

# The Success Effect

## Uncommon Conversations with America's Business Trailblazers

### About John Eckberg

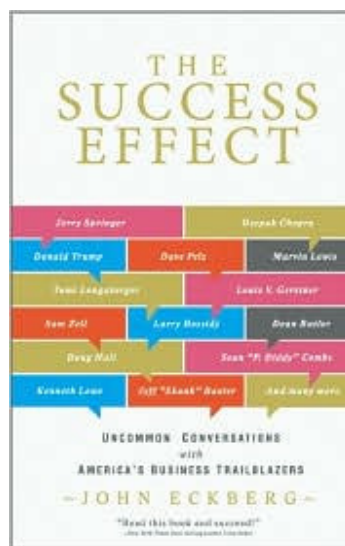
**John Eckberg** is a career journalist with 25 years of experience in the challenging field of daily newspaper reporting.



A graduate of Ohio University, he has been a business columnist and business reporter at The Cincinnati Enquirer for more than a decade, where he has covered numerous beats including federal courts, investigative reporter, feature writing, neighborhood columns and urban development. Widely published, his work has appeared in The New York Times, Newsweek, USA Today and many other American print and Web publications.

Eckberg is the co-author of *Road Dog*, a true-crime thriller about serial killer Glen Rogers of Hamilton, Ohio. He has several other projects underway, including *The Mud Daddy Chronicles*, a recipe book and fishing memoir of 25 years of fishing trips, and *Pot of Gold*, a best-practices business book.

<http://www.thesuccesseffect.com/author.htm>



**Author:** John Eckberg  
**Publisher:** Sterling & Ross, 2008  
**ISBN:** 109-8-76543-2  
**265 pages**

### ■ The Big Idea

Trump. Gestner. Chopra. Zell. Springer. Those are just some of the names in *The Success Effect*, a groundbreaking project by Cincinnati Enquirer business columnist John Eckberg.

This extensive volume contains candid conversations with America's top business trailblazers and innovators, detailing what it takes for individuals, teams and companies to lead, achieve, prosper, and grow.

Through his unorthodox question-and-answer style, Eckberg elicits revealing commentary and off-the-cuff answers.

## ■ Why You Need This Book

This book aims to transform worlds, change lives, and create happiness in the life of every aspiring business trailblazer through the lessons revealed by these powerful conversations. The reader gets insight, not spin – perspective and life-lessons. *The Success Effect* is a crossroads of life-guide and a business leadership book.

## ■ Niche – Sam Zell, Financier

Chicago financier and billionaire Samuel Zell is a modern-day Atlas of industry with a roster of companies that reaches around the globe. Zell started out in business by buying apartment buildings upon his graduation from the University of Michigan. In recent years, his business interests have ranged from office space to fiber optics, from mattresses to household products companies, from senior citizen housing sites to radio stations. His interests ebb and flow with the twin tides of value and opportunity.

### **Q: What would you tell other companies about how to get highly-regarded and competent employees?**

A: Number one, we are constantly a growing entity. And because we have such diverse interests, there is rarely a time where some part of our world is not growing very rapidly and creating opportunity. Number two, we have always been focused on a meritocracy. Consequently, people who join our organization are measured by what they contribute, not necessarily how old they are or where they are in the pecking order. Number three, I'd like to think that the leadership I provide is quite different because I'm very accessible.

### **Q: What advice would you give to a college graduate who wants to become another Sam Zell?**

A: I think what I would tell an aggressive person is, first and foremost – make no little plans. Go for greatness; nobody makes it with half efforts, and nobody succeeds without pain, without extraordinary effort. And although it's a cliché, the long-term investor always wins.

***Carryout:*** Extract redundancies. Attract talent to your organization by offering personal, professional or organizational growth opportunities. Measure staff and compensate on merit: what they've done and how much they contribute, not who they are or where they are on the executive ladder. Think big – always think big.

### ■ Steer the Ship – Louis V. Gerstner Jr., Former IBM Chairman

Big Blue had a bad case of the blues when Louis V. Gerstner Jr., was approached to turn around this American giant. He could reinvent the high-tech titan, smash it into autonomous units, or even sell off IBM division by division. Gerstner convinced the cadre of career IBMers that the company had to shift its focus. By 2002, the reversal was complete. IBM had profits of \$8 billion, and Gerstner was gone, the reins in the hands of Samuel Palmisano.

