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This episode of coach to coach is brought to you by my coach training program for academics and higher education professionals. In each training course, we meet weekly to explore how we can hold space for clients. Listen for the things that they care about most and help them to achieve their goals through focused questioning activities and tools.

If you think that becoming a coach might be a fit for your professional development goals, you can learn more about the coach training program. Or sign up for a 30 minute Q and a session with me to ask all of your questions@higheredcoaches.com cohorts begin in January, April, and June. And I'd love to have you join us.

Welcome to coach, to coach a podcast dedicated to showcasing the power of coaching. I'm your host, Dr. Katie Linder, and I offer coaching to academics and higher education professionals to bring more ease to their lives and work. This season, I'm excited to share conversations with some of the participants in my coach training program.

I get questions all the time about how people know it's the right time to become a coach. What the various career pathways are that lead to coaching and what people decide to do with their coaching skills. After earning a credential this season, we're tackling all of these topics and more, a huge thanks to each coach in training who offered to come on the show and share about their experiences with learning this new skill set.

In this episode, you'll hear from Dr. Chelsea Hetherington, a coach who helps early career PhDs find clarity direction and alignment with their values. Her coaching has guided by her drive to support academics and creating the life that's right for them, setting aside other's expectations and getting clarity on their own priorities and values.

Permission is to help early career academics create careers on their own terms, whether within academia, for outside of it, building a life and career that is both fulfilling and aligned. Hi, Chelsea. It's so good to see you. Welcome to coach to coach. Thanks Katie. I'm so excited to be here. I was so excited to talk with you, Chelsea, about your journey coming into coaching and coach training, because I feel like.

You are someone who throughout this year, you were in the first cohort of the training program. You've really embraced this. I get this really like interesting journey for you to watch. So let's just start with, how did you come to understand what coaching was and what was kind of your first introduction to coaching as a field?

Oh yeah, it's been. It's been really exciting. And what a, what a year to decide to embark on coaching? Oh, my, uh, my first introduction to coaching as a field was, uh, almost two and a half years ago. Now, when I started working with you as the client. So it was where you started. Yeah. Yeah. That's where I started.

Yes. So, um, I remember listening to old episodes of make your way, uh, Sara Langworthy is a, um, An old friend and a colleague from grad school. So that's how I found that podcast. And, um, back when it was called academic gig back in the day, um, day, and I was just, I was so fascinated by this idea of, you know, academics, starting businesses, and I wanted to learn all that I could about it.

And, um, that's how I got to know your work, um, and was really introduced to what is this whole coaching thing? This is so interesting to me. Um, I was in a period of my life. It was a couple years after grad school and I was really in transition and trying to figure out what was going to come next. Um, I was in a non-academic job, um, that was in some ways satisfying in some ways not.

And I was really trying to figure out, should I stay or should I go, what comes next for me? And so that's when I started working with you. Um, and it was such a great experience and helped me get. Clarity and my values, my super powers, what I wanted to do, um, and helped me to kind of move forward in my career.

So that was my introduction to coaching. Okay. That is so interesting. I didn't know. That was like the first, first introduction. So, um, so I'm curious, Chelsea. From a client perspective, because there are people who come into coaching from that perspective, they may know about it, but they're really entering in kind of from a different angle.

And then at some point they kind of make that shift. But when you were being coached from a client perspective, what were the kinds of things that helped you to feel like coaching was effective? You know, you've given kind of the landscape of where you were at that time. Um, and some of the things you walked away with, but were there certain things that kind of clicked for you in terms of how coaching worked and why it was a fit for your particular set of questions?

Yeah, I think I would say it was two kind of main things. The first thing was that it gave me some language to understand what it was that I was experiencing at the time, which I now know was. Values misalignment between my core values and the position that I was in. Um, but at the time I really just felt this frustration and confusion and, um, I couldn't quite put language to it.

So I would say that the experience of coaching and, um, getting that introspection and feedback and, um, the tools, it really helped me to better understand what was happening, um, and use that language to move into a new position, which I'm in now. So that would be the first thing I would say. Um, The second thing that was really useful was having the tools and the homeworks that, um, I would complete in between, in between sessions.

