

A Seat at The Roundtable

Glain Roberts-McCabe left her secure, six-figure job at a consulting firm to pursue her idea for a group-based approach to leadership coaching. Ten years later, and The Roundtable has grown into an award-winning consultancy with a proven track record of fostering success.

BY KAREN VAN KAMPEN



In 2007, 39-year-old Glain Roberts-McCabe walked away from a secure job and six-figure salary to launch The Roundtable, a unique leadership development business that specializes in group and team coaching. “There are moments in your life where you hit the wall hard and you have a choice,” says Glain. You can continue to power through and stay at a stable position, she explains, or take a career risk. “I’m a very independent person, and it almost wasn’t a choice for me,” she says. “I knew I needed to try self-employment.”

Glain was also driven to fulfill a gap in the leadership development field. As former Managing Partner at a mid-sized consultancy, “I saw that the way we were developing leaders wasn’t working,” she says. “We were not helping people make the lasting changes they needed to be successful.” Leadership is not learned in a binder, says Glain, it’s learned by doing. It’s a journey where we learn over time.

Glain envisioned a community of ambitious leaders collaborating, connecting, and learning together, similar to CEO groups that have been around for decades. Twelve years later, The Roundtable has grown into an award-winning, innovative business that reimagines the traditional approach to consulting, and Glain is being recognized for her creative vision and hard work. As President and Founder of The Roundtable, Glain was the winner of a 2018 RBC Canadian Women Entrepreneur Award in the Micro-Business category.

Yet success hasn’t come without sacrifice. When Glain set out on her own, her husband, D’Arcy McCabe, was a stay-at-home Dad to their four-

year-old daughter, Nia. Overnight, they lost their entire income. “We had a lifestyle and a mortgage that was built around my salary,” says Glain. Then suddenly, “You can’t afford to take a vacation. You can’t afford a dinner out. I felt guilty. I had caused this strain because I had been unhappy at work.”

The first year was financially stressful. A mentor offered Glain some advice: Go at it hard for 12 months. You can always go back to a job. “That was a really freeing piece of advice,” she says. “When it comes to change, we focus on what we’re going to lose. We never think about the possibilities that are going to open up to us.”

In 2009, Glain gathered eight leaders together for her first cohort. “When I saw the magic in that room, I thought, this is it,” she says. In 2010, she was approached by PepsiCo Foods Canada. The Roundtable program was delivered to high potential leaders from different divisions. The goal was to help these next generation executives navigate increases in leadership scope proactively versus through reactive ‘fix it’ executive coaching.

The program was a huge success and highlighted how Glain’s group-based coaching approach could not only grow leaders but also support shifts in company culture and increase peer networks in organizations (a huge driver of how work gets done today). Launching her ninth cohort with PepsiCo this year, Glain says the company opened doors to many other clients that include CAA Group, TIFF and RBC. More than 750 people from over 120 companies have participated in The Roundtable programs.

Glain has found that leaders at all levels

struggle with similar issues and that most of the stressors of leadership relate to personal beliefs and mindsets. Leadership can be lonely and issues of insecurity and “imposter syndrome” can affect leaders no matter their seniority. Group coaching allows participants to realize that they’re not alone, which builds confidence. By sharing personal stories and examining mindsets and behaviours in a safe space, Roundtable participants are able to shift unproductive self-talk and uncover pivotal “ah ha” moments that boost both capability and capacity. Perhaps the most powerful outcome of group coaching is the deep and lasting relationships that develop through the process. “We are all struggling with the same issues,” she says, adding a key message of her program: “Let’s cultivate our learning together.”

In 2019, Glain and her team will build on this community-based philosophy by launching an alumni program for past members to support fellow leaders along their journey. Glain also has plans to launch a certification program to train coaches in her collaborative group coaching method.

One of Glain’s proudest accomplishments has been seeing the impact of her programs on people’s lives. Participants return years later, sharing not just their personal career success but stories of how their Roundtable experience continues to shape their leadership approach and personal engagement and satisfaction. As one graduate put it, it’s the gift that keeps on giving. “When you affect people’s lives in a lasting way,” says Glain. “There’s nothing more rewarding than that.”