**Motivational Mondays interview:**

**Brian Biro – *Airing* 03.29.2021**

**Max Irzhak (intro)** [00:00:02] Welcome ladies and gentlemen to Motivational Mondays.

I’m your host Max Irzhak, and joining us this week is one of my favorite speakers and a man on a mission to bust the myth that for you to win … someone else has to lose.

His clients say he “has the energy of a ten-year-old, the enthusiasm of a twenty-year-old, and the wisdom ... of a seventy-five-year-old.”

Brian Biro is one of the nation’s best speakers and teachers of leadership, team building, and thriving through change.

He’s delivered over 1,800 presentations and helped redefine cultures for some of the biggest brands like Starbucks, Microsoft, Pizza Hut, and Lockheed Martin.

And he was honored as one of the top Motivational Speakers in the world! I’m thrilled to introduce America’s Breakthrough Coach, Brian Biro!

**Brian Biro** [00:00:41] Hey Max, it’s great to see you. Thanks so much for having me here.

**Max Irzhak** [00:00:44] You got it! Alright, let’s kick it off. Do you believe that leadership is something that we’re born with? Or can anyone learn to be a leader?

**Brian Biro** [00:00:54] Oh I love that question, Max! I believe that everyone *is* a leader because when we think about what leadership is, it really comes down to making decisions. So no matter what your job title is, no matter what you do, you are the CEO of your own life. In other words, how do you show up every day? That’s a big part of your leadership. How do you deal with it? We've all had to deal with enormous change and uncertainty and challenge in the last year… how do you deal with that? That is constantly communicating something about your leadership. Most important of all, how do you impact people? Do you inspire them, do you lift them up? So you’re already a leader.

My passion is to help people recognize that we all become the best leaders we can be when we focus on controlling our controllables. Shaping our future, energizing and engaging ourselves and our teams and building people, teams, and relationships. So, I don't believe that it’s a genetic thing, we’re already a leader. I think it’s a massive awareness when we become aware that we are a leader, it opens a whole new way of looking at life, and what you focus on is what you create.

**Max Irzhak** [00:02:05] One of the things that I found really inspiring about your work was this concept of “Controlling your controllables”.

We so often get lost in thinking about what we *can’t* control, that we lose focus on what we actually *do* control.

Can you tell us why this is such a core part of your work?

**Brian Biro** [00:02:23] Yeah, it really comes down to I think it’s probably the most important thing that i really teach, is the importance of looking to control your controllables. If every one of us on your show right now asked themselves this question “how do we feel when we’re trying to control other people? How do we feel when we’re trying to control those things which we don’t control”? We feel frustrated, we feel worried, we feel uncertain, we feel doubtful. When we focus on what we *do* control, how do we feel? You feel momentum, you feel a sense of purpose, you feel energized.

And, my mentor was the greatest coach of all time… his name was John Wooden. And his whole focus was control your controllables. In fact in 27 years at UCLA, the greatest coach of all time in his sport never said the words “winning” or “losing” to his players. Did he want to win? Absolutely! But what he wanted to focus on was not the result of winning, but instead what you did each day that you controlled to move towards the result you created. So when you come from controlling your controllables, you’re not worried about comparing yourself all the time, which always always always is a mistake. Instead, you’re focusing on your effort, your energy, your attitude, your actions—and it allows you also to have that magical ability to when you hit the bumps in the road, when you make mistakes to because you’re focusing on controlling your controllables, you look at what you did and you turn that quote unquote failure into a tremendous opportunity to learn.

So controlling your controllables is not something that we’re taught. We’re taught so much to focus on the end result. My focus is to focus on what you put in each day—what you put in and good results will come.

**Max Irzhak** [00:04:07] Very cool. How can leaders bring kindness into their organizations? How can they play the role of Chief Kindness Officer?

