

CRAFT OF CONSULTING PODCAST

EPISODE 30: Launching a Consulting and Coaching Business—with Christine Beal Dunst

Deb Zahn: Hi. I want to welcome you to Episode 30 of the Craft of Consulting Podcast. And I'm giddy to do this episode because I had a chance to talk to Christine Beal Dunst. And she is, aside from wonderfully successful in what she does, she's one of my favorite people. She used to work for me many, many, many moons ago. And now, she has this really thriving coaching and consulting business out in the world. I've been talking to her recently, and I thought, "You know what? This would benefit you so much. I want to get her on so that you can hear how it is she's been able to build such a successful business."

So she is the co-founder and co-owner of Embody Wellness Company, and this is a wellness and lifestyle concierge company. She's going to describe that a little bit more in the episode. But she has an amazing pedigree in terms of consulting. She was at Accenture and PricewaterhouseCoopers. She did work within Kaiser Permanente doing marketing strategy. She knows marketing and communications like the back of her hand. So she took all of those skills and applied them within her own business.

And she's going to talk about some of how she did that. How they were able to build their brand, build up recognition over time. How they developed the right business processes to support their business and to make sure that all the dots were connected. And anything they did supported their overall business goals. So she has a lot of really tremendous information to share. Really excited, so let's get started.

Hi. I want to welcome my guest today, Christine Beal Dunst. Welcome so much to the show, Christine.

Christine Beal Dunst: Thank you so much, Deb. I'm so happy to be here with you and to partner with you again.

Deb Zahn: Thank you. And you heard the hesitation in my voice when I said Christine because we've known each other for a long time, and that's not what I call you. Since what I call you is the nonactive form of marijuana, which is CBD, I thought I should use your actual first name. So welcome to the show.

So tell my listeners a little bit about what type of work you do and then a little bit of why you went down that wonderful path.

Christine Beal Dunst: Yeah. Completely. So I'm happy to share my personal path with wellness. But from a business perspective, my business partner is Stephanie Rapp. We met in nutrition school about five years ago. We both come from very similar backgrounds. So Stephanie worked in corporate as well, and she worked at Goldman Sachs for about 10 years. I come from a rich background in consulting

and strategy consulting all in the healthcare space. Both Stephanie and I, when we were in nutrition school, we both really connected because we understood so deeply what it was like to work these really long hours in a very high-stress, intense job.

But we also had personal wellness issues that we were dealing with on our own. So we had fertility issues and other things. And we really didn't have a place to go or people to really help us with all of our wellness issues. So we really wanted to start Embody Wellness Company as a concierge service and a one-stop shop for clients' wellness goals. So what we do is, we span beyond nutrition, and we focus on the whole person and getting to the root causes of different challenges that our clients may have.

We specialize in holistic weight loss. We specialize in detoxing, cleansing, meal planning, gut health, fertility, as well as stress, which is so prevalent in our society today. So being a concierge, we really focus on the whole person, but each person is so different. So when we create these plans for our clients, we are hyperfocused on accountability. So that is the nutshell of our business and how we work one-on-one with clients. We typically work with top-tier executives, and we work with moms. So we purposely work with those two business segments because we are them. We truly understand their pains and their needs.

We have offices in New York City. We have offices here, in Connecticut. And we also have two other business lines. So we work a lot with corporate businesses as well on different wellness projects and engagements and speaking engagements. And then we just launched our third business line, which is business consulting to entrepreneurs all within the wellness landscape. And we really are focusing on entrepreneurs in the wellness space because that's really where our passion is and where we have the most experience. Because we launched this business five years ago, so we've definitely had a lot of learnings along the way, but also coupled with our 20 plus years of consulting experience. We really help clients grow their business.

As far as entrepreneurs, we mainly work with fellow health coaches. We work with a lot of different practitioners, whether they're acupuncturists, whether they're budding wellness entrepreneurs trying to really get their bands off the ground. We've also worked with restaurants. We've worked with different wellness resorts. So it's been really exciting helping others grow their business using our skills and our background.

