

Michael Bungay Stanier: What it means is that if you're a person who's looking to hire a coach, you should hold high standards to who you want to hire because that does all of us a favor and it allows the coaching profession to be more credible. It allows the great coaches to earn a living, and it starts to weed people who get into coaching with the best of intentions. They're like, "You know what, I've walked some part of the journey. I like people. I like to be helpful. I think I can do some good here." Those are good intentions to show up with, but they're not sufficient.

Robert Glazer: Welcome to Elevate, a podcast about achievement, personal growth, and pushing limits in leadership in life. I'm Robert Glazer and I chat with world class performers who have committed to elevating their own life, pushing the limits of their capacity and helping others to do the same. Welcome to the Elevate Podcast. Our quote today is from Tom Landry and it is, "Coaching is simplicity. It's getting players to play better than they think they can."

Robert Glazer: Our guest today, Michael Bungay Stanier, has helped to elevate the coaching industry. He's the founder of Box of Crayons and works with brands such as Yahoo and TD Bank to get the most out of their talent. Michael is also a top rated speaker. He's spoken to organizations such as Microsoft and Salesforce and is The Wall Street Journal bestselling author of the coaching habit and do more great work. He also has a new book, The Advice Trap, which should be out right about when you listen to this podcast. So Michael, welcome. I'm excited to have you join us on the Elevate Podcast.

Michael Bungay Stanier: Bob, thank you. Although I'm realizing I need to tweak that introduction that says we've helped brands like Yahoo thrive because Yahoo hasn't really thrived that much at the moment. But you're right, we are working with companies like Microsoft and Salesforce and Google and the likes. So some pretty cool people we get to play with these days.

Robert Glazer: Yes, you have a fun sandbox.

Michael Bungay Stanier: Yeah.

Robert Glazer: So you've lived all over the world, but you grew up in Australia. Tell me a little bit about your experience growing up there and what eventually led you to leave 20 years ago.

Michael Bungay Stanier: Well, I had a pretty idyllic childhood. I have two awesome parents who are still happily married and just rock their 50th wedding anniversary. I work two younger brothers who, allowed me to bully them in the kind of older brother tradition and now don't beat me up even though I did that to them. So that's pretty cool. And even though Canberra in Australia in the news at the moment with these terrible bushfires and the photos I see of Canberra, which is the capital of Australia is blanketed in smoke in a way I've never seen before.

Michael Bungay Stanier: It was a great place to grow up. I was a happy kid, a pretty self sufficient kid. I love sport, I love reading. I'd like to do all of that. And then went to my local university, The Australian National University and did a degree that you only really get, I think in Australia. It's a combined degree. It's like you take two undergraduate degrees and get them done in one and a half times [inaudible 00:03:11]. Well, a more efficient way than doing the degrees back to back. So I did [inaudible 00:03:16] law. So a BA in literature and a law degree. So I was really good at literature.

Robert Glazer: So you'd be a good literary agent.

Michael Bungay Stanier: Yeah. But I finished my law degree literally being sued by one of my law school lecturers for defamation. It was a great guidance and to why I shouldn't have become a lawyer. And in fact, the thing that stopped me becoming a lawyer and the thing that truly made all the difference is I [inaudible 00:03:43] scholarship. And that took me to England and to study at Oxford. And I always say the two really brilliant things happened as a result of that.

Michael Bungay Stanier: First of all, within four weeks of arriving at Oxford had met Marcella, the woman who 30 years later is my wife. And I was like, "Well, that's good. Anything else is a bonus." And the other thing is, it kind of confirmed that I wasn't going to become a lawyer because that opportunity, that sum cost fallacy, which is like, well, I've done a law degree, so I may as well do my articling and kind of become a lawyer.

Michael Bungay Stanier: And now I'm a lawyer, I might as well do a couple of years in a law firm, and well now I've got a couple of years, it's only another five years till associate partner. Now I'm an associate partner, I might as well be a partner and who knows? I could have walked that path and if I had I'd be an unhappy man trying to be a lawyer, not having this conversation with you. So it was a blessing in many ways.

Robert Glazer: So what was the bridge between Oxford and you're getting your start in the coaching world? How did you actually start your career?

Michael Bungay Stanier: So when I finally finished my studies, I was so done with university and I was like, I've done six years as an undergraduate in Australia. I did a two year master's at Oxford and I'm like, I'm desperate to not be in university. But I don't know what to do. And I launched into the world of innovation and creativity, so inventing products and services for the world, and starting to run and train people around the skills of creativity.

Michael Bungay Stanier: And it was about that time that I noticed the rise of coaching happening on the West Coast of the US, California. Because I was living in England at the time. Obviously we looked at anything coming from the West Coast with a huge degree of skepticism. We were like, this flaky-

Robert Glazer: Snake oil.

