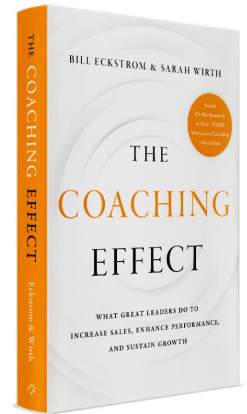


The Coaching Effect

What Great Leaders Do to Increase Sales, Enhance Performance, and Sustain Growth

by **Bill Eckstrom and Sarah Wirth**



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THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

In *The Coaching Effect: What Great Leaders Do to Increase Sales, Enhance Performance, and Sustain Growth*, authors Bill Eckstrom and Sarah Wirth detail measurable and quantifiable coaching activities that have led to improved performance and sustained team growth.

With a justifiable focus on what coaches can do to drive more performance from individuals and teams, the authors also detail how an organization can adopt and implement coaching best practices.

The authors also share a four-step coaching methodology that can be utilized by businesses of all sizes to create a team of high-growth coaches, the outcome of which measures and quantifies coaching activities, behaviors, and overall coaching effectiveness.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- Why managerial effectiveness must be measured to drive growth.
- How Growth Rings illustrate environments that either promote or hinder growth.
- Four high-growth coaching activities that have the strongest correlation to effort.
- The Four-Step Coaching Process that can be executed in an organization to achieve growth above and beyond what is currently being achieved.

Measuring Managerial Effectiveness

To a high-performing business, developing talent is the essential function of their managers, rather than just one of their priorities. Managers and their team members have used the term healthy tension to describe how high-performance environments feel. They push themselves and their teams to constantly improve; and being “too busy” is never an excuse for not getting done what is most important. The success of high-performance teams depends on their coaches. In fact, every growth challenge a business faces is a management issue.

Data that measures employee effectiveness is by no means new, especially in sales, where many companies track most every selling activity imaginable. Very seldom is that the case with management and managerial effectiveness must be measured. For the heads of organizations to know nothing about the activities, behaviors, and overall effectiveness of the role that has the greatest impact on team performance, the manager, is ludicrous. Common sense dictates that nobody comes to work with a goal of failing, but the manager’s role is arguably the most precarious regarding longevity. Companies are quick to release managers, and a revolving door is set in motion, especially in sales departments.

A big reason for this chaotic turnover is that nobody helps them understand how to be effective, nor is anyone measuring their performance inputs or outcomes. Time and again senior executives have no idea how their managers are spending their days or even how they should be spending them. Even managers themselves question if they’re focused on the activities that produce the best team results.

The Growth Rings

Growth only occurs in a state of discomfort, and leaders at every level have the greatest impact on the discomfort level of their teams.

To sustain growth, maximize performance of your business and teams, attract the best talent, and ensure that your organization remains relevant in today’s and especially tomorrow’s workplace, resources must be committed to the continual development and quantification of managerial effectiveness. The goal of this commitment is to get managers to behave and drive results in a way that resembles a high-growth coach as opposed to a performance-limiting manager.

The best leaders are unique in their coaching, and either intentionally or unintentionally, they create or embrace an

environment of discomfort as a growth mechanism. During the journey to understand how coaching affects the performance of individuals and teams, a model was discovered that shows *why* exponential and sustained growth only occurs in a state of discomfort. This model is called the Growth Rings.

Understanding the Growth Rings can change how you parent, coach, view adversity, and think about human behavior. The Growth Rings illustrate differing environments that exist in our world and how they either promote or hinder growth. Each ring encompasses one of four primary environments: Stagnation, Order, Complexity, and Chaos.

Stagnation: The first Growth Ring represents a low-performing, low, or negative growth environment called *Stagnation*. Stagnation is a situation in which people may need to follow too many steps, get someone’s permission, or deal with minutiae that stifle creativity, independent thought, or action. Stagnated environments don’t just freeze growth, they regress it. By the time a business reaches Stagnation, drastic measures need to be taken to reverse the decline.

Chaos: The antithesis of Stagnation is an environment called *Chaos*. Also, low-growth and low-performance, Chaos can be caused by internal or external events or conditions. Chaos may be a temporary state that occurs, for example in the early stages of a new business. Behaviors exhibited in chaotic environments typify those when fear is present; fear tends to trigger in our brains one of the three Fs: freeze, fight, or flight. Chaos is having zero predictability or control over inputs and outcomes. And although more common than Stagnation, is it not an environment to desire, frequent, or reside in.

Order: Next to Stagnation is *Order*. Order is where people tend to want to exist because it is the most comfortable environment, but it is also the most dangerous. Order is achieved when the same repeated processes lead to a predictable result. However, predictability can lead to comfort and comfort is what can make Order catastrophic.

Processes and predictability have nothing to do with growth or advancement. Order keeps you stuck in a minimum growth cycle. Order doesn’t promote evolution, and for quite some time science has shown us that absence of evolution leads to extinction. This applies not only to biology, but also to products, markets, skills, and businesses.