Deb Zahn:

That's wonderful. And I know in five years, you've accomplished great things, which, since I know you, is no surprise to me at all. But when you were first starting off, and obviously you had a lot of business savvy from the corporate worlds that you were in, but what are the most important things that you did that inevitably contributed the most to your success?

Christine Beal Dunst: Yeah. It's a great question. The very first thing that I think is so important, especially if you have a business partner, is we started and created an operating agreement between she and I. And I think that's really important. It included how we were going to distribute the financials, our business processes. So that was the foundation. If you have a business partner, going out and starting a business, I think it's super important. She and I, we agreed very clearly on our vision, our mission, and our branding. So how we wanted to show up in this business and how we wanted our clients to feel was something we spent a lot of time on.

And you're going to laugh, Deb, but we put everything on paper. So I think that's really important. As you're starting your own business, it's great to have these theories and strategic brainstorming in your head, but we put everything on paper. And I think that's really important because it's giving the same dedication that you would if you were working for a billion-dollar company.

Deb Zahn: Yeah. I love that because I think, particularly when new consultants are starting, whether they work at a firm or they're going to work independently, not making those decisions ahead of time about how you want to do things, what's your brand going to be in this space, it inevitably catches up to you but usually not in a good way. So I love the idea. When I started this business venture, I wrote down very precisely all of those details as well as what I wanted my life to be like.

Christine Beal Dunst: Yes. I love that. And both Stephanie and I were moms. I'm a mom of two. She's a mom of three. And when we talked about our vision, it was to create a company that we also had the balance to do what our passions were. And our kids are obviously the most important things to us. So we built that into our business. When we think about our vision, it always comes back to serving them as well as serving our clients.

Deb Zahn: That's great. And how did you continue to balance that as now your business has grown, both in terms of clients as well as service lines?

Christine Beal Dunst: Yeah. Balance the work-life component of it?

Deb Zahn: Yeah.

Christine Beal Dunst: It's a lot. Stephanie has three kids. Hers are much younger than mine, and she has a brand-new baby. We set boundaries very well with each other and with our clients and when we're doing the work and when we're not doing the work. And I had to learn this the hard way. There were times...As you know, having your own business, you can be on the computer until 10:00, 11:00, 12:00. I've had to really set boundaries with that and being present when I'm with my kids, and when I'm not with my kids, I'm doing my work. So I really had to set those boundaries. No phone. So I stopped...And also, I'm sure we're going to get into it

later on, is all the things I do to cultivate balance in my life are so critical to me. We work so deeply with clients on self-care and what that even means and how that can make you more productive, more creative...

Deb Zahn: That's right.

Christine Beal Dunst: So I'm happy to talk about all my self-care pieces, but that's also so important of how we keep ourselves balanced.

Deb Zahn: And it sounds like also then part of your brand because you're going to be the message that you bring.

Christine Beal Dunst: No question. Yes.

Deb Zahn: I love that. So if you could go back in time, you're in your time machine, you went back to the beginning, what would you do differently?

Christine Beal Dunst: Yeah. I love this question because I really had to think about it. And I would say that in the very beginning, we spent so much time on our website and our branding and making things "perfect." But the reality is, nothing is ever going to be perfect. And we waited a bit before getting started, until things were so button up. And I think that perfectionism can...It can stop a lot of creative ideas. In the very beginning, we spent a lot of time on getting all of that ready before we saw clients or before we started to form different partnerships. I'm really pleased with how everything turned out. I think it was our process, and we were meant to do that in the beginning. But if I could go back, I would maybe cut the time a little bit.

Deb Zahn: Yeah. Yeah. Get to clients a little bit faster.

Christine Beal Dunst: A little faster, yeah.

Deb Zahn: So what type of prospective client do you have? You mentioned that you work with a lot of executives, but sounds like you have the individual business line, the corporate business line, and now the entrepreneur line. So starting with the corporate actually, because I think that's going to relate to what a lot of other consultants might go after. So how do you pursue them? How do you get them to a "yes?"

Christine Beal Dunst: Yeah. It's a great question. So the corporate business line...We've been really fortunate. We launched it this past year, and we've been fortunate. We got into some really big companies this year, like Google in New York City. We got into Meredith Corporation. So it was quite a few big, reputable companies. And what we honestly did was leverage our own network to get into these larger companies. We worked very hard to build our social media platform over the past five years so that when companies do see us, they see us as a brand versus just a one-off as well.