Michael Bungay Stanier: Yeah. Flaky California. And of course they're doing this thing called coaching, whatever that is. But the truth is, as a teenager, a young man, I've spent a lot of time being the person listening to the angst filled conversations of my teenage friends, because that's what a teenager is. And even at the time of like, I'm pretty good at being present and listening to what's going on. I just don't know what to do.

Michael Bungay Stanier: I mean, other than be there and be present, which is, more than half the battle quite frankly. But I was like, "But, what else could I do?" And then when I went to university in Australia, I signed up and was trained in crisis counseling for youth. So a ton of telephone suicide hotline thing. And that was the first real step into me understanding better what it means to ask a question, hold the space, make it psychologically safe, know that there's a little more below the surface and they might tell you right at the start.

Michael Bungay Stanier: And finally when I moved to Canada about 20 years ago, I was like, "Okay, I've hired a coach. I've kind of got a sense of what that's about. I'm going to do my own coach training." And it was a culmination of, all those experiences. I don't know if you've ever heard the saying, inspiration is when your past suddenly makes sense. That was kind of a moment for me, which is like my past is telling me to do this coaching piece.

Michael Bungay Stanier: And ironically, as I've done the coach training and became a coach and built a coaching practice, I discovered, I didn't actually like coaching that much. I didn't like the business of coaching. It just felt a bit lonely and not quite scalable enough for me. So that took me into this career of, look, I don't want to be a coach. I want to help others be more coach-like. And that's kind of what I've been a champion for, for the last 15 years.

Robert Glazer: So when did you start Box of Crayons?

Michael Bungay Stanier: 2002. July 4th, 2002. I'd left Boston where I had been living. I'd had a job lined up. It was going to be a kind of consultant in this space of change management, which is kind of the work I was doing at the time. And my wife, we had flights out of Boston on 9/11. And so you can imagine that put a spanner in things. I mean, minor details from my life compared to others. But it meant that when I arrived in Toronto, finally the job I had lined up had vanished because all consulting jobs vanished in the wake of 9/11.

Michael Bungay Stanier: And I got a job, an internal job, which I spent six months failing at, and on the two days after I got my landed immigrant status, which is like a green card status, I got fired from that job and so I was like, "Perfect, now's the time to start my own company at last." So the universe, if you like conspired to say Michael, you are basically unemployable. You need to start your own business at this stage.

Robert Glazer: It's amazing how many people need that external thing too. They know what they want to do and they're just afraid to do it. And then when they're forced to do it, they almost universally say it was the best thing that ever happened to them.

Michael Bungay Stanier: I might've got there eventually, but it certainly helped having, somebody give me a healthy shove in the back, pushed me out the door. I'm like, I'm here now. Let's see what I can make work here.

Robert Glazer: And one of your interesting strategies, you have your businesses that you offer a 10 minute coaching session. Is that to prospects?

Michael Bungay Stanier: That's a great question and popular points too bad marketing on my part. So here's what Box of Crayons is about. Box of Crayons is a training company that helps organizations move from being advice driven to curiosity led. So under that umbrella, what we spend a lot of time doing is helping managers and leaders be more coach-like, which for us is, hey, can you stay curious a little bit longer? Can you rush to action and advice giving a little bit more slowly. That's the behavior change that we're trying to pull off.

Michael Bungay Stanier: And we don't go in to be coaches to them. We are training normal regular people to make coaching part of their leadership repertoire. And the belief we have, and this is where the confusion comes up is, if you can't coach somebody in 10 minutes or less, you don't have time to coach. Because what we've got to do to champion coaching as a force for good inside organizations is we've got to un-weird coaching, and most people in most organizations are like, you know what, coaching. I heard about it, I don't know, I'm too busy and I just want to get my work done. I don't want to spend time doing kind of whatever HR staff coaching is related to.

Michael Bungay Stanier: And a big part of what we're trying to do at Box of Crayons is normalize a sense of what coaching is. It's an everyday way of showing up. It's part of your leadership repertoire. It's not HRE. It is about helping you and your team focus on the work that matter, have more impact and grow your people so they become more competent and more confident and more self assured and more self sufficient.

Michael Bungay Stanier: And you can do this even in the busy reality of your working life, which is you feel too busy. So you can do coaching fast. Doesn't have to be a 30 minute or a 45 minute conversation. It's quick. And what that does is it removes barriers people have to going, you know what, coaching is not for me because I'm normal. I'm like, "No, you're normal which is perfect. That's who we need being more coach-like."

Robert Glazer: Well, and not spinning the hamster wheel faster, which I think leaders struggle with. So we just did an exercise this morning with our whole leadership team as a recap from last year for everyone to talk about. It was something I sort of stole

from a podcast with Adam Grant and Tim Ferris about what's the 10% that they did last year that would have doubled down on and what's the 20% they would have stopped doing?

