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## Inspiring a Culture of Trust

Be inspired by this conversation with Eric Marcoe, Dream Coach at Miron Construction Co., Inc as he shares how to create safe space, care for an employee beyond their work and become more coach-like

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Miron specializes in providing innovative pre-construction, construction management, design-build, general construction and industrial services to multiple markets. From elementary schools to office buildings to casinos and clinics, we work side-by-side with our clients to bring their dreams to life.

WCWI, a community of connected employers who are transforming Wisconsin's workforce.



The Wellness Council of Wisconsin is the only nonprofit organization in Wisconsin dedicated exclusively to helping employers design results-oriented wellness programs to maximize the health and productivity of their most valuable asset—their employees. As Wisconsin's premier resource for workplace wellness, WCWI's mission is to serve by:

- Empowering organization in transforming culture to change lives;
- Helping employers build comprehensive and sustainable programs;
- Dedicated to local support with a national network;
- Connecting over 700 likeminded professionals who support over 500 organizations.

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## **“It’s the whole idea of caring about an employee beyond their work”**

Eric Marcoe, Dream Coach, Miron Construction

**Katie Reiels (Learning & Project Strategist, WCWI):** Hi Eric! Tell me a little bit about your role at Miron as their Dream Coach.

**Eric Marcoe (Dream Coach, Miron Construction):** I've been the Dream Coach for Miron Construction for the last 4.5 years. I'm certified through the ICF (International Coach Federation) and have their PCC (Professional Certified Coach) credential. When I first started, I came in with the life coach approach of working with individuals in the moment. It was set up that an employee could only work with me on something personal and nothing work related. With my past organizational development background, I knew that work and personal life are so interconnected and it was hard for me to separate. As I've moved more into this role, I'm now given the opportunity to work with both personal and work-related aspirations. It also helps communicate to our people that work and personal life are interrelated as they collectively make up who you are as a being. Whether that's the feelings or the emotions you have right now, whether it's what you're looking to create for yourself, whether it's something that's happened prior that's created your feelings now, or maybe it's that growth and confidence and all of that connects.

**KR:** We share a similar philosophy in regards to wellness as we work to support the whole employee. How does your work align with wellbeing at Miron?

**EM:** Our wellness coordinator and I work very closely together because we're both part of our culture team. We work back and forth, to show holistic support, whether it's for employees' physical health or emotional health, whether it's their work life or their home life, and tying those pieces together. In addition to us, our culture team also consists of our Director of Culture, our Learning and Development Manager and our VP of HR. From a wellbeing standpoint, in order to drive alignment with our culture team, we came up with our culture team's mission, and that mission is:

*“To inspire a culture of trust, where people are genuinely cared for, empowered, and feel valued.”*

And that's what the five of us have been diligently working to create.

**KR:** How have you seen this alignment with your leader's impact organizational culture?

**EM:** Our group is actually pushing for more of that from an engagement survey standpoint. However, I remember having a conversation about a year into my role with one of our owners. And that owner said, “Eric, this is not one more spot we're going to try and measure. We measure so much of the rest of our business. In your role, we can all feel the difference and we can see the difference. If you can help one person become more engaged in their work or feel more connected to Miron and in their life, then it paid for your salary for the year.”

**KR:** Talk to me about how you help people feel more connected to their work and in their life?

**EM:** A lot of people start out wanting to meet with me around something they want to do or have. I usually don't have any goals in meeting with them, but one of the things I try to do in my role as a coach is to help them realize who they want to become, because of that doing or having. Because then people can either become even more connected to that piece they want to do or have because they realize the emotion behind it. Or they've just been stuck and realize it's finally time to release something because it was never their goal, there was just a roadblock in front of them. People are re-energized after I meet with them and a lot of times they feel that based on our conversation that the company really cares for them.

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**KR:** Isn't that cool that just by allowing the space for a conversation, that it translates to viewing your company as caring. What prompts people to take that step?

**EM:** It's just your willingness to see yourself. As soon as I get that email from someone that said, "Eric, I would like to meet with you?" Or "how do we set this up?" The first thing I do is congratulate them on their courage. Their courage to meet with me translates to courage in seeing themselves in the mirror, because that's really what meeting with me is about.