So when I say leverage our personal network to get these clients because we both came from the business background, we really focused on that. We created a brochure. We asked our network to actually forward it to the appropriate people in HR. And that's how we started to get these. And also, it was word of mouth. So because we work one-on-one with executives, they're in pretty prestigious firms as well. So they actually recommend us to their businesses as well. So we've gotten into some of those companies through our one-on-one clients as well.

Deb Zahn: That's great. I love the cross pollination of the two different client lines.

Christine Beal Dunst: Definitely. And also, Deb, one more thing I think is important too. We really get out there in the community, and I think that also spreads the word of mouth of what we do. So we do a lot of speaking engagements. We do a lot of different podcasts. We do a lot of writing as well. And I think that that is also so important to build the brand and to attract those types of clients.

Deb Zahn: That's right. Because they're already getting to experience value from you. So how do you get those, let's say, speaking engagements? Because I know that that can be a really, really helpful thing for consultants in their first phase to get visibility but also give people an experience of what it'll be like to work with them.

Christine Beal Dunst: Yeah. Absolutely. So speaking engagements within the corporations or speaking engagements to lead up to that?

Deb Zahn: I'd say to lead up to that.

Christine Beal Dunst: Yeah. So that's so important and what we work with our entrepreneurs on. It's almost like you are your own PR person, and I know you would appreciate that, Deb.

Deb Zahn: Yeah.

Christine Beal Dunst: So what we did was, we really leveraged authenticity of what we loved. So what I mean by that is, different places that we go in our community is where we form the partnerships. So for me, I adore the farmers markets. I adore the different yoga studios. The schools were a big thing for us as well, parent organizations, different mother groups, different women groups that were focused on entrepreneurs.

So we really tapped into our personal authenticity of where we go and frequent, but then we also looked in the community of what kind of business organizations did they have. How can we be a part of those? We formed the relationship first without pushing and seeking a speaking engagement. We formed...that they knew us on a personal level. They may follow us on social

media. We developed a lot of relationships through social media, where they would see the work and see us, kind of what you said in the very beginning, Deb, living our brand. Right? And then they started see us every day and be like, "OK, look at all these things that they're doing around eating healthy." Right? "Or around optimizing their sleep or stress management." And then they start to think of us in that way as well. So that's how we formed a lot of these partnerships.

In the beginning, we did a lot of speaking for free. It was a fine balance. Right? You want to get paid for your services, but also, it's so important that people see what you have to give. So we did quite a bit of that. And we did a lot of events in the city with various gyms. We ended up partnering with fertility doctors. So we ended up really building this robust network of partners, and then we started doing events with them, which was added value. So I found that extremely helpful because not only are you providing more benefit to the people who are coming to these events by having multiple people at these events, but you're also...It's a great way to get referrals in a genuine capacity. And we always go back to the genuine and authenticity component because it's so critical to our business and how I want to serve in this world.

Deb Zahn: Absolutely. And I would say to any consultant, I can't think of where that's not a good idea.

Christine Beal Dunst: Absolutely.

Deb Zahn: So I like the...You went out to the places that you authentically already went to but also the places where you knew that your target market went to and was meaningful to them and showed a spark that they would care about, which you want. And then, how did you pivot to paid speaking gigs? Because I know at a certain point, it makes sense because price signals value. So at a certain point where you're able to say, "Yeah, this is so worth it, it's worth you paying for."

Christine Beal Dunst: Yeah. Absolutely. So with that, as we started to gain more of our...So a lot of those speaking engagements, we got one-on-one clients from them, versus the larger corporations. But as we started to get more and more entrenched with those, we started to step back. And we, as a business, decided that we're not going to do as many of those. We're going to start to create an actual offering of it. I do believe, so deeply, you have to own your value and not give it away for free and spread yourself too thin. That's a big thing I see working with entrepreneurs. But we really decided that as a business. That's where we got to saying, "We have a business line for this."