Robert Glazer: And I think the most universal answers to that were the best time they spent was really coaching their team to kind of step up and take over stuff. And conversely, the stuff they want was stuff that they needed to delegate and stuff they should have gotten off their plates sooner, but those go hand in hand, right?

Michael Bungay Stanier: Totally.

Robert Glazer: So you're so frustrated that everyone comes to you to solve problems. But if you haven't sat down with your team and worked on problem solving, like you're not going to stop that cycle of violence.

Michael Bungay Stanier: You've trained them to come to you and they've trained you to go, your job is to give me the answer and nobody wins with that. I mean, 10 years ago I wrote a book called Do More Great Work, and to the model that you were just talking about, it says, look, everything you do falls into one of three different buckets. It's either bad work because it's kind of mind numbing, soul sucking, life crushing bureaucracy where you're like, this is my one and precious life and I am doing this. What happened here?

Michael Bungay Stanier: There's bad work, everybody recognizes that there's good work which I define as your job description, productive, efficient, getting things done, what your boss wants you to do, what your boss's boss wants you to do, but it's also not so much about stretching and growing and increasing impact. It's more about sustaining the everyday work. And then there's great work, work that I define as work that has more impact and work that has more meaning. So it's both serves the organization and serves you.

Michael Bungay Stanier: And the question I always, I mean, I get people to draw a little circle. Your listeners can do this now. Draw a circle, divide that circle into three segments that represent how much bad work, good work and great work you're currently doing. And now you've got some data. Are you happy with that? Almost nobody is. Almost nobody is going, I just got too much great work right now. Too much of the work that lights me up, excites me, makes a difference in the world.

Michael Bungay Stanier: And there's too much of the other stuff. And that comes to a really powerful coaching question which is, if you're going to say yes to the work that has more impact, what are you going to say no to? Because there's no point in doing the exercise you did this morning Bob, where you go as a team. Yeah, we won. Here's the 10% that could really make the difference. Is unless you clear space for it.

Michael Bungay Stanier: And that's where it gets hard, because everybody gets that in theory. But in practice you're like, I'm going to say no to stuff, which means I've got to say no to people, which means I have to disappoint people. So who am I willing to disappoint so that my work matters, so that my team thrive, so that my CEO is delighted in the work that I do?

Robert Glazer: And hopefully not yourself.

Michael Bungay Stanier: Right.

Robert Glazer: Well, I have a curious question for you, because you alluded this to this before you're in London and seeing the sort of coaching industry kind of pop up in the US and now it's exploded. And now everyone's a coach. And I struggle with this because I know what you talk about is sort of making everyone more coach-like. But I'm curious on your perspective on the industry because I've had discussions with myself both ways on this.

Robert Glazer: So I look at professional sports and it's often not, the all star athletes and the MVPs and the best players who are the best coaches. But in business it always used to be like people did something really well and then they became a coach and now I just see people who have done things not well or maybe even really poorly and failed then becoming a coach. I'm really conflicted on this because I have a lot of different evidence either way, but irrespective of your opinion on all the leaders should be coaches. I'm curious more in your commentary on this behemoth that has become this coaching industry and who is qualified and who is not qualified to be a coach.

Michael Bungay Stanier: I'm not conflicted about this. I think in the coaching industry, people who are putting out their shingle saying, I'm a coach and I'm going to charge you money for my time. There's a lot of mediocrity. Because the barrier to entry is purely whether you're able to say the phrase, I am a coach. That's it. If you can say that you can claim to be a coach. And there isn't... I mean, there's kind of like I sorted things like ISO 900 qualification, which is like-

Robert Glazer: There's no standard.

Michael Bungay Stanier: ... you've got some hygiene factors to make sure that you know some of the principles from the ICF and stuff like that. But there's a vast amount of difference between coaches who are outstanding and coaches who are good and coaches who are pretty mediocre and ho hum. And it often has no much to do with their training. I know a number of people who I would call brilliant coaches who haven't ever done a coach training course.

Michael Bungay Stanier: And I know some people who've done a lot of coach training and they're still not that great. So I think in some ways it's like the market gets to solve this out. And what it means is that if you're a person who's looking to hire a coach, you should hold high standards to who you want to hire, because that does all

of us a favor. It allows the coaching profession to be more credible. It allows the great coaches to earn a living and it starts to weed people who get into coaching with the best of intentions. They're like, you know what? I've walked some part of the journey. I like people. I like to be helpful. I think I can do some good here. Those are good intentions to show up with, but they're not sufficient.

Michael Bungay Stanier: You need some rigor, you need some models, you need some scars. You need a degree of emotional intelligence and a kind of, the language I use Bob is fierce love. Like are you able to give your clients fierce love, loving that your wholeheartedly in support of them, fierce in that you're willing to do what it takes to push them, to challenge them, to provoke them, to set boundaries, all of that sort of stuff.