Um, whether that was, you know, uh, recommending you recommending a book I read or, uh, an activity to do. I have a very specific memory of, um, one tool that I think you had me do that now. Having gone through coach training. I think of, it was kind of like a crosswalking activity. So, you know, looking at my values and kind of tracking and journaling over the course of several weeks and then seeing where are these showing up for me in my job, where they made me more, more lacking, um, Yeah.

So I would say that would be the two things kind of the language and some of the tools as well. So what then led you Chelsea to think, I want to flip this and maybe come to the other side and learn how to be a coach. How did you make that decision? That that might be a good fit for you? Yeah, it's funny because when I look back on, um, that time, you know, December, 2019 feels like, uh, you know, millennia ago, a lot of ways.

Um, when I look back. I really just think, I just knew. I just knew deep down that this is a thing I wanted to do. I remember when you started posting on Instagram, that this was, you know, this coach training thing was something you were going to do. I was immediately just enamored with the idea. Um, and I think it just instinctually, I really knew that this was something that I wanted to do when I reflect further back on, um, you know, my experiences in grad school and, you know, In other parts of my life.

I've always been someone that people come to for, for help, for reflection, for advice, for support. Um, and you know, it's something that I've always found very fulfilling is, is helping people, um, But I, I didn't really maybe feel like I had the tools to do it, that I wanted to. Um, I think that in the past, I often just kind of told people what to do or gave them advice and, um, that often it doesn't work out so well, you're trying to help people to learn more about themselves and, um, learn what's going to be best for them.

So I, I really think that, um, Coaching coach training has given me the skills and the tools to do what I've always been wanting to do, which is help people and help them change, help them find their way. Um, but it, I didn't always have the, the nuance and the skill to do it in a way that was effective and supportive.

You know, it's so interesting. We talk about this so much in coach training, this concept of giving advice and being an expert versus coming from more of a coaching mindset, which is not that it's more facilitative and helping the client to understand kind of where they're coming from and their own kind of self knowledge.

But because we come out of higher ed, which is so steeped in expertise, and that's really, how many of us have positioned ourselves as experts as teachers, um, as advice, givers as advisors, that's kind of where a lot of people come into coach training. Like with that mindset of this is my identity. And then you have to experience a kind of shift and transition.

When you put on a coaching hat to say, Oh, that's not what I'm supposed to do. And. It's effective to do all these different kinds of things in different ways, but coaching is kind of a different flavor of that. Can you talk a little bit about that transition because you are coming out of higher ed and you're still working in higher ed.

This is very much a space where you're a researcher. You're. Seen as an expert in various ways. How has that been for you to balance that? Oh gosh. I would say it's so freeing because I don't have to know the answers. I don't, I don't have to have the content area expertise. I don't have to, um, know the perfect solution for someone's.

You know, problem or specific issue they're dealing with it, it's incredibly freeing. I, you know, I have the, the background knowledge, the contextual knowledge of being someone who's worked in many different roles in higher ed, as someone who has done research, someone who's taught someone who's, um, done outreach, um, But I don't have to know someone's specific field or, you know, the intricacies of a specific department's requirements or policies or, you know, someone's graduate program, what their, you know, dissertation expectations are, you know, it it's that knowledge that I have.

Provides context. And it helps me guide the different kinds of questions and tools and resources I might provide to someone. Um, but I, I find it incredibly freeing to not have to know all the answers, um, because I don't that's, that's the thing, I don't know all the answers. Well, can you imagine Chelsea going into every session and it would feel like a candidacy exam.

If you were expected to know all the answers, it's like, what questions am I going to get? What, what are they going to want to know? And how can I provide it? Like I agree with you. It is really freeing to not have to constantly be concerned about. In those sessions. Yeah. And being able to kind of jump into coaching someone and, you know, the prep work we do for individual sessions is very minimal because we've done all the prep work ahead of time of going through coach training.

Um, so it's all very in the moment. And at first that was something that I was very nervous about, but now I find it to be very, very freeing. Okay. So I want to circle all the way back to what you were saying in December of 2019. And how you, you kind of knew, you know, that this is what you wanted to do.

This is a question I get a lot about people who are thinking of entering coach training about the timing. How do you know it's the right time to fit it in with other things that are going on in your life? And you had a lot going on in like the winter of 2019 into 2020, and you made a move this year and you changed shops.