**Brian Biro** [00:04:16] Wow, yeah i call it the CKO. And I think that the first thing is everybody can be a CKO. you don’t have to be promoted, you can choose to be a CKO, a Chief Kindness Officer right away. There are a few really powerful ways to bring kindness into an organization that I think are the most powerful. Number one, is to be fully present. That means when you’re fully present with another person, that means 100% percent of your mind/body/spirit is with that person. And it sends an unstoppable, unconscious, but incredibly powerful message to that person that they are important. Whenever you’re fully present, it sends that message that you’re significant, that I value you, that I respect who you are. And there is nothing that builds trust or delivers kindness more than being fully present. So step one in being a great leader to inject kindness is to give the ultimate kindness, because without presence there is no kindness.

Second, be a blame buster. Blame kills teams. And there’s a reason why blame has no productive value—even though we’re conditioned to blame constantly. Our litigation system is all about blame. But if you think about blame in the context of time, is blame about the past, the present, or the future? Always about the past. So can you do anything about the past? No, it’s done. So whenever you find yourself in blame, you are in the past where you have no opportunity to do something constructive in the present. So as a leader, you don’t pretend that we don’t make mistakes, we do; you don’t pretend that you don’t make mistakes. But what you do is you ..take it out of the past—which is in blame, and say here’s what we did, what can we learn, what will we do now differently? Again, a huge kindness because when people feel blame they go in defense, and when people go into defense all they want to do is protect their comfort zone.

I think a third one, and it goes along with being present, but it’s a subset of it but an important one… listen. Truly listen. One thing that I admire about you, I've been on many podcasts but I don't know that I've ever been on any where I find somebody that I really believe is listening more than you before formulating what you’re going to say in response.

What is the least used sense, or underused sense? I definitely believe it’s hearing, listening. Because 98% of the time when we’re in a conversation, when somebody else is talking, what are we actually doing? We’re not listening, we’re thinking about what we’re going to say. And therefore we’re missing maybe the most important parts of what they are actually trying to communicate. When you truly listen to people, it’s transformative.

**Max Irzhak** [00:07:13] You’re right, active listening is so rare these days. We have so many distractions. You’re trying to have a conversation with someone, and if you’re working really hard to pay attention to what that person is saying, you feel the buzzing in your pocket, a social media ping, a text message comes in, a phone call. And it’s so easy to be distracted and so difficult to stay focused.

The other two things that you said were one-hundred percent true. First of all, it’s allowing yourself to be vulnerable. Too many people are afraid to show that weakness, because they think it's a weakness. But if they only understood that you are able to reframe it. And the more leaders I speak to, the more they bring that message home that leaders don’t need to have all the answers. And another thing that you said that I keep constantly hearing is that people just need to be heard.

**Brian Biro** [00:08:10] They do. It really is. Perhaps the greatest human need is the need to feel heard. And it moves mountains. When somebody feels heard, they want to reciprocate. And when somebody feels unheard, that they’re not heard, they create an IOU. and eventually they’re going to get their chance to pay back that you don’t care enough to listen to them. And they don’t do that consciously, but unconsciously, they’ll do a little bit less. Here’s the beautiful thing about listening, or helping, or supporting people… whenever you seek to enrich another person’s experience, say you listen to them, you can’t but help to enrich your own because you are now in a place you would never have been without them—it makes you go to a different place. It’s a great gift to you to listen as well because you learn things you never would’ve learned.

**Max Irzhak** [00:08:58] And i think the greatest gift is to be naturally curious. That’s what gets people to actually want to listen. That’s why I love meeting new people. People always said “don’t speak to strangers''—I think that that’s such poor advice. And maybe that’s smart advice to give a child, but unfortunately that’s the one piece of feedback and one piece of advice that we carry through to our adulthood. And we are no longer eager to meet strangers, we’re no longer eager to start those conversations and talk about not only talk about ourselves but want to learn that person’s story.