Robert Glazer: That all makes perfect sense to me. But based on my analogy before, [inaudible 00:17:49]. And look, the flip side of this is true. Some people who are really good doers are not good coaches. They don't know how to package it, they don't know how to listen, they're just, they're good at doing it. But let's say in business or in leadership, like someone to be coached by someone who really didn't do it or failed at doing it and is now a coach. How do you think about that?

Michael Bungay Stanier: So I'm just going to talk about myself. I've had a bunch of successes that I can point to, kind of badges that I can wear. But if you look at my career, I had never been a great manager. Occasionally I'd been a good manager, sometimes more than I'd care to admit I'd been a bad manager. So if you were going to teach me to be a better manager and a leader, Michael, based on my track record, you wouldn't go, I'm picking Michael first out of all of this.

Michael Bungay Stanier: But here's what I've got. I've got the self awareness to know where my strengths and weaknesses are. I've got a bunch of learning around what leadership is and what management is and how it works. I've got a 20 years practicing of craft which allows me to go, I think I know what questions work. I think I know what, how to both be curious and ask questions, but also to teach and provide insight as well.

Michael Bungay Stanier: So what's easier the people [inaudible 00:19:17] these people suck. They're really bad at what they've done before. They don't have any redeeming features. They're like, "You shouldn't be a coach." But what gets more nuanced is people who like, even though I don't have a wonderful track record perhaps, there's something in how I show up as a coach where I can be absolutely fantastic.

Michael Bungay Stanier: And to your point, there are, if this all came really easily to you, sometimes that makes you a terrible teacher because you're like, I don't even know how I learned this stuff. I just did it. And you're like, okay, so that's lucky for you, but it makes it hard for you to share your wisdom.

Robert Glazer: Adam Grant had a great article on this and he was arguing very specific points about why academics would make better doers than doers would make academics. But he was talking about a diving coach and once, and he had asked another expert diver about how to do something and the person was like, "Hey, you just jump and do it." Like it was so-

Michael Bungay Stanier: [inaudible 00:20:15].

Robert Glazer: Yeah. And there was a guy on the team who had sort of coach who sort of broke down the steps for him and who actually wasn't as talented but understood the mechanics behind it and it was an interesting analogy.

Michael Bungay Stanier: I mean, look at the two biggest names in English football coaches. You've got Mourinho and the Manchester city coach, Pep, I've forgotten his surname. And they were both players who played at a pretty high level but were grinders, they did not excel in any way at the level in which they played, but they bought an understanding of the experience to it. So they're like, I can teach this and I have a philosophy that based in rigor of thought and in learned experience at the same time.

Robert Glazer: I know. I think that's pretty common. And then I think it's a great way for people to think about and as you said, ask the right questions as they're talking to someone who might be their coach. All right. So I'd love to dive in and talk about your book, *The Coaching Habit*, which you self-published and made into a bestseller and wrote a phenomenal article about how you did it. Well, we'll provide a link to that cause I think if anyone wants to understand how to self publish a bestselling book, Michael had an incredible formula for how he did this and was kind enough to lay it all out an article that was sent to me by a lot of people. How many copies have you sold now of that book?

Michael Bungay Stanier: It's trending towards three quarters of a million copies now, which is, as you know as a fellow author, that is a ridiculously large amount of books. I mean, that's inconceivable in terms of actually how many books have been sold. So I'm pretty stoked about it.

Robert Glazer: And just for perspective for people, I mean, for a self published book that would put you in the top 110th of 110th of 1%. So this is, you are a unicorn and I know you're about to do it again. So tell me, why did you decide to self publish that book?

Michael Bungay Stanier: Because I ran out of other options. I mean, I had the *Do More Great Work* book I had mentioned earlier on, that was published by a New York publisher. I self published a version of it and this publisher picked it up and, "Actually, we really like this. Don't print too many and we'll redo it as our book." And I was like, "Amazing. I have a New York publisher. How cool is that." And then when I got this idea for the coaching habit, I literally spent three or four years trying to get them to publish the book.

Michael Bungay Stanier: I even went and got myself a New York book agent, which also felt really cool because it's like one of the big names in that space and I just could not make it work. The agent couldn't sell it. I couldn't sell it. I actually wrote I think four full versions of books based around called the coaching habit or something like it.

Robert Glazer: And was that because you were trying to... was this the book you wanted to write and you kept trying to bend it to what they wanted or were asking you for?

Michael Bungay Stanier: Yeah. So they would go, "Oh yeah, it's interesting. That's not quite right. But maybe something more like this." And I'm like, "Okay. So let me try and reinvent everything about the book." And after awhile I'm like, somebody told me an insight about editors and they're like, "If they tell you what's wrong, they're probably correct. That's probably a useful insight. If they suggest a solution, be very skeptical about that because their solution is often not the right solution at all."