Like there was a lot going on. So I'm wondering if you can, this is kind of a two-parter. Can you talk about the feeling of the instinct? Because to just say, I knew people were like, but how, how did you know, like, they, they want the details. So I wanted to get in there, but also just about the general timing of where this was in your life and, and kind of taking a leap to give time and attention and energy to this new area of growing this skill.

Yeah. It's a great question. I think what you're getting at is kind of the. The two different ways of making a decision, the more cognitive and the kind of like emotional instinctual. Um, I think for me, uh, I knew it was the right time, despite the fact that I had a lot going on in my life, my partner and I were, um, doing long distance.

And so I was trying to relocate to where they're living. Um, I also was still in that position, um, that old job that was not a great fit for me and was working on transitioning out of it. Um, the reason I knew kind of cognitively that it was the right time was that I really was feeling like I needed something outside of work that I could put my energy and my attention into.

Um, and especially something where. It was an opportunity to use a skill that I wasn't able to use in my day job. So this, you know, I saw it as a way to have an outlet and have something that was mine outside of work. Uh, especially being someone who went into coach training with the very explicit intent of, I want to start a side business around coaching.

Um, it wasn't a purely just professional development for my larger career. I had the intention of, I want to start a business as a coach. So, um, The kind of rational mind, cognitive mind making that decision was really around, you know, I need to have something that's outside of work and especially for the place I was in at the time, I knew that that would be very freeing to be able to kind of mentally set work aside at five o'clock and shift over to something that I was really excited about and found really fulfilling.

Um, Yeah, the, the kind of instinctual. So it is it's it's trickier. Um, I think that the way that I just kind of knew was, um, you know, you ran two cohorts in 2020, and I did think about, you know, what I would it make more sense to start in June? You know, I don't really know where things are going right now, or if I'm going to be moving or starting a new job.

And I just kind of felt this. You know, unsettled feeling of, but no, I wanna, I wanna, I want to do this now. I just want to do it now. I want to be in that first cohort. Um, like I, I don't want to wait so excited to do this. Um, so I think that, that, that might be a way to, you know, talk about that feeling was the idea of, you know, waiting and maybe doing it in 2021 or waiting until later in 2020, it was just.

You know, unsatisfying. I was just, I was excited. I felt that kind of fire of, I want to do this. I want to do it now. And I'm so excited to do it. Do you follow that energy? You do. I think this is something where, you know, the other thing I often do, so I feel like one of my super powers is I do forecasting.

Like I look way into the future, which is why I do so much strategic planning. And I really like to think multiple steps ahead and, and I will often ask myself a year from now. Will I have regretted that I didn't take the step, you know, like who do I want to be basically in a year? Do I want to be someone who has a coaching credential?

Do I want to be someone who has a yoga training credential? Do I want to be someone who has a PMP credential? 2020 was a year of credentials for me. So I was really pushing in that direction, but also it's just like, do I want to be someone who read a hundred books this year? Do I want to be someone, you know, like, what is it, what do I need to invest in order to be that future version of myself?

And I feel like it's kind of that feeling of like, Will I be unsatisfied if I don't move forward with this, like, will, it's not necessarily regret because you can make a different decision later. I don't think it's about, you know, negative self-talk towards ourselves, but it is this feeling of like, is there a kind of energy I have now that I want to pursue?

Yeah. Yeah. It, it just, there's that feeling of excitement and just, um, just knowing that maybe it's the right thing for you. There, there is another piece that I'm recalling now, which is that, um, around that time, my, my mom decided to give me a, uh, financial gift that just happened to coincide with the amount that I was going to have to contribute or invest for coach training.

And I felt like that was a, um, That was this little, a little sign from the universe that it was the right decision to make, so, yeah. Okay. Okay. So also look for signs from the universe. I love that. Yes. So one of the other questions I wanted to make sure we talked about Chelsea is you are also in the past year have gone through this low hustle program, which is a business building program that I run.

And you decided to do those two things simultaneously, as you said, you knew you wanted to be a coach and you wanted to build this business. I know that some people really. Struggle with that in academia, this idea of having a separate thing and feeling like you can make that choice to go in that direction of devoting your time and energy to something that is not your day job.

And maybe it will influence it in a positive way, but it really is a separate thing. And what I hear you saying is you did that, you really made that choice. I'm wondering if you can talk about that decision of, you know, I want to have a business and I'm going to take clear steps forward in order to build that.

