetic dye, Post-it Notes, pacemakers, the Slinky and radioactivity, all discovered by accident. When I was studying for my undergraduate degree, the research I was doing was on extending the life of blood platelets. It was cutting-edge research that was focused on extending the life of blood plasma in blood banks, and it could have helped save millions of lives. Well, I say with a smile, it could have, if my research and experiments had worked out. But after many, many months of spinning blood plasma in centrifuges, my ideas weren't going anywhere. My professor recommended I quit and I realized I wasn't meant to be a scientist.

But I never forgot to apply a scientific approach to my career. You see, I've been experimenting and making mistakes for years. I consider myself an accidental entrepreneur. My dad was an entrepreneur and he worked really hard to raise his sons to follow any career but entrepreneurship. I was a high school teacher for the first 15 years of my career until the day I was fired by a new boss who wanted her own team.

Being fired was really humiliating and I left London for a vacation, but really to lick my wounds. I traveled to Thailand and I discovered that the coaching skills I'd learned while training to be a head teacher were actually invaluable on a beach. Apparently, lying in the sun and sipping cocktails is rather conducive to reflecting deeply on one's life. One day, a woman said to me, "Rich, talking to you has changed my life," and I was hooked.

I flew to the United States with three thoughts in my mind. I didn't tell anybody these thoughts. I never said it out loud ever until years later. Number one, I'll train with the best coaches in the world. Number two, the best coaches in the world will be my friends and colleagues and number three, I will be one of the best coaches in the world. So I took a scientific approach to my new career. I worked hard, I took risks and I didn't really know where I was going.

This year, it's been 15 years since I was fired as a teacher. As I'm talking right now, I have literally been a coach that much longer, ever so slightly longer than I was a teacher. That thought has been quite a shock because it means I've an outdated self-image. I'm no longer a teacher who accidentally became a coach. I'm a coach who used to be a teacher.

Here are my five lessons from 15 years of coaching. Number one, work hard, but constantly look for the tiny steps that make the biggest impact. Number two, take risks but when you do the opposite of what the majority are doing, it's almost never a risk. Number three, don't worry that you've got no idea where you're going. Clarity is overrated. You don't always need it going forwards, and you'll always find it looking backwards. Number four, surround yourself with extraordinary people. My one-line business plan for this whole 15-year period has been meet fun and interesting people. It's generated millions more in revenue than Facebook ads, SEO or internet marketing ever could for me. Number five, expose yourself to new ideas and experiment with new ideas. Never stop learning. Never stop making mistakes. And if you learned from it, it wasn't a mistake in the first place.

One of the biggest challenges as you become more successful is that there is rarely anyone to really challenge your thinking or help you see through your own [inaudible 00:06:59]. If you're a coach, you're really good at doing it for others. Who does that for you? That's why I constantly surround myself with super smart people. How about you?

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).