

A FRAMEWORK FROM IMPACT

Coaching Out

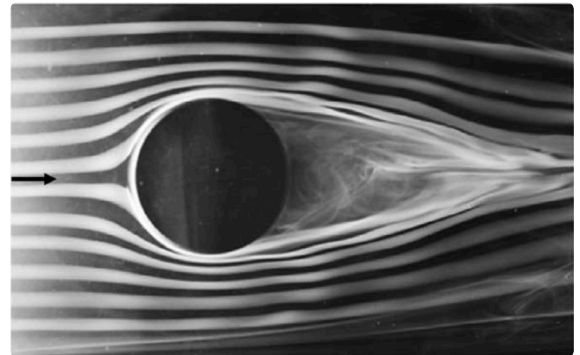
Protect the productive — and coach turnarounds and exits with decency.

Keith V. Lucas, PhD · Built on the book *IMPACT*

THE HARD PART

The productive must be protected from the disruptive.

Some people can't or won't contribute — to your mission, in the way the team works, in a timeframe that matters. It may seem innocuous, but the cost is real: work routes around them, the people who care absorb the extra load, and stress hardens into culture. Without intervention, the people you most want to keep leave because the team isn't effective. Protecting that environment is the job — and **how** you treat those who are struggling matters as much as taking action. Coaching Out is the how.



Work routes around a disruptor — and the productive quietly absorb the cost.[†]

THE REFRAME

Coaching up and coaching out are one continuum.

You don't cross a line from "developing" someone to "exiting" them. You follow the same person as their **probability of success** rises or falls — coaching what the moment needs, from pushing for mastery, to turning a problem around, to helping someone find the right team, even if it isn't yours. One practice, one set of principles. You follow the individual; you don't steer them.

Probability of Success — a look-forward read on someone's chance of contributing to the mission, judged against your team's success criteria. It replaces the vague idea of "fit" with something specific: this team, this mission, right now.

THE MINDSET — FIVE PRINCIPLES

Get these right and the hard conversations stay humane.

Coach the Continuum

Objectively assess, coach the moment, follow the individual where they lead.

Probability, not possibility

Anything is possible. Act on what's probable. Be decent, but be real.

An assessment, not an indictment

It's about *this* team, *this* mission, right now. That's it.

It's not about being nice[‡]

It's about taking action and being decent. Niceness that pulls its punches fails everyone.

Require ownership

You coach, but they own the turnaround. Ownership is key to success, so it must be key to turnaround.

One continuum, measured by probability of success. As it falls, the conversation changes — in tone, severity, and urgency. This is the progression I developed at Roblox and have used ever since. You follow the person where they lead: **Green, Yellow, Orange, Red.**



Does it get easier? It should get easier, just not easy.

Deciding someone's place on your team should stay sobering. But if it stays genuinely hard, you're missing the mindset, the approach, or both — and that's exactly what the full framework fixes.

BRING IT TO YOUR TEAM

This is one framework from a larger talk.

I teach Coaching Out live — as a keynote and working session for leadership teams navigating the scaling chasm. If your team is there, and the hardest part is the people — **who to coach up, who to coach out** — reach out. **No forms. No funnels. Just a note.**

Keith V. Lucas, PhD — thirty years building teams in tech, a decade at Roblox from employee #7 to CPO and CTO. Advisor. Author of *IMPACT*.

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Read the story: [IMPACT](#)

[†] Flow image: Martin Trinder and Mark Jabbal, "Development of a Smoke Visualisation System for Wind Tunnel Laboratory Experiments," *International Journal of Mechanical Engineering Education* 41, no. 1 (2013): 27–43, <https://doi.org/10.7227/IJME.41.1.5>, with permission.

[‡] "It's not about being nice": Jeannie Kahwajy, CEO, Effective Interactions, <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jeannakahwajy/>