Because I know some people come into coach training and they're feeling the same way, but maybe not feeling that they have the permission to go in that. Yeah. It's a great question. I think that, you know, I, I finished my PhD program about four and a half years ago, and I would say as early as. Five years ago, maybe even I was interested in starting a business.

I was fascinated. I was following people on, you know, on Twitter who were doing this, um, you know, higher ed, small business kind of thing, you know, consulting and all different kinds of things, whether that's like careers or, um, you know, consulting in all different kinds of areas. So I I've been really fascinated for a long time about how folks make this pivot from these skills they're using in higher ed to.

Uh, doing it more as a consulting or freelancing or starting their own business. Um, so that was something that I kind of had been paying attention to for a very long time. Um, I think another piece of it is that, um, Over the last several years as I've been in this kind of post PhD transition, getting more in touch with my values, um, the work-life balance and the boundaries have become super important to me.

Um, and it's been something that I've really, really worked at really, really hard, um, in the last several years. And so that I think has played a direct role in being able to say, you know, I'm going to keep fairly regular hours with my job. I'm going to give it my all during those hours. And then once those hours are up, I'm going to devote my energy to other things.

So I really see it as a, a way to have kind of an outlet for some of the creative things and other skills that I don't necessarily get to use in my day job. Um, And really it's, it's kind of just an area to experiment and play and have fun, which is really cool too. So, um, that aspect has been. It's been a great learning experience in the last year, the business starting part, and thank God for slow hustle, more information in the show notes for people who want to learn more.

Our 2021 cohort is closed, as people are listening to this, but there's always 20, 22 for people who want to plan ahead. I'm curious, Chelsea. I want to, I'm sure people are listening to this thinking like, Oh my gosh, that sounds so healthy. Like that you're like my day job has certain hours and then I have time for my own pursuits and people are just like, salivating, like listening to this going, how did you get to that place where you feel that way and where you're able to make those decisions?

Can you talk a little bit, I mean, cause you just said it was like a journey to get to this place where you felt like you could do that and have those boundaries and feel that sense of, I call it work work-life balance because I have my day job and my side business and my wife, you know what, I'm kind of balancing all those things.

Can you talk a little bit about what that's been like for you to go through that? Because I think it is hard one and for people who are in that place right now, what are some things that maybe you would tell them about how you took steps on that pathway for yourself? Yeah, it's a great question. I think the journey, the journey word is kind of a perfect one for it because it's something that, um, I've come to over the course of many years.

And there are certainly days where, uh, that balance is a little harder to strike. Um, Whether that's because of, um, you know, the demands of the particular time of year or different projects or, you know, conference travel once upon a time. That was a time when the balance was a little harder to strike. But I think that the biggest thing for me has been, uh, the shift after grad school.

I felt like during grad school, I was in this place where I had many different needs and grad school was there to serve all of them. Not always well, but, um, you know, my, you know, my social circle was within my grad school friends, the, you know, intellectual enrichment I was getting was purely through grad school.

It was, it was very centered around that specific environment. And then getting out of that transition and as being on part of this journey, it's helped me to see. How multifaceted our lives are, and we have all these different areas of our lives that can provide all different kinds of enrichment, um, all different kinds of values, alignment, all different kinds of fulfillment and satisfaction.

Um, and really at the end of the day, um, You know, higher ed is a field where we hopefully have a really good high degree of fulfillment and alignment, and it's very meaningful work. Um, we're doing it for our clear purpose. Um, but at the end of the day, a job is a thing we do for money. Th that's that's really that's really it, you know?

So, um, I think that. Watching some of the people I really care about, uh, sacrifice a lot of themselves for a job that wasn't necessarily going to give back to them. The same level of sacrifice that they were giving also really taught me that, um, Establishing and maintaining those kinds of boundaries is, is really important.

Um, and it's, it's required for, for our mental health, for our physical health, for the sake of our families. Um, it's, it's just a thing, you know, we have to do, there's more important things than just work. And I include my business in that as well. There's more important things in my life then than my business.

So healthy by myself, elevating a little bit too, because I'm like, this is so, I mean, it rings so true. And I think it's something that it's so wise to figure this out in the earlier stages of your professional life and to set those boundaries. Because I think the little, the farther we go, the harder it gets to pull back and say like, no, that time is mine.