So when people would ask us to do things for free, we would literally pitch that this is what we do. "We're happy to customize rates for you guys because you are a smaller organization." But the more we started putting that out into the world, that we deserve to get paid for what we're doing...And we actually created structure around it, meaning that we created a page on our website.

We created a brochure. We put the business processes around that. Then, we started really going after getting those engagements.

Deb Zahn: That's great. And that's not just you saying, "Hey, can you pay me for it?" I like the business processes around it, so it doesn't seem odd or awkward. It's just, this is a business.

Christine Beal Dunst: This is a business. Yeah. And I also think people, as you grow in your business, after year one, year two, year three, they start to see that you're growing and you're evolving. So you're at a different level than when you first started out. Right?

And also, a big thing of what we do that I think has been really helpful as a consultant is, we gather results, and we gather testimonials. I think that when Google was looking at us or some of these bigger organizations, they really cared about the testimonials, that they cared about the results that we had generated. And you know me and how much I enjoy data. So yeah. We were very focused on gathering that. When I would hire consultants when I worked in corporate, I did like to see their background. I did like to see what other clients were saying about them. So we were very focused on that. And every corporate engagement we do, we capture testimonials authentically, if they would like to give them to us. I think it's helpful. I think it's very helpful.

And to also be open enough...It's not a bragging to say, "This is what we've done." It's more of like, "This is how we serve." So that's how we shifted the structure with that.

Deb Zahn: That's great. It's interesting. A lot of consultants don't collect those things. And then if they're submitting a proposal or a bid, they're suddenly scrambling to try and get that information, as opposed to just make it part of your normal processes, your normal business processes, to collect them.

Christine Beal Dunst: Yeah. And that's what we do. Right after we work one-on-one with a client, we ask for the testimonials in a more formalized way. And that's worked amazing, versus an afterthought. Right? It's like, "This is what we do with every client." And we also collect results ongoing with clients every single week, just like you would in a consulting agreement, which is nice because by the end of our time together, whether it's a three-month program, whether it's a six-month program, you're seeing the results as you go. And we also share those results on social media.

Deb Zahn: Great.

Christine Beal Dunst: That's another trick as well. What I've seen with some entrepreneurs, they don't feel comfortable saying that. Right? And I didn't in the beginning as well, but then, once again, I just came from a mindset of service, and said, "We are truly helping these people and this organization. So I'm fine sharing that."

Deb Zahn: Yeah. Yeah. And it's a delicate balance to do it because you're right, I know a lot of folks that are like, "Oh, I don't want to appear as though I'm bragging," and then other folks that do the humble brag version, where it seems icky. But if you're coming from a place of authenticity and if you're really excited about the service you've been able to provide and the results it achieved, it should be a normal part of what you do. To tell other people about it because what you're doing is you're giving them hope that they can get those results too.

Christine Beal Dunst: You are absolutely right. And it gives them a little indication of who you are as a person. When you want to hire a consultant, you want to understand who they are and what they've done. Right? It's nice to have other people tell the story as well as the business tells the story.

Deb Zahn: Yeah. Love that. So client retention is always a really important thing for consultants, particularly new consultants, to learn because the more you retain clients, the less time you have to spend going out and getting new ones. So how do you keep your clients? What makes them stay with you?

Christine Beal Dunst: Yeah. I mean, it comes down to doing exceptional work and exceeding their expectations. And that's what it really always comes down to. About 80% or so of our clients are referrals. Right? So that's telling us that we're doing the work. It's such an honor to have a client refer us to somebody else. It's such a good feeling to do that as well. So how we keep our clients is, obviously, do exceptional work, but we touch base with former clients quite often as well. So we have processes. I'll check in with my former clients. Once again, it's from a mindset of "I genuinely care." I'm working with them on very deep health issues. We get very personal in a lot of our sessions. So I genuinely care about them and their success.

So we check in with them periodically throughout the year. We collected all their information. Right? So we can send out different value ads that we have as well, is a nice way to check in with them, whether it's articles that I think would benefit them, things that we've written. We've been doing immunity guides and different guides that we give them as being part of our community, which is great. We also partner quite a bit with a few national brands. So sometimes we have some free giveaways. So we definitely focus on the clients we've worked with.