Michael Bungay Stanier: Anyway, after four years I sat down with the publisher of this company and went, "Okay, I've reconnected to what I think this book really is. I spent so many years trying to write it. Now I'm going to put this on the table. It's either a yes or a no. I'm not going to take a maybe anymore. You've only got to say, yes, let's do it or no, we're not interested." And they said, "No." And honestly, Bob I was gutted.

Michael Bungay Stanier: Like, my other book, *Do More Great Work* has sold almost 100,000 copies. I've got some chops around marketing. Why wouldn't you bet on a person rather than betting on the book? But they chose not to. So I spent a month or two licking my wounds and feeling umbrage, disappointment. But then I went, "You know what, this book actually I can see it, I can feel it. I think there's something there. I'm going to self publish, but my commitment," and I talk about this in the article you're going to link to.

Michael Bungay Stanier: My commitment is to publish it as a professional. I want somebody in the book industry to pick this book up and not know that it was self published. Because we've all had that experience of seeing a self published book and you can just kind of tell immediately, right? The design isn't quite right. The weight of the cover isn't quite right.

Robert Glazer: High gloss like cover it looks like.

Michael Bungay Stanier: There's all these clues that almost exists subconsciously where you're like, this feels like it was done through a self publishing process rather than a regular publishing process. So I hired experts. I hired a really good editor. I hired a really good designer. The designer introduced me to this company called Page Two who are like, a publishing house, who will allow you to white label.

Michael Bungay Stanier: So in other words, I published my books under the imprint Box of Crayons press. But really they're the machinery. They do all the details. They help me with distribution, they get the book into airports, they allow me to do that. And I've got the luxury of being able to have... I have the cash up front that I can pay for that service. And being able to pay for that upfront allows me to publish it, control the book, tweak the book, invest in the book, play around with the book, earn more money from the book. It's really turned out to be a great move for me.

Robert Glazer: One of the things you talk about doing that no publisher would have let you do is saying, hey, can you rate this book at the end of the book? And I saw this morning you have over 2000 almost five star reviews on Amazon, which is a huge driver of visibility algorithm and obviously right, it's a strategy that helps sell books. But I loved reading the story about that.

Michael Bungay Stanier: And for me the book is part of a business ecosystem. Like I want people to pick up the book and then go, oh well, Mike was interesting and Box of Crayons is interesting. So maybe I should look into that. And we're able to point to literally millions of dollars of revenue that have come from new clients, from people who found us through the book. But it's meant that I've been able to play around with the call to action.

Michael Bungay Stanier: So the first call to action was, "Can you please write a review. That would be great." And then the second call to action was, "Hey, why don't you go to this website and download some good stuff?" And then a third call to action was, "Hey, go and check out Box of Crayons because we're cool." And now the latest call to action in The Coaching Habit book was, "Go and sign up so that you can get information about my new book that's coming in February, The Advice Trap." So I've been able to play around with all of that to go, it's an ecosystem. So how do you tweak it? And that's something that the freedom of self publishing gives you.

Robert Glazer: Let's talk about the book itself, which has really, [inaudible 00:27:17] a cult following among managers and leaders. And I noticed that our coaches that we work with were asking us all these questions that were in reference to your seven questions. So you talk about the importance of the seven questions. Can you take us just through that and maybe give an example of each one and why it's important from the perspective of coaching.

Michael Bungay Stanier: So the context for this is I'm trying to make coaching feel un-weird. There is not some kind of black box where you're like, I don't know. They go off to this mysterious place and they get anointed as a coach. I'm like, no, look, you're trying to stay curious a little bit longer. That's the goal here. And seven good questions can take you a long way down the path. And as part of the writing and rewriting of this, I experimented with a number of questions a lot.

Michael Bungay Stanier: It's, one stage I wrote a version of this book which had more than 150 questions in it. I'm like, "All right, two pages per question, it'll be amazing." And

it was terrible. It was just a terrible book because it was overwhelming. It was useless. So I'm like, "I've got to find the right number that people can go, ah, if this is coaching," staying curious. "And if it's just seven questions, I can probably do that. I can probably use this."

Michael Bungay Stanier: So I'll give you some of the questions. I mean, one of my favorites is a pairing of the seven questions. I just call it the bookends pair. And it's how you start a conversation and how you end a conversation in a way that you can do time and time and time again. It can become a coaching habit for you, and it can make your conversations faster, better, and smarter. The kickstart question, the first question in the book is, what's on your mind?