Um, and I'm not necessarily giving it to either a day job or clients or other kinds of things that we're working with. Yeah, it's not always easy. I will say. And I, I may sound very healthy right now, but I wouldn't say that every single day I have this very clear, very clear view of it, or very easy ability to exercise it.

It's it, it really kind of does feel like a daily practice in a lot of ways. I think it's a constant negotiation. Of like, I think about even like, I can say this week, I opened up extra coaching slots during a window when I normally wouldn't, but I noticed that all my other coaching slots for like the next few weeks were just full.

Like there was literally no way for people to meet with me. And I thought, well, on a short-term basis, I'm going to open up this window of time for four days, you know, in the weekend and allow people to book it. But it's not a long-term practice. It's, you know, it's something that I'm doing in a short term because it's the beginning of the year.

And, you know, I want to make sure people can talk with me if they want to. And I think it is a constant negotiation, you know, of saying like, how do I feel right now? What is my energy? Do I feel like I can open up those slots? You know, does this feel like a good decision? That's aligned with everything else that's going on, you know, in my life.

Um, so yeah. Practice negotiation is huge. Yup. Absolutely. So I'm wondering Chelsea, if you can talk a little bit about. This. I mean, I think you're coming across as like this very confident, you know, I have a business, I'm a coach. I, you know, I've figured a lot of things out. And, and I know that there are definitely, and like you said, there are days when it's like, yes, and other days where you're like, no, I'm still working on a lot of these things, but I think that when you first start out in a coach training program, there's so much to learn, you know, and there's, and you have come like such a tremendous amount this year, just with your business, we'll link to your website.

People can take a look at kind of what you're doing, I think to say where you were in January and where you are now huge leaps on the training side and the business side. Right. So I'm wondering if you can just talk about that process of where you started, where you are now, were there key elements in there that helped to build your confidence on both the coaching side and the business side?

Because I think that they're both really integral to the growth that I've seen for you this year. Oh, thank you. That's that's really nice. Um, yeah, I definitely don't have it all figured out or even a large portion of everything figured out. So, um, I think that that's, uh, it's maybe. Maybe what's coming across more so as an acceptance of not having it all figured out, then the actual act of having it all figured out.

Um, it's been an incredible journey and like what did journey and what a year to decide to start a business and to embark on coach training 2020 was, um, just. It, it, it just, it's been a really, really interesting experience and kind of a wild ride. Um, I think the, the thing that I did not anticipate as much kind of going into coach training and going into slow hustle, um, going into these different ventures was how crucial the community was going to be for helping me to feel confident.

Um, having other folks who were going through coach training were feeling. Um, maybe overwhelmed at the idea of starting a business. We're wondering what the heck does this pandemic mean for higher ed? And for me trying to launch this new thing, um, having that community to call on for support and for encouragement to be able to cheer each other on that.

That it's been incredibly invaluable. I, and I, I know that I've made connections that will long, long outlast, um, both of these programs. So that's just been incredibly useful for, um, building my confidence. I think the other thing, um, that's been helpful in terms of thinking about confidence has been just really a realization that.

All of business is experimentation. Um, it's trying something out. It's seeing what works and it's adjusting from there, which, you know, honestly is. Kind of something that I picked up in grad school, being able to kind of take in data and see what's working. See what's not working and make adjustments, um, tweak it from there.

I really do think, and I even have a blog post about this. I really do think that there are a lot of skills that people with PhDs have that. Are incredibly useful in the entrepreneurship space. It's just a matter of, as you said, kind of making that mind mindset shift from the higher ed space where we give away a lot for free, because that's kind of how we're acculturated to this space where your skills and the things you can do just deserve to be paid for.

Um, so yeah, I think it's been, it's been a really interesting, really interesting time to, to go on this adventure. So you knew coming into the year, you had this instinct that you wanted to do this and that it would be a good fit for you. What are some of the things throughout the year that you've realized you just really like about coaching?

Like maybe something was affirmed for you that you kind of thought would be the case, or that maybe there were other things that you were like, I had no idea. This would be such a cool thing. And you're experiencing it now that you're coaching. What are some of those things? Oh, gosh. I mean, it's, it's such an incredible.

