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Grow your business by growing **YOURSELF!**

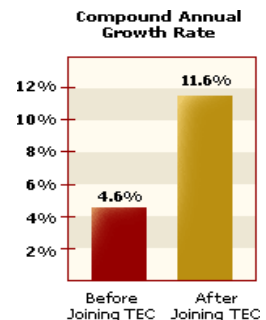
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I operate from the belief that as an executive you grow your business by growing yourself. I believe that your performance as an individual and as part of a team can be significantly increased when you engage work and life from a resourceful state. Life is enhanced when we acknowledge our capacity to choose and we become fully aware of how these choices manifest themselves as our "reality".

Successful executives look beyond the traditional sources of skill and knowledge learning to accelerate their personal and professional growth. They seek out relationships and access to processes that ultimately: allow them to make better decisions; teaches them better ways to hold themselves and others accountable; makes them feel less isolated and most importantly increases their ability to chart and lead change in themselves and in their business.

As an executive, your role is to lead your company or functional area from its current state to some future state in a period of time. That change may involve improved financial results; new strategic initiatives; possible diversifications or consolidations etc. During this process, you will consciously or unconsciously be challenged to grow your own capabilities to succeed and you may develop some anxiety about being exposed for some of your own limitations, lack of experience or lack of clarity as to what it takes to accomplish the task.

That journey, for most of us, is a private conversation with ourselves. Showing any kind of doubt or weakness to those above us, next to us or below us in the organization could prove to be disastrous, at least in our own minds. Some choose to participate in programs that accelerate their personal and professional growth and in turn accelerate their business results. One such set of programs are offered by TEC (The Executive Committee), the world's largest CEO membership organization with over 11,500 members. TEC claims that member companies grow at more than double their original rate after joining TEC. They achieve this with a combination of facilitated peer groups, one to one coaching, expert speakers and access to peers across their network.



Whether it is TEC, or the combination of other peer or 1-2-1 learning environments, successful executives have an insatiable drive to continuously learn, are fully aware that their reality is created by their choices and continually keep looking for those relationships and processes that will make them better leaders, help them make better decisions and obtain greater results. Let's take a closer look at some of these desired outcomes and what you need to ensure is in place to make them happen:

Making better decisions – The quality of decisions get significantly enhanced not as much from getting external and discrete knowledge, as they do from having your thinking questioned, challenged, deeply explored and above all having the questions you hope no one asks, asked. As was elegantly explored in "Fierce Conversations" by Susan Scott, one must "master the courage to interrogate reality". This can only happen if you place yourself in a safe, totally confidential environment where the participants have only one agenda: increasing your performance and enhancing your life.

Increased Accountability – A common obstacle cited by executives in obtaining better results is their ability to hold themselves and others accountable. It starts with difficulty in setting clear expectations, holding conversations with staff that actually motivate the right behaviours and in turn achieve the desired results. The discomfort sometimes associated in engaging in truthful, honest and unfiltered conversations is for most of us, large enough that many other things are allowed to happen and those “fierce conversations” do not take place. Ultimately, we end up wishing we had the courage to engage them much earlier in the process, leaving us with the “nasty” job at the end. Mastering the one to one process is key to increasing accountability.

Isolation – It is lonely at the top -- There are certain conversations that C- level executives would greatly benefit from having that cannot be pursued with the board, their staff, their peers in the business community and even with their spouses. Those who find access to a safe environment in which to engage those conversations demonstrate a much higher level of ease in dealing with complex problems, they manifest much less physical manifestations of stress and engage life with a much higher level of enthusiasm and optimism. By mitigating their isolation, they are able to have their reality questioned and their thinking challenged before making what are, very often irreversible and material decisions affecting many people. Our culture expects us to separate the business from the personal. It is the same bio-computer (our body) who processes all our work and personal “programs”. Behind many business issues lurks a personal issue. Having a way to explore these as one and in safety is the key to mitigating the feeling of isolation and its potential negative impact.

Leading Change -- As executives our lives are all about charting change and leading people to execute the plan. It requires a very enlightened and aware executive to take into consideration the various elements of the human condition, how to engage in the right conversations with the right people at the right time, whether one on one or collectively. It is all about “the conversation”: the clarity, the honesty, the motivation and many other human factors. It takes, getting away from the daily activity of the business and putting yourself, on a regular basis, in a position to consider and act on the tough and key strategic issues without the distractions associated with the daily operations.

As you read the topics above, what has come up into your awareness? What questions were you asking yourself? What actions, if any, are you starting to consider about your own personal and professional growth? I invite you to **take a deep breath, to be introspective and to consider, in total honesty, the following questions:**

1. What do I need to be better at, really, to execute my current business and personal agenda? How am I going about growing that skill or knowledge?
2. Which conversations am I not having, that if I did, could change everything?
3. Who has my trust, without any conflict of interest, to ask me those tough questions, which I know need to be asked? Does, he/she challenge my worldview and makes me grow just by considering different ways to think about things that make a difference in my life?
4. What choices am I making? Are they serving me and the business?
5. How do my personal memberships, consultant relationships, business networks and friends contribute to my personal and professional growth? Should I consider developing additional “third opinions”?

Do any of your answers give you pause? If yes, this may be good time for you to reflect on how you can create your personal and professional growth plan to give you the benefits you really want. What individuals and group mechanisms would work best for you to help you make better decisions, make you and others more accountable for producing greater results, make you feel less isolated and help you chart an agenda for personal and organizational change?

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Increasing the performance and enhancing the lives of executives