HIDDEN PERFORMANCE METRICS THAT LEADERS DON'T KNOW EXIST

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INSTITUTE

INTRODUCTION

Coaching when not measured is a soft skill. Coaching objectively measured is a vital leadership performance metric.

Imagine playing solitaire (with real playing cards, not on your phone!) After several games, you have not yet won and are starting to get frustrated. You commit to one more game and it starts off well; you immediately get three aces up top, three kings, followed by queens, jacks, and 10s. But, as you again go through the deck, you only place a single card up top. And when the deck is run through for the third time, you realize the game is over. Frustrated, you gather the cards and suddenly notice something on the floor. "Really? Please let this be a joker..." But when you reach down and flip it over, you see it - the ace of hearts. The entire time, you had only been playing with 51 cards.

Success in solitaire is the ability to get cards to the top, preferably all of them. In the above example, though you played your best, you were never going to win; it was impossible with a partial deck. You didn't know a card was missing, so you naively continued the game with the hope of achieving the unattainable.

"Without quantifying impact, there is no logical or systematic way to improve team performance."

THE CHALLENGE

This white paper is about closing the information gap. Leaders, coaches, businesses, and athletic institutions must be aware of the effectiveness their leaders and coaches possess. Not knowing this is actively detrimental to the performance of their respective teams.

Our research shows that more than 90% of those in a leadership role believe the performance of a team reflects how that team is coached. However, most research and studies are focused on understanding the behaviors of those being coached – the team members, not the coaches themselves. Not that this is wrong, but it's a very small piece of the performance puzzle. Organizations must know more about what impacts team performance the most: the leaders.

*Ecsell Institute prefers the term "coach" as opposed to "leader." Coaches must have individuals or teams that report to them, whereas leaders can simply be those with great leadership behaviors yet aren't responsible for a team. "Coach" will be used as both a noun (a role) and a verb (an activity) in this paper.

A major gap we uncovered by researching thousands of leaders and team members at a myriad of industries is this: organizations and the leaders within, in spite of knowing they play the biggest role in team performance, are not able to quantify the impact they have on their respective teams. And without quantifying impact, there is no logical, systematic way to improve team performance. Which means all stakeholders are left to guess what to do, and guessing is no way to run an effective, high-performance organization or team.

90%
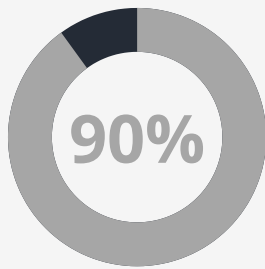
90% of those in a leadership role believe the performance of teams is a reflection of how those teams are coached.

THE DATA

Many corporations have some sort of coaching development program in place to help their leaders behave more like a coach. In athletics, where the role of a coach has been cemented for decades, it is often assumed they understand exactly what coaching behaviors and actions are most effective. As a result, we see very few athletic institutions provide the critical resources to help coaches grow. Regardless of the professional sphere in which you spend your time – business, athletics, or otherwise – most coaching improvement programs are woefully short on research-based substance and resulting measurements. If growth cannot be measured, there should be minimal investment made for the programming because nobody can know if it is working.

If you are committing resources to improve the quality of coaching, ask yourself the following questions:

- Does our coaching program teach our leaders what research proves are the highest payoff activities to execute each day, week, month, or year? (Hint – there are four of them.)
- Does our coaching program objectively measure the quality of coaching, the amount of coaching activity, and overall coaching effectiveness?

Every organization that has a coaching improvement program may provide such info as methodology for effective feedback, or perhaps how to conduct a team meeting. And while those are important things, nobody is measuring how well they are being done, how often they are being done, or with whom they are being done. Said another way, nobody is measuring coaching inputs and outcomes, and measurement of inputs and outputs is Performance 101. Coaching when not measured is a soft skill; coaching when measured becomes a vital leadership performance metric!