Honor to be a part of people's journeys, especially when folks are in these periods of big transitions, trying to make big life decisions and to, to be a part of that. And to be able to witness that, especially this year, you know, I've had clients who have really grappled with really tough decisions about, you know, what to do about going back to work or, you know, working in person and.

Trying to make these big kind of life altering decisions and knowing, you know, as we said before that I, of course can't make that decision for someone, but I can be there to support them, to validate, to help them think about how to make that kind of decision. So that's, that's just been incredibly fulfilling, um, in ways that I had expected, but also didn't expect, I guess, um, And I think the other thing is, um, seeing, seeing growth and change and decisions happen in real time.

Um, when those moments happen during a session, whether it's, you know, an aha moment or someone kind of comes to a big decision and realizes that they know which way they want to move forward, I'm almost getting chills thinking about it because they've had a few of those moments. Those are just, it's just, it's incredible.

It's so cool to witness and to be a part of that, it's. I love it. It's amazing. So what do you think is next for you, Chelsea, with your coaching as you're approaching, you know, getting your coaching credential and working through, you know, building your client base, building this business, what's on the horizon for you as we're entering into 2021.

Yeah. So as we're recording this, um, I will be wrapping up coach training, uh, in a few short weeks, which is. It's so weird to say, you know, been, been in coach treating every week, um, for the last almost year. So that's going to be a really strange transition. Um, I know that that's a group that will continue to stay in touch, um, with our, you know, reading groups and other conversations that we have together.

Um, so what's next for me is wrapping up coach training, um, earning my 100 hours. To get my ACC level accreditation, which, um, as a recording, this I'm about halfway there. So that's very exciting. I hope to get that, uh, later this year. Um, I also, uh, I do have a program called post-grad Pathfinders, which is a group coaching program for early career PhDs who are kind of in that, um, Either late grad school or post-grad school transition, trying to figure out what's next, knowing that it's not a tenure track professor path.

Um, so that's a program that I will be running again. I think as this areas, I think the next cohort should be in enrolling pretty soon. Um, so those are kind of the main things. And then just, you know, trucking along with, um, private coaching, supporting clients, especially through that, um, that post grad school transition.

Cause it can be. It can be tricky. It can be tough. I like that word tricky. It encompasses so many things and it can be going on with clients we're in that, in that mode. Well, Chelsea, I'm wondering if there's anything else you want to share about your journey over this past year or just what it has involved for you to kind of come to this place of stepping into your identity as a coach.

Yeah, I think that maybe the last thing I'll share is, um, something I was thinking about as I was, you know, kind of trying to make this decision to enter coach training. I didn't, I didn't even know if I would like coaching. I just, I just had a feeling that this would be something that was good for me.

And, um, I think it might've actually even been something that my partner said that, you know, this is an experience and it's data and it's information and. You know, do you want to look back and have tried something new and have gone for it and seeing what it's like and learn this skill, or, you know, do you want to not, and to not is of course an okay decision.

But, um, I think that I kind of approached it as this is, this is a way to explore if this is for me. Um, and I'm so glad I did I'm so, so glad I did. I. I could not have imagined what 2020 was going to bring for us. And I don't know where I would be right now if I hadn't had the support of that group and have you, as you know, coach trainer, um, during this incredible and weird year.

So I'm just really grateful. Yeah, I'm so grateful you joined this first cohort too. I think it took a lot of trust and I I've always wondered, I guess the second cohort is a good answer to this question, but like what would have happened if I had enrolled this program post COVID, you know, like just, it would have been a really different landscape, but.

It's just been so interesting to see how the group has supported each other this year and just the relationships that have come out of this, um, period for people. And for me too, I mean, it's, I feel the same way I look back on 2020 and coach training is a huge part of that picture for me, because we spent so much time.

In those, in those classes together. Yeah. We've been on the journey together. Well, I am so excited to see your continued journey. Chelsea, as you grow in this space, we will definitely link to your program and your website, other places for people to contact you in the show notes. And, um, yeah, just looking forward to seeing where you go in all these different coaching pathways.

Thanks for coming on the show. Yeah. Thanks Katie. Thanks for listening to this episode of coach to coach for any resources mentioned in the episode, check out the episode, show notes at Dr. Katie linder.com/coach. If you found this episode to be helpful, please take a moment to rate or review the show in Apple podcasts or recommends episode to a friend or colleague.

Thanks for listening.