

# The Source of Intelligent Growth

**W**hen business leaders get a call from Steve Smith, they know it's time to get to work.

As Founder and President of GrowthSource Coaching in Lake Forest, Calif., Smith has delivered tangible results to over 400 businesses across the U.S. and around the world.

Surprisingly, his coaching sessions typically don't take place in a cozy office or the confines of an intimidating boardroom.

Instead, Smith finds the most beneficial conversations with his clients occur over the phone.

"Most of my coaching is done this way. In fact, there's been times when I've had people leave the office and sit in their car because



*Steve Smith of GrowthSource Coaching provides business leaders with customized, strategy-based game plans to illuminate blind spots and uncover hidden strengths.*

they want to have a very candid, raw conversation without others hearing about it," Smith says. "This method I use allows them to get right to the core of what's holding them back. Ultimately, that's my job—to help my clients get the ball down the field."

Of course, reaching your goals with Smith involves more than just sitting back and letting the expert take over. It's a distinguishing factor that separates consulting from business coaching.

"The big difference with a consultant is that they do 80 percent of the work. With a coach, the client does 80 percent of the work," Smith says. "So when you have someone who walks into the arrangement expecting you to take

care of everything, then you've just got a fundamental mismatch. It's not what I do. It's not what drives the success of the process."

That process is built around a strategy-based game plan that Smith customizes for each individual client. Over time, these specific programs are designed to give business leaders the confidence to incorporate the skills and key concepts they learn into their own work environment.

A recent example of Smith's simple, yet effective coaching techniques took place with a client working for an e-commerce business in Southern California. In this particular case, the individual's primary problem was time management and the inability to set priorities.

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To help resolve this issue, he gave the client a challenge.

Instead of meandering his way through a disorganized list of tasks, Smith told him to pretend he would be going on vacation the following week. However, in order for that to happen, he needed to get a week's worth of tasks done in just three days.

When the pair talked later that week, the client expressed his amazement at all the things he was able to accomplish within such a short time frame. Smith encouraged him to apply the same mentality to his workload every week, which would provide two flexible days in return.

"It took one day to really start thinking and talking to people about bigger issues than just what's on your desk for the day," Smith says. "It also gives you a day to go out and play, whether it's a conference or something completely outside of the business to rejuvenate yourself. Plus, your team will like you more because you won't be crawling down their backs about stuff that you haven't planned, but expect them to cover your butt on."

In another instance, Smith found himself working with the owner of an IT services business that maintained a staff of eight employees. While the client loved the technology his company was designed to provide, he lacked any real interest in managing his team.

"He needed to learn how to give direction to his staff and have enough confidence to follow up and hold them accountable for doing things," Smith says. "Many times, leaders confuse holding people accountable with being a micro manager. I don't know how that happened but it's a common excuse I hear."

As part of the strategy to resolve this issue, Smith tasked the owner with holding more condensed, yet focused staff meetings. Instead

of scheduling long, drawn out meetings, he was told to cut the sessions down to 30 minutes and walk in with a clear agenda.

"When the client finally started doing things like that, aspects of the business started to improve because he now felt more confident about what he was doing as opposed to almost feeling like an imposter," Smith says.

"Everything you do as a leader is designed to train and influence behavior and the thinking of everyone around you. This takes time and you have to be consistent."

For Smith, consistency paired alongside an open mind is among the most important factors for long-term success with his coaching methods.

"Coaching is designed as a permanent sustainable fix—an alteration and an improvement on how you do things but it's not a quick fix. It usually takes a few sessions before clients start to understand why you're actually there and what you're trying to do for them," he says.

"Some of the best clients I've had were the ones that told me they were open to looking at better ways to move things forward and willing to change their old habits. When I get a client with that kind of attitude, I know we can make things happen." — *By Sean Stroh, California Business Journal*

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