

# Extraordinary Influence Summary

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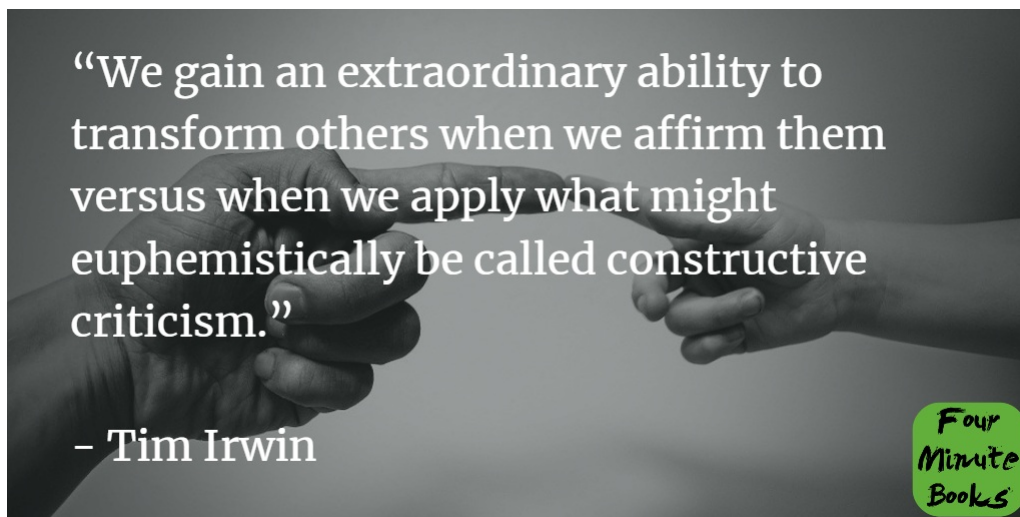


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**1-Sentence-Summary:** *Extraordinary Influence* helps you become a better leader by revealing what neuroscience has to say about effective leadership, identifying communication as the key to the highest levels of performance.

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



How can you help someone reach their full potential? Managers, team leaders, and especially parents know that the answer is praise. But it's not as simple as just complimenting people. To really get others to reach their dreams, you've got to appeal to their deepest values and skills. The best way to do this is called *affirmation*.

Affirmation is the process of building a supportive environment of encouraging people to act on their own intuition. If you're sitting there thinking that sounds hard to do, don't worry. No matter your age or situation you can learn the skill of affirmation. This is just what Tim Irwin teaches in *Extraordinary Influence: How Great Leaders Bring Out the Best in Others*.

Irwin is a professor of organizational and clinical psychology, and he bases his claims on science. You'll see how affirmation can apply in many different settings. This book will also give you the reasons for learning this skill. Most importantly, you'll learn how to put it into practice with actionable tips.

Here are 3 of my favorite lessons I learned about effective leadership from this book:

1. Complimenting people or giving them a pat on the back is good, but affirmation is much more than that.

2. Publicly criticizing people negatively affects the brain in the long run.
3. Replace numbered evaluation systems with affirmation-based ones in performance reviews and see your employee's satisfaction skyrocket.

Are you ready to learn how to make a real difference in people's lives? Let's get started!

## Lesson 1: Affirmation is far more than just a simple pat on the back or compliment.

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Imagine you're a young football player and you've just lost the most important game of the season. You feel devastated after all your hard work didn't pay off the way you expected.

Picture yourself at the end of the game, shaking the hands of the opposing team members. One of them pulls you aside and says that it was an honor to play against you. He saw your incredible courage and grit playing as hard as you did. Wouldn't this type of comment soften the defeat and inspire you just a little?

This is called affirmation, and it's something that our brains crave. A 2005 study shows that affirmation decreases stress and boosts our problem-solving skills and performance.

The word affirmation is from Latin words that mean "to strengthen" or "fortify." To practice this skill effectively, speak with others in a way that strengthens them. **It takes consistent reinforcement, feedback, and praise to get great at affirmation.**

To truly "fortify" others, you must focus on their strengths and values. A word of encouragement should spotlight what means the most to them, not you. Also remember to center your comments on the reasons for your approving comments to further strengthen them.

## Lesson 2: Criticizing others in public has long-lasting negative effects.

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As a child, the author's wife Anne took an art class in her preschool playgroup. Not wanting to follow the rules, she randomly threw paint at her canvas. The teacher wasn't impressed, and in front of the whole class rebuked Anne for her "mess." The humiliation has stuck with her since the experience.

Science confirms that negative comments, especially shared in public, have a long-lasting negative effect on a person. In one study, scientists showed that the emotion-centers of the brain connect with social conformity. Acceptance by our peers triggers dopamine release in the brain, which gives a sense of well-being.

**Thus, criticism from someone else and in front of our peers damages this connection, and our prosperity.** Instead of being buoyed up by those we care about most, we feel rejected by them. This erodes our belief in ourselves, and tears us down.

The lesson here is that if you want to help someone and need to give feedback, do it privately, not in public. On the other hand, you should focus on sharing praise in public as much as possible.

### Lesson 3: Focus on affirmation, not numbers, in your performance reviews to help your employees the most.

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Do you remember your last performance review? I know when I was still working for someone else I dreaded them. It felt like a formality and that nothing much ever came of it.

The reason for this, I've learned, is because the way most companies do performance reviews is flawed. Usually this type of meeting will cause confusion between worker and boss. Even worse, employees often come out feeling underappreciated for their contributions to the company.

The modern workplace has changed, and it's time our reporting efforts do the same. Employees unquantifiable efforts now mean more than anything else. Relationships with clients and personal development, for example, are critically important but can't be measured with numbers.

An affirmation-based approach is more effective at accurately gauging employee's contributions. It starts with a more broad range of reporting efforts that are not number-based. You may use a scale from "needs improvement" to "excellent," for example. But that's not all.

**Rather than focusing on accomplishments and metrics, performance reviews should center on how a person has done their work.** Take a high-achieving sales representative who is toxic to the workplace culture, for example. In this type of system, their high numbers wouldn't be easily rewarded because their behavior is the focus of a review with their boss.

### Extraordinary Influence Review

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I really liked Extraordinary Influence and I believe you will too, no matter what you do for a living. I'm excited at the idea that the workplace is improving from performance reviews to actually caring about people. These ideas are also helpful to parents raising children, and I'm excited to implement them as a parent myself!

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## **Who would I recommend the Extraordinary Influence summary to?**

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The 42-year-old business coach who wants to make a real difference for his clients, the 54-year-old CEO that would like to improve the leadership in her company, and anyone who leads a team of any kind.