**Q: When you were being recruited to IBM, how important was patriotism to you in deciding to take the job?**

A: Well, they were getting pretty desperate. They couldn't find anybody willing to take the job. And I actually turned it down three times. They tried the Good Humor Man. They tried to get anybody they could find in the street. They came back to me the fourth time, and said they were going to call President Clinton and have him call me. Well, that had very little to do with it. One, I knew it was a bluff. Two, I knew the president wouldn't do it. And three, that wouldn't be a very good basis upon which to make a decision.

**Q: What's your advice for that young student who's entering an engineering program at a major university this fall? Someone like yourself, perhaps, but a few decades younger?**

A: My advice to somebody going into that field is the same advice I'd give to any young person going into a university: see this as an incredibly important time in your life to build skills. I would urge them to reach out as broadly as they can.

***Carryout:** Markets opening in China offer an unprecedented opportunity and could herald an extraordinary period of economic growth. College students should expand their abilities: learn a language, read great books. Technical degrees never go out of style. Focus on horizons.*

### ■ Audacity – Jerry Springer

Long before the glamour, the bright lights of Broadway, the notoriety and the scorn, talk-show host Jerry Springer was just another rookie city councilman in Cincinnati. He was earning \$8,000 a year from city hall and living in an \$85 a month apartment in the blue collar neighborhood of Westwood. Unlike other council members, Springer was an activist, and one of his first missions was to get the city jail closed and a new one built.

But when a local TV station broadcast the rookie council member Springer in jail, inmates watching the show began to grumble. Springer, eating dinner in the jail, watched as the grumbling grew to an eruption, everybody looking at him; a scared, long-haired Jewish guy from NY City with a funny accent and big city ways.

This time, he felt, he'd really done it. Surrounded by angry and annoyed scoundrels, drunks, wife-beaters, drug dealers, check-kickers and all manner of thugs, Springer had no choice. He climbed up on a dining table and started to talk.

**Q: Careers have pivot points. Was that yours because it showed you the career potential of media? You went right from politics into being a news anchor and finally into a gig as a talk-show host.**

A: Well, it's all hindsight. I was offered my first job in media, but I never thought for a minute about being in media. After I lost my primary race for governor, I went to Hilton Head the next day. I was going to be there for a week. And that week, I got calls from three different Cincinnati television stations. Now, how did that happen? Probably word got out that one station was looking for me so the others came talking to me about employment. Two wanted me to be a political commentator and the other wanted me to anchor the news. So I decided to go with WLW-TV 5 because they were at the bottom, and I figured I could learn.

**Q: Talk about public education. What needs to be done?**

A: Overwhelmingly, early childhood, early childhood, early childhood, early childhood education. And it should start at birth, not at three years old or even two. With a lot of these teenaged mothers, you almost have to have someone in that delivery room. Someone who is just being around, someone who can provide help two days a week, someone who can work with the mother and work with the child. Someone who can stimulate them, who can come one hour on Tuesday afternoons, who can help the mother develop a habit so that every day the child can look at this, or play with that. It's kind of like a counselor.

**Q: Your career, your life, has had a lot of twists and turns.**

A: I've been blessed – and I would say that 99 percent of success is that and luck. That's why I'm saying it's not like, "Well, here's the formula." Whatever it is, tons of people are doing the same thing. When I say 99 percent is luck, that means it's a gift from God. All these things that you find in successful people, it's all a gift. Put a successful person in a room, cut through the bullshit and ask, and you'll find this is true: most were just plain lucky.

***Carryout:*** *Start at the bottom and learn – no matter the field. Find an audience for your product or service then communicate directly to that audience, whether the*

*field is politics, business or health care. Be authentic, and your product, service or career will have appeal.*

## ■ The Brand – Donald J. Trump

For real estate mogul Donald Trump, money is just one way to keep score. One of the nation's first real estate developers to recognize the power of brand, Trump decided early on in his career that he would turn his personality, his name and his presence into a brand. The rest would follow.