**KR:** How do you work to help employees feel safe in these conversations?

**EM:** Safe space is one of the key things we try and do within our culture group. How do we create a safe space with an unbiased perspective? I'm going to coach you in a way that serves you best which is really helping you see yourself and having your own answers since you are the expert on you. Everything is confidential and I let them determine the agenda for our meeting. As humans, we think we need to always find an answer and share advice. How can we step away from that? Because as soon as we begin to advise them on what they should or shouldn't be doing, we then show them that we don't trust that they can figure it out on their own. And how do I go into that unbiased enough that I'm not judging them.

**KR:** How do you suggest we put action to that type of perspective?

**EM:** One of my favorite coaches and author, Michael Bungay Stanier says we need to become more coach-like. How do we become curious for a few seconds longer today than we would have been yesterday? A starter question in meeting with anyone so that you can really get to the heart of everything quicker, is simply "what's on your mind?" We tend to give advice with a question mark at the end. Have you tried this? What about this? Those aren't necessarily coaching questions; those are you giving your advice. The other key piece is as you're working with this individual and you're having a conversation out of curiosity you ask "and what else?" A lot of times people's first response isn't the most important one.

**KR:** Why is being coach-like a vital tool, in supporting employees in their wellbeing?

**EM:** For so many people meeting with me is the first time in their life they've ever focused specifically on themselves. Yes, this conversation is all about you. We are constantly thinking about everyone else in our life and yet, when you're meeting with a coach who's truly viewing you as the expert in your life, they simply provide a safe, unbiased space to do so. It is all about you. And it's odd for some people, but when you can shift your perspective that's where real growth happens.

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**KR:** Growth is a key pillar in our expanding scope of wellness. Employee wellness is rooted in opportunity to learn and use your strengths. How do you help employees feel a sense of growth?

**EM:** This sounds general, but it's important to believe that your employees have unlimited potential, and then create a safe enough space to have that communication. Our organization is probably not alone in this, but what I've seen is sometimes we're hesitant to share the growth that we would like to see for ourselves because it may lead us outside of the organization. And maybe people don't want to hear that. But I think there are times where there's fear to share, I want to do something different. Because I am so valued for what I do that what if they don't look at me as valued anymore because I want to do something different. So how do we create a safe enough space for people to share that they have other aspirations and passions for some other things? Can that work within this organization? If it doesn't, how can you help prepare them to get to where they want to go? This is hard for an organization or a leader to do

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because they don't want to lose that person, but they're going to lose them anyway. Whether they actually physically leave, or tying it back to wellbeing, they're just not emotionally present anymore in the work they're doing.

**KR:** How can wellbeing leaders become more coach-like?

**EM:** It's the whole idea of caring about an employee beyond their work. It can be hard to want to become more coach-like sometimes because it feels like it takes more time. We all know if we step back from it, there are people that we would work and do more for than others. And it's because of how we've gotten to know that individual, the trust we have with that individual, and maybe it's the vulnerability that we've shared back and forth. There have been people that for

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the first three hours of their morning had zero productivity because something had come up in their business, personal life or their work life, and they were not moving forward. I had a couple people that would reach out and say, "I see you have an opening at 11:30. Can I meet with you?" And until that conversation was finished, they were not even able to process anything work-related because they couldn't work through the emotions that were there. The space

and the time they took in that conversation, whether it is with me, with a supervisor or leader, it just allows them to step back out. I remember one person clearly saying, "Thank you, because I actually feel like I can go and do some type of work now at my desk. I couldn't all morning." So sometimes we say we can't take time for this, but had we not taken time for that conversation, there would have been zero production for the entire day, versus just during the morning. We need to be willing to step into that. I know it's a scary space because it's dealing with emotions. You say to yourself, "I don't know if I should talk to them." But sometimes you don't necessarily need to do much more than listen.

**KR:** It's imperative that we step into this space of supporting emotional wellbeing. I'm sure you've been a part of some pretty transactional conversations.

**EM:** It's so important to put them in the driver seat. If I have the agenda for them that may not even be what they want to talk about from the last time we met. Most of the growth happens between our coaching sessions. I know for a fact that people have forever been changed and so have I, after our conversations. Our outlook, both theirs and mine, have changed because of a conversation. So when we meet again three weeks later, it's amazing what can transpire. That may not have ever happened had we not had that conversation.

**KR:** As a dream coach, what is your dream for the work that you do?

**EM:** I am here to support all our leaders and individuals who aspire to be coach-like; I provide resources to coach them on being a coach. My dream would be for all our employees to look left or right and have someone that would be available to be that coach for them in the moment when they need it most.



The Wellness Council of Wisconsin (WCWI)

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