Michael Bungay Stanier: And it has that kind of Goldilocks quality of being a question that is both open. It says to them, look, I'm not going to tell you what to talk about. You tell me what matters, but also focusing. It doesn't say, tell me anything and tell me everything. It says, what I want to hear is the thing that you're worried about or excited about or overwhelmed by or [inaudible 00:29:18], you've got to get off your plate. Let's go somewhere that matters. So that keeps our question, has the ability to get you into an interesting conversation fast.

Michael Bungay Stanier: And then the learning question, question seven in the book is a great way to finish a conversation. And by conversation, Bob, I'm talking about in person, on the phone, by text, by email. It's an exchange with somebody. And the learning question is, what was most useful or most valuable here for you? What was most useful here for you? Kind of referencing the conversation you've just had.

Robert Glazer: And is there an implication, some of these questions that what people answer is not what they thought they were going to answer?

Michael Bungay Stanier: Well, I think people are often surprised by what shows up.

Robert Glazer: For the coach or the person or both?

Michael Bungay Stanier: Well, your hope it's for both. Your hope is for the coach because the more you ask a question and you hear an answer that you weren't completely expecting, the more you realize the value in asking the question and helping them figure this stuff out themselves rather than offer up your ideas and your opinions, because we all overrate the importance and the quality of our own advice.

Michael Bungay Stanier: So that last question, the learning questions, the classic, you go, okay, I mean, people can do it to this podcast. You're like, Bob and I have talked about a bunch of things. What was most useful and most valuable from this podcast? So what it does is this, first of all, it stops everybody from just kind of passively receiving what we're talking about. They go, huh, well, Michael has talked about starting a company and he's talked about publishing a book and he's talked

about self publishing and he's talked about coaching and he's talked about questions and of all of that, what was most useful for you? So now you're engaged and you're being forced to kind of go, I'm extracting the value from this conversation.

Michael Bungay Stanier: Secondly, as the person who's asking it and therefore hearing the answer, you get to understand what actually struck a chord for people. And what you may think as is your genius pole of wisdom that dropped from your lips and here's a nugget of gold that will cherish you for years to come. And they say something completely different. You're like, well that's interesting. It tells you what to do more of and perhaps less of next conversation. It also tells you that different people find different points of value in different things that you say.

Robert Glazer: So from a feedback loop, I ask all of these questions in a coaching session. And then how do I bring them back kind of full circle? Would you suggest it's the same thing every time or do you oscillate between different questions?

Michael Bungay Stanier: Honestly, I think there's some value in pretty much saying the same thing every time and not only that, train them so they know what you're about to ask them. Like you can imagine the people I work with on my team, have they heard every one of the seven questions on the coaching habit? One bazillion times each. Of course they have.

Robert Glazer: But it's a process that works.

Michael Bungay Stanier: Well, and here's the thing. So you start off and the first time they're like, "Michael, you're amazing. You're such a good leader and a manager and a coach. [inaudible 00:32:33] great questions." And then when they go, it appears that he only has seven questions. There's a kind, I'm not going to say anybody on the team's done an eye roll, but I bet you it's occurred to them to do that.

Michael Bungay Stanier: But then after they get through that, they go, but the questions work. But why wouldn't you just keep doing the questions that work? And so now I show up and I'm talking to Chloe on my team and I tell you, "So what's on your mind?" And she's like, "Here's what's on my mind. I've been thinking about that." And then I go, "So what's the real challenge here for you, the focus question?" And she's already thought about it. She's already there. She's self coaching herself.

Michael Bungay Stanier: And I get to work even less hard, which is perfect because I've got other stuff to do. She's internalizing the questions and getting used to using the power of the questions to guide her own Forbes, which means that our conversations become increasingly valuable because they're all about solving the hard sticky stuff that she hasn't been able to figure out by herself.

Robert Glazer: Interesting. Well, I'm sure that takes us a little bit to your new book, *The Advice Trap*. Be humble, stay curious and change the way you lead forever. And I'd love to give us the high level preview there, having been in an EO, Entrepreneurs' Organization for awhile and most joining YPO, one of the key tenants of form there. This huge thing I've learned is to start sentence with in my experience and not giving advice. And that's actually become something I've carried elsewhere. So tell us about, particularly in coaching on feedback, how we get into the advice trap.

Michael Bungay Stanier: I mean, the starting point is to say, this is not a book that says all advice is bad. I mean, that would be stupid. It's a book that says, you know what, what kills us is not giving advice. What kills us is when our default response, our habit, our instinctive reaction to any situation is to leap in with an idea or a solution and insight and action some advice. That's what starts getting in the way of productive conversations.

Michael Bungay Stanier: And the Genesis for the book, because Bob, you just got put *Elevate* out in the world in the last number of months. There's nothing like writing a book that can make you say, I never want to write another book again in my life. It's hard [inaudible 00:34:55].