But as far as the corporate clients that we've already had, once again, we touch base with them. It's not our one-on-one clients. We almost don't want them to be our clients forever. We want to empower them to be healthy on their own.

Deb Zahn: Spread your wings. Fly, fly.

Christine Beal Dunst: Fly. So it's that dichotomy. You want them to succeed on their own and empower...But also to know that we're always there in case their family, in case anyone they know needs our support as well.

Deb Zahn: Yeah. And I like the mix of authenticity. So you always do it from a place of truly caring. But I know you, so I know you have systems behind it. And it's OK to automate. I'm going to say something radical here: it's OK to automate signs of caring. It's no different than putting someone's birthday in your calendar so you don't forget. It doesn't make you care about their birthday less. It just makes sure that you remember to do it in your busy day.

Christine Beal Dunst: Absolutely. And I also think in our social media and our newsletters, we do targeted things for our clients. So yes, it is definitely automated to a degree, but we personalize a lot. I will personalize things to...It's just so rewarding seeing clients who have fertility issues have three kids now. So I've followed them along their journey. Especially what happens a lot with our clients is, a husband or wife does extraordinarily well. And then we start to work with the family, and then you really get to know them. And then it's two years later and you've seen them through changes. So that's been extraordinarily rewarding. My passion has always been on transformation, whether in a business setting or personal setting. And I just love to watch the transformation of my clients. So to keep them and to retain them, I think it's just giving them value. And it doesn't necessarily need to be paid value, but it does come back to you for sure.

Deb Zahn: It does. Absolutely. I don't know where I read it, but a stat...It was for entrepreneurs, but I think it certainly applies to consulting. People who've already been clients over a lifetime are worth 15% more than non-clients. Now, that's a cold, hard statistic, but what it basically says is, relationships are primary, and if you maintain and nurture the clients that you have, ultimately, at least for me, that's where the bulk of my business comes from.

Christine Beal Dunst: Yeah. I completely agree. It's the bulk of where our business comes from too. Like I was saying, over 80% of our clients are referrals. So to me, that's saying a lot. I mean, they're so valuable to us that we want to continue to provide value to them in nonpaying ways as well. Absolutely.

Deb Zahn: That's wonderful. So let me turn to...Because I love the idea that you're now going to be consulting with entrepreneurs in the health and wellness space. So what are you seeing entrepreneurs in that space struggle with? And as they're trying to either get started or build their business, what are those things that you keep seeing?

Christine Beal Dunst: And I love this question because I see this so often. Particularly, I've been working a lot with health coaches. And they're really scared to put themselves out there. They're scared to own their own worth. And I know that's more on a personal level, but they're thinking they're ready to really launch this. So they

want to do it, but then they don't want to share themselves on Instagram. They don't want to share their personal stories, or they don't want to open up their network and ask for help when they're launching. So that's a big one, and it could be a fear of being judged. It could be many different things with that. That's what I see a lot, and we work a lot on owning that and building the confidence. And business processes have to be behind that. Right? It's more an interior thing to work on as well.

But the other thing from business side is, I see so many beautiful, great ideas, but they're lacking in execution. They're lacking the planning component of it. And I go back to the putting it in a plan, putting it on paper, really being deliberate with the planning. And I feel like that builds the confidence that they need as well. We work a lot on literally putting together a strategic plan, putting together a marketing plan, defining who your customers are, what do they look like, what are their buying capacity, where do they shop. Really getting into customer profiling so that we can be very deliberate with tactics. So I feel like a lot of our work is getting that planning, and clients love it. Right? They're themselves out here. So to have almost a mind share and a person actually helping them put it on a plan and making it a reality is something exciting.

I also see, as far as struggling to get off the ground, is thinking that they can sit behind a computer and push their business to happen. I see a lot of them, they spend hours. It was almost what I was talking about what we did, with just so much work on this website. And I don't think you can force it to happen. I do think it's very important to get out in the community, what I was saying about building those authentic relationships and what you were saying about relationships are fundamental and key. I think it's so important to do that, as well as obviously balance of planning. But to actually get out there and talk to potential customers and talk to people who can mentor you, talk to people who you can learn from. I think it was so important with us in the beginning. I made a lot of time to do that.

