

Strategic Decisions

A Guide to Coaching through the Use of the “Impact/Effort Matrix”

“There will always be more good ideas than there is capacity to execute.”¹

Strategic planning offers leaders a structured process and platform to optimize the efficient utilization of time and resources. Coaching leaders through the use of an *Impact/Effort Matrix* as part of the strategic planning process can greatly enhance decision-making clarity and elevate intentionality in the pursuit of strategic goals.

Impact/Effort Matrix



Guiding leaders through the *Impact/Effort Matrix* enables a thoughtful evaluation of the effort required for specific initiatives in relation to the expected outcomes. By placing initiatives

within the matrix's framework, the prioritization or selection of the optimal sequence of actions can be accomplished.

Broadly, the aim is to prioritize actions that yield the highest impact with minimal effort. However, there is no definitive “wrong” choice when selecting initiatives within specific quadrants. The key lies in fostering awareness by coaching through the matrix and cultivating a deeper understanding that informs the design of subsequent steps.

An *Impact/Effort Matrix* is typically comprised of four quadrants, each of which is designated to fit the relevant tasks:²

- **Low-effort and low-impact:** These tasks, often known as “fill-ins,” involve minimal effort and have a negligible impact on your strategic goals. Examples may include virtual, standalone professional development opportunities with no follow-up support.
- **High-effort and low-impact:** Tasks that demand substantial time and energy but yield limited effects are included in the bottom-right quadrant. These actions are often referred to as thankless, pointless or tedious tasks. Examples may include grant compliance reporting.
- **Low-Effort and high-impact:** Representing easy victories; these tasks deliver significant impact with minimal time or energy investment. They are efficient methods with substantial positive effects on your goal attainment. Examples may include real-time instructional coaching.
- **High-effort and high-impact:** Large projects that will have a significant effect on your intended outcomes, but also necessitate extensive time and effort to accomplish, are included in the top-right quadrant. Examples may include adoption of a high-quality curriculum.

Coaching leaders to precisely identify the placement of each initiative within the matrix significantly enhances their capacity to discern and prioritize efforts that yield the highest impact, fostering strategic and effective decision-making. Elevate your impact as an executive coach through the use of an *Impact/Effort Matrix*.

**“You might find it hard to let go of a lot of good goals
until you start serving a greater goal.”**

*Chris McChesney, The 4 Disciplines of Execution*³

References:

1. Discipline 1: Focus on the wildly important. FranklinCovey. (2023, June 5). <https://www.franklincovey.com/the-4-disciplines/discipline-1-wildly-important/>
2. Guide to the impact effort matrix. Vibe. (n.d.). <https://vibe.us/blog/impact-vs-effort-matrix/>
3. Covey, S., & McChesney, C. (2023). *The 4 disciplines of execution: Achieving your wildly important goals*. Simon & Schuster UK Ltd.