Robert Glazer: It's like a baby. You say it at the time and then you forget how bad it was and then months later you're like, I just talked to someone who has just got through. And is like, I'm thinking about another one. It's, it was terrible, wasn't it? So [inaudible 00:35:07].

Michael Bungay Stanier: Exactly. So all of that. And what I noticed with the coaching habit was, there was some people who had the coaching habit and went, "All these seven questions they're great. I've started to use them. It's changing the way I lead, it's changing my team, it's changing the dynamic in my home. This is fantastic. Michael, you're a genius." And of course I love those emails. But there are plenty of people-

Robert Glazer: I have a special folder for those.

Michael Bungay Stanier: I do have a special folder of people who write nice things to me. But there's bunch of people, none of whom wrote to me, but kind of I bet who went, I've read the book, I like the book, I like the seven questions. I can't seem to actually use them. I can't seem to somehow integrate them into my working life. Why is it so hard for me to be curious and be curious longer? What's getting in the way? And I really wanted to tackle this kind of the barrier to what it takes to be curious because it sounds easy enough. Right?

Robert Glazer: Right.

Michael Bungay Stanier: Because all I'm asking you to do is stay curious a little bit longer. Rush to action and advice, giving a little bit more slowly. How hard can that be? For lots of us, it's hard. It's hard to shift that deeply ingrained habit of giving advice.

Robert Glazer: Two ears and one mouth. Use them proportionally.

Michael Bungay Stanier: Yeah, exactly. So we've all read that and we're like, but how? How do I overcome years of training where you've been rewarded for the person [inaudible 00:36:31] by having the answer? You were rewarded in school, you were rewarded in university, you were awarded in your early career to learn stuff, know stuff. That's how you pass the test. And I'm like, in this world where first of all, all the answers are find-able on Google and there are better answers than you had.

Michael Bungay Stanier: And secondly, it's a more complex, confusing, different world anyway. Curiosity is a more powerful force and reframing your role as somebody who says, I'm seeing my job as the person who figures out what the real challenge is for us to work on rather than the person who can come up with the fast and usually slightly wrong idea. And so that's what this book is about. It's like, here's some stuff around behavior change. Here's some stuff about the power of focus and the value in doubling down on spending a bit more time, getting clear on what the real challenge is. And here's a piece around the neuroscience of engagement. How when you're in conversation with somebody, whether it's a coach like conversation or not, do you make your conversations irresistible so people stay engaged with you?

Robert Glazer: Well, I'm excited to read it and I got to ask you, it looks like you self-published again and I know after selling three quarters of a million books, [inaudible 00:37:50] book offers. So you're betting on yourself?

Michael Bungay Stanier: So yes, I'm betting on myself in part because the last bit worked out so well. I'd be foolish not to give this another go. And secondly, I just liked the control. Like the book is an extension of my brand, my personal brand and Box of Crayons' brand. So for me to be able to work with, Peter the designer and be able to shape that and to have the final say in this is what it's going to look like, this is what's going to be in there, this is how we're going to talk about things. Rather than when you're an author who's contracted to a publishing house, that they get the final say. They're underwriting it. So it's their right. So placing the bet and we'll see how it goes.

Robert Glazer: I like it, because look, it would have been very easy to get a big advance.

Michael Bungay Stanier: Yeah. This is boasting a bit. So forgive me around that. But one of the cool moments was a year after the coaching habit came out, having one of the big famous publishing houses offered to buy it and offered me a big chunk of money for it and I actually say, "Well thank you. But no, because what you bring

isn't quite sufficient for what I lose in terms of the control and what I'm getting from it."

Robert Glazer: That must've felt so good.

Michael Bungay Stanier: Well, honestly, part of me always got it because this is a publishing house I've looked to and admired for years. So part of me is like, "I would love to be published by you guys, just not this book because I've already got this book sorted. Maybe another one down the line perhaps."

Robert Glazer: I find it's really interesting when we idolize something in life and then it's presented to us and we often realize it's actually not what we want in that moment of decision. I've had that happen a few times and one thing, not to get into book economics with people, but I think it's an interesting for people to understand, when you hear about like an advance on a book, that's an advance against royalties in terms of, if you don't get a good advance but your book sells a million copies, you will end up in the same place based on the percentage of deal you have. And if you get a big advance and you don't earn it out, my understanding is you will never write another book again that is sold. So it's organized to be very, it can be very wind lose around whether you want to bet on yourself or not.

Michael Bungay Stanier: I mean, advantages of book advance is a cash management thing. It's like, hey author, we'll give you money so you can actually write this and you don't have to worry about working and earning the whole time. It's also, there is something that the bigger the advance, the more the publishing house has invested in making it work. So the more that they will market it for you. So there's a kind of deeper commitment than just the cash. But it's also true that there's then pressure on you to actually, to have the book be a success.