Deb Zahn:

Yeah. And it takes a certain amount of willingness to be vulnerable because you're out there and you're exposing yourself in a good way. I remember when I first started consulting, one of the first things I did is, I went to a conference where my target market tended to go. And the timing didn't work out for me to speak at it, but I basically stood in places where people congregated, and I just handed out value. I would ask them what was going on with them. I would help them in ways that I could. Someone actually came up to me and joked that she was coming over to the Deb Zahn kissing booth. I said, "Well, I wouldn't go that far but maybe." And I just focused on not trying to get business, which was really hard because I didn't know how I was going to get business at that point. I just focused on, can I add value to folks who come and talk to me, whether it's related to what their business or organization is or just a laugh, something to enjoy in the midst of their day?

Christine Beal Dunst: Absolutely.

Deb Zahn: Yeah. But it's hard because you're out there, and you're saying, "I'm doing something new. You don't know me in this way. What do you think?"

Christine Beal Dunst: Absolutely. It's such a fine line with that. But it is putting yourself out there and it is being vulnerable. I can get in the tendency of planning because I just feel so comfortable in that capacity. But for me, just to get out, and same thing, but genuinely get to know people and know different business owners, it opened me in a different space and made me a better consultant, for sure.

Deb Zahn: That's great. I love that. And then go back and put it in the Excel spreadsheet.

And that's the business process piece. So I thought I liked Excel spreadsheets until I met you. And then I realized we didn't have as close a relationship as I thought. You do things like that, that are high-touch, because it's going to help you, and it's going to tell you things, and it's going to give you insights you wouldn't otherwise have and give you connection. But then you got to have the business processes that are backing up. So if you do that and then you walk away and you don't do anything...

Christine Beal Dunst: Then what's the point? Yeah. Absolutely. I mean, that's like cultivating the relationship. Right? And what we also did was, with developing these partnerships with local businesses, I mean, we really cultivated those relationships and didn't rush in and try to pitch them with partnering...It was more of this gradual thing. And then once we got to know them, saying, "Wow, wouldn't it be interesting if we did this event together? We have very similar clients that we're attracting. Let's do this. Let's add value." And then we followed up. We also put them on our mailing list as well, and we asked them for that. We're like, "We would really love for you guys to keep up with us as well, and we would love to be on your mailing list as well."

Deb Zahn: Perfect.

Christine Beal Dunst: So that's a really practical thing. And I also think if you're building a social media platform as well, to genuinely follow the businesses in your community and who you're trying to attract. I think that's another relationship builder. Right?

Deb Zahn: Absolutely. And clients notice it. I follow, I think, all of my clients if they're on social media. And I said to one...I talked about some event they had. And she's like, "How'd you know about that?" And I said, "Well, I follow you on Facebook." And her eyes got big, and she said, "You do?" And another one, I comment anytime they do fabulous things. I get excited for them, and I say something. And they notice it because they tell me they notice it.

Christine Beal Dunst: Yeah. But I love that because then you're more than just a consultant. Right? You're not just doing this engagement and getting paid and leaving. You genuinely care about the success of that company that you touched for how

many months that you were in this project. And I mean, for us, it's the same. I mean, I follow all my clients, of course my one-on-one clients. I love to see what they're doing. But also the corporate clients, but mainly the small businesses in our area because I personally want to support them. I know a lot of female-owned businesses. And that's really how we started our business consulting arm because people...You know I love to talk about business anyway. So it always came up, whether it's "How are you guys growing your Instagram?" Or "How are you doing this?" And my business partner and I laughed. We get so many questions on this, we should actually start a business line.

Deb Zahn: Yeah. Absolutely. Well, that's how a lot of consultants start too. I actually know someone who's the CEO of an organization. And she was joking to me that she's basically a consultant. She keeps flying places and giving people advice. And I said, "And that is a valuable thing. You should consider being a consultant. If you love it, then maybe that's what you should be doing." That's wonderful.

So what is it that you think is most important for the businesses that you work with, the new businesses and the entrepreneurs, that will help them stay on track and really build the business with the right business processes and taking their ideas to fruition?