A UNIQUE VIEW

I challenge senior leaders and coaches to analyze themselves and their teams through the graphic below.

To maximize performance, there are four quadrants that should be filled with data that every coach at every level should have at their disposal. The four quadrants are:

- What a team member does (quantity)
- How well a team member does it (quality)
- What a coach/leader does (quantity)
- How well a coach/leader does it (quality)

	TEAM MEMBER	**COACH**
MEASURE WHAT THEY DO (QUANTITY)		
MEASURE HOW WELL THEY DO IT (QUALITY)		

Upper-left quadrant
Coaches typically have access to data that results from what team members (employees, athletes, etc.) do – what we refer to as quantity measurements. For example, a sales team would track activity metrics such as calls, closes, meetings, etc. In sports, it could be shots per game, attacks, putts per green, etc. Most organizations have resources or technology to populate the upper left quadrant in the form of statisticians, a CRM, etc., which provides them with accurate measurements.

Lower-left quadrant
This is the quality measurement quadrant (how well they do it), and, when in a business environment, this is where data can start to become scarce. Organizations should be obtaining objective performance feedback on employees (not subjective), along with client feedback to get a good grasp on the quality of an employee's effectiveness. Athletics does a much better job of objectively quantifying the quality of an athlete's work, typically utilizing film to grade how well something is being done. Unlike business, this is woven into the fabric of athletics.

	TEAM MEMBER	COACH
MEASURE WHAT THEY DO (QUANTITY)	• CALLS • CLOSES • SHOTS PER GAME	? ? ?
MEASURE HOW WELL THEY DO IT (QUALITY)	• PERFORMANCE FEEDBACK • VIDEO PLAYBACK	? ? ?

Now the gap. Regardless of industry, almost no leadership development or coaching program has the information or understanding to populate the right two quadrants: coaching inputs and outcomes. And having no empirical coaching data results in organizations that are supplied with, at best, 50% of the information they need to maximize team performance.

What is clear through our research is that teams will either hit or miss objectives, increase performance or stagnate, as a direct result of their coaches. To know this to be true without putting in place the proper programming to quantify coaching effectiveness is not just poor business – we'll go so far as to say it is negligent.

Below are a few examples of coaching effectiveness metrics that tie directly to team performance and that organizations should be objectively tracking:
- Career development discussions held
- Psychological safety score
- Challenge/Disruption score
- One-to-one meetings held
- Coaching effectiveness score (an objective measure of overall coaching acumen)

THE SOLUTION

This is not as complicated as one may think. There are two ways to obtain the right data regarding the quality and quantity of coaching.

1. Survey your team members to measure the experience they are having with their coach. Ecsell Institute's version is called the Coaching Effect Survey, which includes industry benchmarks to help organizations understand where they stand. An important reminder: you should *never* be conducting your own survey unless you are a data scientist trained in survey methodology (we have a whole white paper on that, too).
2. Implement a program that uses empirical data based on your individual survey results. Ecsell's programming is customized on a per-leader basis to ensure each leader is receiving specifically what they need instead of wasting time in areas where they are already exhibiting strong coaching skills.

CONCLUSION

The solitaire analogy applies to every organization Ecsell has studied and worked with, and we've done that with many. Regardless of their size, coaching tenure, technology, learning and development teams, employee effectiveness departments, strength of leadership, etc., they were all playing with a card (or more) under their chair, missing the critical information that leads to maximum performance. So, before you play another game, take on another initiative, or ask more from your team members... take a look under your chair.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Bill Eckstrom is CEO and founder of Ecsell Institute and is one of the world's foremost voices in metric-based performance coaching and growth.

He founded Ecsell Institute in 2008 to help executive leaders, sales managers, athletic coaches, teachers, and more to master how coaching done correctly is the #1 enhancer of performance. He is the co-author of best-selling book, *The Coaching Effect*, and speaker of viral TEDx Talk "Why Comfort Will Ruin Your Life."