Robert Glazer: All right. Last question for you. And you should have a lot of good answers to this as given your profession. And this can be singular or a repeated. But what's a personal or professional mistake that you've learned the most from?

Michael Bungay Stanier: I have so many mistakes to draw upon. I honestly feel that most of my life is stumbling through getting it mostly not right, but being resilient enough to kind of bounce back and taking some good bets along the way. I think, I came to be lucky enough to have a good enough life that even the stuff it hasn't worked out or I screwed up on, I can reframe it not as a mistake, but as a learning opportunity, which I know sounds a bit kind of high in the sky.

Michael Bungay Stanier: But I'll tell you my first job. So there's this innovation company in England. And I had done the interview. I was kind of excited by meeting them because they were quirky and different and non-corporate and I kind of liked this. It feels like a fit. And I've interviewed in a bunch of other places that really didn't feel like a fit. And, by the time [inaudible 00:41:50] they're ready to make me an offer, I'd flown out to Australia to visit my parents.

Michael Bungay Stanier: So I got a call from Matt, the founder evening in Australia. And Matt was like, "All right Michael, we want to make you an offer. We'd like you to join this company." I was like, "Amazing. I'm so excited." And he's like, "So how much would you like as a salary?" And I thought back to the job ad and it said the salary is somewhere between 15,000 and 20,000 pounds per year. And I was thinking to myself, most of the other people that were interviewing were undergraduates. I have a master's degree, I have a law degree. I have a lot of university education. [inaudible 00:42:30] blah blah blah blah.

Michael Bungay Stanier: So I pause for a moment and I said, "Matt, I'd like 12,000 pounds, please." And that was like, there's a stunned silence on the end of the phone as Matt was like, "Wow, he's underbid the minimum by 3000 pounds. What is going on here?" And Matt came back and went, "Well, how about we start you on 15,000?" I'm like, "Yes. Fantastic. So I've already got a pay rise." And let's frame that as a mistake because it was not a strong negotiation stance.

Robert Glazer: What was the strategy?

Michael Bungay Stanier: So it makes it sound like I had a strategy, which is, first of all, I hadn't thought about the money at all. And secondly, I hadn't thought about the money and I really wanted the job and I had no real grounding on what difference the cost of living and living in London would be. So I was like, "I'm just making this play because I want the job." And the lesson there is get your act together around money.

Michael Bungay Stanier: We talked about coaches and there's a lot of bad ones out there. I've had one guy who's been my coach for the last 14 years, the guy called Ernest. And part of the reason that he is in my corner, why I hire him is he helps me with the money stuff, because I don't have a natural instinct to make the cash become super rich because that's not part of my value set. I'm not particularly driven by that.

Michael Bungay Stanier: And I know I need to be good with money to run a company, scale a company, be able to employ other people. I'm going to get my act together around that. So I'd say, let's call it a mistake. It certainly was a display of weakness and ignorance. And I've worked hard to try and get my own act together around money, but also make sure that people around me who are better at it than I am.

Robert Glazer: Good lessons there, particularly on negotiation. Reverse psychology negotiation.

Michael Bungay Stanier: Exactly.

Robert Glazer: Michael, what's the best place for to learn more about you, your work, your books, upcoming books?

Michael Bungay Stanier: So if you enter the [advicetrapped.com](http://advicetrapped.com), that's a great place to go. There's still going to be stuff about the books and there's a ton of cool stuff we're giving away, including a questionnaire where you can take a short questionnaire and discover which of the three personas of the advice monster is most common in you. Is it [inaudible 00:44:56], is it save it or is it control it? So the [advicetrapped.com](http://advicetrapped.com) and my umbrella site is [mbs.work](http://mbs.work). So you'll see other books and stuff that I've written there. And if you're interested in the corporate training side, then [boxofcrayons.com](http://boxofcrayons.com) is the website for that.

Robert Glazer: Awesome. Well, Michael, thank you very much for joining us today. I've really enjoyed following your work and having a chance to hear your story.

Michael Bungay Stanier: Well, my pleasure. I really appreciate this. I mean, I appreciate you having read the article I wrote around how to do book marketing and then helping me out-

Robert Glazer: That's a good article.

Michael Bungay Stanier: Helping me out with the book marketing. It's really kind of you.

Robert Glazer: All right, to our listeners, thank you for tuning into the Elevate Podcast today. We'll include links to Michael and his work and anything we talked about on the detailed episode page at [robertglazer.com](http://robertglazer.com). If you enjoyed today's episode with Michael or any of the episodes on the Elevate Podcast, I'd really appreciate if you could leave us a review as it's one of the best ways to help new users discover the show and get the same learnings. If you're listening in Apple podcasts, it only takes 10 seconds. You just select the library icon, click on Elevate, scroll down to the bottom, and you can leave a review. Thanks again for your support, and until next time, keep elevating