Christine Beal Dunst: Yeah. I think the biggest thing is going back to the philosophy of why they're doing what they're doing. To check in with that often I think is super important to keep everyone on track. So every new business idea that comes up, if they're trying to identify an offering they want to do, how does this align to what I really want for my business? Because many people don't ask that biggest question. I'm going to say creating the plan and holding themselves accountable. That's a huge thing. What is the accountability when they create a plan and how they hold themselves accountable.

Other things for entrepreneurs to stay on track, I mean, this is going to get to a personal level, but it's getting back to the balance for themselves and making the time to do what they love every single day versus working themselves to the bone, for what? Many people don't go there when we start to talk about how entrepreneurs can be successful, but I always go there because I think it's...For me personally, I mean, it's changed my existence, to care for myself in this way. And I've seen it over and over with the very, very high-level executives, how if we give them the tools and really work with them on that, how they could be more creative, how they could be more productive. So I think that that has to be part of the equation.

Deb Zahn: Which when you're first starting...And if you read any or listening to other blogs about entrepreneurs, with a scant few saying something different, it's all "Grind, grind, grind, grind." It's not sustainable. It just isn't.

Christine Beal Dunst: No. It's not sustainable and you'll burn yourself out. But it is self-awareness for an entrepreneur too to know that you don't want to lead yourself to burnout.

So it's the self-awareness to really have the consciousness that you want to care of yourself, while you're doing something of true value to this world.

Deb Zahn: And you mentioned...And we're going to get into more about how you do life balance in your own life. But you mentioned boundaries, which I am, as you know, a huge fan of, setting and protecting boundaries. And regardless, everybody has, in whatever their sphere of influence or control is, things that they can make choices about in their work life. They can't make every choice, but they can make a lot of them. So I think knowing what those are and being clear about those and then being willing to set and defend because it's not, as you know, just setting a boundary. People might knock against that boundary a few times.

Christine Beal Dunst: You think so?

Deb Zahn: Maybe.

Christine Beal Dunst: Have I talked to you about this before? I'm not sure.

Deb Zahn: Never. Not even today so far. But what else do you do to bring balance to your life? Because I do know how essential that is to you, and not just related to your business, but just the life you want to live and how you want to walk on the planet.

Christine Beal Dunst: Yeah. No. And I love talking about creating balance because I don't think that self-care needs to be this grandiose thing or these vacations you take. My definition of self-care is, it's doing whatever you need to do to bring you back to your highest self.

Deb Zahn: Love it.

Christine Beal Dunst: And for me, it's how I think about myself, how I talk to myself. So it's my thought patterns and what I embody, but really practical things every day I do to bring myself balance. I have a really wonderful meditation practice and yoga practice. I've been doing that for over 20 years now, but it's definitely ebbed and flowed. My meditation practice now is not a nice thing to do when I have all the time in the world. When I am most busy is when I need to take the most time for my practice. So I'm realistic. I have two little kids. So my practice is not an hour long. My meditation practice is about 20 minutes a night. And I actually do my meditation when my kids are going to bed. I meditate in their bedroom because that is my time.

Deb Zahn: Aww.

Christine Beal Dunst: Yeah. And I think it's good intentioned for them. It's good to teach...My perspective: it's healthy to teach the kids, mommy and daddy need this time. This is how I self-regulate. I never really was taught that growing up. I was

taught just pushing and working hard, which is beautiful, but I think it's so important to teach how to take care of yourself.

Deb Zahn: That's wonderful.

Christine Beal Dunst: Thank you. My meditation practice has really been guiding me through really difficult times in my life as well. In the morning, I'm very excited that I started to do a gratitude practice, a deep belly breathing practice. I work a lot with breath in my day. What I've realized for years and years is, I was breathing out of my chest. So I was a chest breather. It's stimulating your fight or flight response. Right? When I really focused on deep belly breathing and specific types of breathing that I do, it calms my nervous system. It puts me in a parasympathetic nervous system state, and it's telling my body to calm itself. So between every client, I do deep belly breathing. In the morning I do it. When I'm in traffic, I do it. So it's something that I've really learned, and it's really been beneficial for me.