**Brian Biro** [00:09:37] Absolutely! One of my most I think important things I want to communicate to people is this idea that if you want to live a great life, if you want to have a great impact on other people, if you want to live with joy—here’s a recipe. Be easy to impress, and hard to offend.

I wrote a story called *Wednesdays With Ruby* about my grandmother—her name was Ruby Jewel, believe it or not—what a great name. Anyways, Ruby so epitomized this natural curiosity. She was fascinated by everything and everybody. And she delighted people because of that interest. People love to be asked about their lives, people love to be asked about their thoughts, people love to be asked about their families—and she never missed a beat, she had to do that. She found joy in a tile on the floor, she would find something valuable. So the “easy to impress” doesn’t mean you’re a push-over, it means you have curiosity, that you’re fascinated by everything around you. The “difficult to offend'' is that gift to stop taking everything personally, to ask yourself when something seems to you to be a personal affront, ask this question “what else could this mean?” Maybe they’re having a bad day, maybe there was a miscommunication and they’re assuming something which was not what i meant, maybe it’s not about me at all. Maybe I should be compassionate instead of feeling defensive. Easy to impress and hard to offend is a remarkable recipe for joy.

**Max Irzhak** [00:11:30] Can you tell us about your book The ROI of Kindness, and what’s the #1 lesson you want readers to walk away with?

**Brian Biro** [00:11:39] I have to come down to one lesson? I have to cheat and give two. One is a little bit more macro, one’s a little bit more micro. The first lesson I want people to recognize is that the old thinking that kindness is weak and soft and does not work in a business is dead wrong, and that the opposite is true. I want them to understand that kindness works all the way to the bottom line. But most of all, I want people to emerge—each individual to emerge from the book with the sense that they can choose to be a Chief Kindness Officer in their lives every day and how to do it. That’s why I talk about the seven habits of highly effective CKO’s—we’ve talked about virtually every one of them today. And I want people to recognize that kindness is your choice, and that at the heart of really truly being kind is that kindness must be proactive for it to really effect this world.

See it’s easy to be kind to kind people. It’s easy to be nice when somebody’s nice to you. But where kindness really can make a difference is when somebody is scared, somebody is not at their best, somebody has mistreated you—that’s when kindness can be transformative. And that can only be proactive. So if I had one individual wish for every person who reads my book is that they emerge with the sense that they are not just going to be reactive CKO’s, they’re going to be proactive CKO’s, and then that will in turn generate more kindness and that will in turn create greater results.

**Max Irzhak** [00:13:18] And if people wanted to learn more about you, where should they go?

**Brian Biro** [00:13:22] The simplest way is to just go to my website which is www.brianbiro.com and that’s got information about my speaking which i love—i feel like i was put on Earth to teach these principles. And it’s got all the books for sale, if that’s something that you want.

It’s such a cool thing, Max, or one of the cool things about writing a book…. When i first wrote my first book i really didn’t think about anything about selling books, i just wanted to write my book. I wanted to take these ideas and express them in a way that I felt good about. Then the book was done and I went “oh my gosh I have to do something with this thing.” But one of the great realizations is that people I will never meet may get one idea, or one inspiration, or be moved by one story in a book that they then go and effect everyone in their lives who affects everyone in their lives so you get to really be a ripple effect beginner. I love that, and so that brings me the greatest joy is that maybe something in my book will help somebody bring their family back together, or help them ignite them to take that chance and go for their dream rather than to think they don’t have that choice.

**Max Irzhak** [00:14:43] Brian, I truly want to thank you for all that you do, for making the world just a little bit better each day, and for helping us realize that when we’re kind to each other, we can all succeed together.

This has been so much fun and truly a pleasure.

**Brian Biro** [00:14:57] Thank you Max, I feel the same way. I could talk with you for about we’ll have to turn Motivational Mondays into Motivational Monday through Sunday, and then start again.

**Max Irzhak** [00:15:05] Hahaha I love it.