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Meet Kyle Zamcheck: Raise your authentic voice

Kyle Zamcheck is an executive communication coach at Speech Improvement Company and founder of Listenly in Austin, Texas, USA.

Kyle Zamcheck (kyle@listenly.co) was interviewed in May by Adam Turteltaub (adam.turteltaub@corporatecompliance.org), Vice President, Strategic Initiatives & International Programs at SCCE & HCCA.

AT: Let's start with the obvious but important: you're not a compliance professional. You're an expert on helping executives improve their communication skills. How did you end up in the field?

KZ: I followed through on an introduction to a friend of a friend who was a partner at The Speech Improvement Company. I didn't know that executive communication coaching was a profession until I trained and became a coach with them.

Previously, I'd studied psychology and nonverbal communication, which took me on a wild journey through theater and dance; analyzing pedestrian movement; and traveling through India, the West Bank, and Israel. I was fascinated by how people held themselves accountable for their verbal communication but were unaware of their nonverbal messaging.

A few years ago a colleague recommended I apply to speak at a compliance conference. I was accepted, and in the weeks leading up to my conference session, I actually had to google what compliance was! It was at the conference that I learned compliance had evolved from technical specifications into a far larger practice, one that looked at social constructs and the communication skills essential for professional environments. The overwhelmingly enthusiastic response of the attendees to my presentation was unexpected. I had an impassioned 40-minute conversation with a participant about the future of compliance and how necessary effective communication would be to its success. Profoundly moved, I saw how important this work was—and I was hooked! Only later did I discover that the participant was Roy Snell, then-CEO of SCCE.

The fields in which I now find myself are the result of a human network of loose connections: the friend of a friend, the person I happened to strike up a conversation with at a conference, and the list goes on.

People underestimate the power of loose connections and following your curiosity.

AT: What kind of leaders do you typically work with?

KZ: I work with innovative leaders to apply communication skills and techniques that strengthen their teams. I have niche expertise working with technical communities, female leadership, and integration of intergenerational workplaces. My passion for innovation has led me to work with a diverse range of leaders and communities, such as multiple Google sales teams and Women Who Code.

When working with leaders or teams, there are three questions I ask myself to determine whether or not it's a good fit:

1. Will amplifying their message have a positive impact on the world?
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2. Are they curious?
3. Are they willing to be vulnerable?

I've worked with Jackrabbit Mobile. They explore innovative tech spaces; however, what I saw as innovative was their willingness to dive in and apply their creative thinking toward their team dynamics. They dedicated time to rethinking the culture of communication and doing organization-wide exercises focused on transparency and vulnerability. This is the work it takes to create lasting cultural changes.

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