So other stuff...There's so much. I move daily. I love to be in nature, even if it's a 15-minute walk. It makes me happy. As you can see from our Instagram, I cook a lot with my kids. I'm definitely not a chef in any way, but I truly enjoy my food and giving myself nourishment. And then at night, I do just a lot of decompression, once again, the yoga, the meditation. I love Epsom salt baths to really balance myself. And what I said in the very beginning, about with my kids and setting the boundaries, I do turn it off from work. I do put away my phone when they come home. And I really am trying to focus more on that because it's so important. And obviously sparking joy. I like to have fun. I think it's so important to be with my friends when I want to, but also I have that introvert tendency too. So a lot of times, I do need to shut myself out and just read and come back once again to what brings me back to my higher self.

Deb Zahn: I love that. That's a nice, robust list. So you encouraged me to post more things about my personal life on social media. You were the reason that Craft of Consulting has at least one picture of kittens.

Christine Beal Dunst: I love it.

Deb Zahn: If anybody wonders, that's who made me do it. And there's a pumpkin. A pumpkin and kittens. But what I find is, that's reinforcing for the self-care choices that I'm making. So if I'm sharing it, it's almost creating a community accountability to live what I'm teaching. So you said nature and belly breathing. So I did that. I was in my mom's minivan on what I call a kitten stakeout, which basically means I'm working with this colony of feral cats, and they have all these kittens, and I'm rescuing all the kittens. And I saw one, and I said, "I can do my calls from here. That's fine." But I had a moment in between. And it's beautiful fall colors because I live in the northeast and the sun had just come out. It was beautiful. So instead of picking up my computer and doing something else, I stopped, and I did deep belly breathing and just looked at the trees

swaying. I did that for about 10 minutes, which is all I had, but that 10 minutes was completely restorative.

And then when I returned to work, I was clear. I was more focused and more able to help my clients.

Christine Beal Dunst: Absolutely. I mean, it's amazing, even if it's a minute, to take that time. So many of us can just push and push. Right? You could've easily got on your computer and pushed. But once again, you were more productive because you took some of that time for yourself.

Deb Zahn: That's right.

Christine Beal Dunst: I've seen it. I've seen the data on it with my clients. But even more so, regardless of the data, I've seen it on myself, like really, really transformed my calmness, my confidence, definitely my productivity, and just even dealing with kids. It brings you a different consciousness with parenting. I am not perfect in any sense of the word with that. But I have realized, when I'm more diligent with my practice and focusing on it, I'm definitely a different type of parent with them.

Deb Zahn: Wonderful. Well, I am going to put a link to your wonderful business in the show notes because-

Christine Beal Dunst: Thank you.

Deb Zahn: -I'm sure there's listeners out there that are looking for the same calm and able to be productive in a healthy way that you just described. It's so essential. And as I've been going back to meditation and going back to nature walks and going back to all of that stuff, it's been life changing. So I definitely appreciate how important that is to you and how you practice it every day.

Christine Beal Dunst: Yes. Thank you, Deb.

Deb Zahn: Well, thank you so much for joining the podcast. This was absolutely fantastic, and I'm so glad that we got this chance to talk to each other. So blessings to you for being on the show.

Christine Beal Dunst: Oh, you too, Deb. It's such an honor. I've loved working with you. Even just talking again today, I've really missed seeing you more and more. So thank you.

Deb Zahn: And I'll see you soon in Connecticut.

Christine Beal Dunst: Yes. I'm excited.

Deb Zahn: Thanks so much for listening to this episode of the Craft of Consulting Podcast. I want to ask you to do actually three things. If you enjoyed this episode or you've enjoyed any of my other ones, hit subscribe. I got a lot of other great guests that

are coming up and a lot of other great content, and I don't want you to miss anything. But the other two things that I'm going to ask you to do is, one is, if you have any comments, so if you have any suggestions or any kind of feedback that will help make this podcast more helpful to more listeners, please include those. And then the last thing is, again, if you've gotten something out of this, share it. Share it with somebody you know who's a consultant or thinking about being a consultant, and make sure that they also have access to all this great content and all the other great content that's going to be coming up.

So as always, you can go and get more wonderful information and tools at Craftofconsulting.com. Thanks so much. I will talk to you on the next episode. Bye-bye.