Complexity: To break the Order, and hence the minimum growth cycle, you need to change what you input. When inputs are altered, you eliminate Order and enter the *Complexity* environment. Complexity is the only

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environment that creates exponential growth or consistently sustained growth. Complexity is driven by changed inputs, unknown outcomes, and discomfort.

Complexity's impact on the performance of individuals and teams is profound. The coach must control this high-growth environment, instigating and perpetuating it when appropriate. Executive leaders who are committed to evolution and who do not acquiesce in challenging periods caused by complexity show more growth.

A note on complexity: a person cannot live their entire life in this environment. All of us need Order, and it is healthy to have a balance, with ongoing doses of Complexity and Order.

Coaching Redefined

Executive leaders have forever been viewing incomplete or inaccurate data regarding team performance because they are not looking at the root cause of performance growth—the coach. No more resources should be committed to any frontline workers before the company understands the effectiveness of the coach.

Until that happens, the success or failure of any programs, products, or services cannot be accurately measured and understood without knowing if the coach enables or disables performance.

There are four high-growth coaching activities that have the strongest correlation to discretionary effort. Of all the tasks and duties that a coach can perform, the most important are one-to-one meetings, team meetings, performance feedback, and career-development plans.

One-to-One Meetings: Proactive, consistent one-to-one meetings are necessary to generate trust, communication, and accountability with team members. When coaches take the time to connect with team members individually, they get to know their team members better, and they are able to have strategic conversations about how to do their job more effectively.

Coaches can help their team members with any questions they may have, assess their progress toward goals, and help them make sure their plans are carried out successfully, holding team members accountable for executing their visions. A regular, effective one-to-one meeting is one of the most important tools a coach has in driving productivity.

Team Meetings: Team meetings are often used as a communication vehicle for leadership within a company, but they are rarely used in ways that could most benefit team members—to help them learn how to do their jobs more effectively. Surveys show that team members want more education. They want information, ideas, and training so they can do their jobs better.

Bringing in speakers or sharing best practices among peers are good ways to use team meetings as a vehicle to improve and develop team member skills. Define an agenda that encourages interaction and information sharing. This type of agenda proactively drives everyone to ask questions, share ideas, and engage throughout the entirety of the meeting.

Performance Feedback: Good feedback is a gift to the people receiving it. It helps them improve their skills, overcome challenges, achieve their performance goals, and avoid the embarrassment of making a mistake that everyone but they can see. Delivering effective, consistent, and documented feedback is one of the biggest factors in driving team performance.

Learning to give great feedback is a lifelong learning experience for most coaches and is one of the most challenging coaching skills to master. You have to be able to clearly articulate the points you want to make but also ensure that you create an effective back-and-forth with the person to whom you are giving feedback. Regularity, rather than only in response to something going wrong, is key to help team members accept it and view it in a positive light.

Career Development: Having a coach who helps team members progress toward their long-term career development goals strongly increases that person's achievement of their current daily work goals. The best coaches are often

the ones pushing their team members to keep growing. Career development can't really be about setting up your team member for a promotion to management.

Instead, you, your team, and your organization must think of career development as a way to help people grow and develop their skills and experiences for whatever their current and future goals may be. In this way, effective career development is all about a person's unique goals, talents, and interests.

The Four-Step Coaching Process

The Four-Step Coaching Process can be implemented and executed in an organization to achieve growth above and beyond what is currently being achieved. The steps within the process, though independent, are inextricably linked.

Step 1: Measure

Surveying team members about the effectiveness of the coaching they receive provides clarity of what can be improved and allows for potential recommendations to better meet their needs. This measurement establishes a baseline from which to assess progress and performance over time.

Step 2: Educate and Train

Continual development—giving up old skills and learning new ones—is absolutely critical to individual and organizational growth. Unfortunately, many companies view education and training as stand-alone events. The key is to follow up and make sure what's learned in the training is actually implemented.

Step 3: Implement

Even after education and training on how to be a better coach, venturing into Complexity is too uncomfortable. By default, most coaches return to old habits and behaviors.

The best way to combat this tendency is to create a collaborative implementation environment that is driven by bringing people together who are trying to improve their coaching. Conference-call gatherings called implementation huddles focus on the continued sharing of best coaching practices and open discussions of challenges to overcome.

Step 4: Track and Analyze

Because the vast majority of coaches in the business world don't have the data and information they need, they have been underperforming for decades. Tracking and analyzing data on coaches can be used to make targeted improvements to their coaching efforts, create more accountability for coaching across the entire company, gain insights into how coaches are spending their time, and to better understand the impact of good coaching.

Becoming a great coach is a journey, and the best coaches never stop learning or growing. Maximizing growth by creating a high-growth team of coaches is hard. It's not for leadership teams who are unwilling to dive into the challenges that Complexity presents. When coaches embrace discomfort and make changes, growth is the outcome.



Bill Eckstrom is an executive, entrepreneur, mentor, student, husband, and father. His primary passion is growth; especially how coaches and leaders influence the growth and performance of individuals and teams.

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