**Q: Obviously you've made a little bit of money in real estate. What are the elements you look for in a project? Ten years down the road? Ten months down the road?**

A: Well, I think it depends on where and it depends on what. We have a lot of projects going right now. A big one in Chicago. A big one in California, along the ocean. A lot of them are going on in New York. I'm building one in Miami. They're all good. And again, if the markets change, they probably won't be so good. But right now, the markets were we are at – they're very strong.

**Q: You have thousands of people working for you. When you hire, are you looking for credentials? Or are you looking for commitments? Are you looking for education? Can you look into a person's eyes to see their heart?**

A: I think I see a lot. There's nothing like education. It's a great thing. But it's not exclusively that. If someone went to the Wharton School of Finance or Harvard, certainly it tells you that they've done a good job and that they're smart, but it's not exclusively that.

**Q: When you hire staff, do you look for people with families, single people, or does it matter?**

A: Oh I think the family is always a good thing. It's always an asset. There's nothing bad about it. Are you talking about it from the standpoint of a person having family or from the standpoint of hiring somebody with family? It's always nice to hire somebody with family. It means they're supporting more than themselves, and they'll be a little more cautious.

***Carryout:*** *Education can be a marker of character, but it's not the only concern when hiring staff. Individual initiative may be more important. Teach risk-takers that sometimes caution is the best course of action.*

### ■ Synchronicity – Deepak Chopra

Recognized as a world leader in mind-body medicine, Chopra's approach blends yoga, nutrition, and meditation, and aims to bring clarity and rejuvenation to the individual. He teaches that everyone, be they an executive or file clerk, shares seven human needs – survival, safety, creative expression, achievement, belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization. He frequently lectures to packed auditoriums on tours that span the globe.

**Q: University of Wisconsin neuroscientist Richard Davidson suggests meditation will decrease stress, anxiety and depression, boost the immune system, increase concentration and, perhaps, happiness, so why don't more people pray or meditate? And for those who do already, why don't they do it more often?**

A: I think we get caught up with the idea that success is so important and that happiness is around the corner if we have a little more of something. That in the end, the premise becomes that if you have enough money and enough things, you will be happy. It turns out to be a false premise because the more successful people become the more their stresses increase. You are walking out on a treadmill. You never get anywhere in terms of inner fulfillment. But the premise doesn't change; the premise is really part of our culture now. Advertising, media, the whole cultural mindset is based on this false notion that things bring happiness.

**Q: Does that false premise apply to companies? Never enough profits? Never enough dividends? Never enough shares?**

A: Yeah, yeah. And it's also this way in medicine. If we could just fix this one thing, we could be healthy. We are such an action-oriented society. We think that the more violent our actions are, the more successful we will be. We have a war on terrorism. We have a war on drugs. We have a war on cancer. We have a war on poverty. We have a war on everything. Our bodies are, in fact, nothing more than a battleground for these war games that are being played in our minds. No wonder we are sick. As a society we do not think in terms of creative solutions.

**Q: How can individuals actively entice Synchronicity into their lives and into their work, and live in a prayerful state of being all day long? Meditate more often? Breathe more deeply?**

A: I follow certain rituals that allow me to experience my larger self which is intimately connected with everything else. On one particular day, I will see the world as an extension of myself. Another day I might just focus on relationships and see that they are the most important thing in existence, and how through the mirror of relationships we learn about ourselves and about everybody else. Another day, I might just watch my internal dialogue. Another day I might just see that I'm not getting drawn into melodrama or hysteria. I watch my emotional turbulence, if I

have any, and recognize that all my emotional turbulence comes from a deep need that we have to be offended all the time. That's where we nurse grievances. I might say, "Today, I release grievances."

***Carryout:*** Practice daily rituals to illuminate the connections that are all around us. Be an observer of people and of yourself – watch for emotional turmoil, release grievances and strive to deserve investor, employee and customer loyalty. In the end, employees are more important than customers.

### ■ Out-of-the-Box – Jeff "Skunk" Baxter, Guitar Wizard, Steely Dan, & the Doobie Brothers

For more than three decades, Jeff "Skunk" Baxter, age fifty-seven, has been a pop and rock guitar wizard who has played with Steely Dan, Elton John, Dolly Parton, the Doobie Brothers and many others. Today, Baxter has a high-level Pentagon security clearance as a Department of Defense advisor to the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization and advises business leaders on tactics to encourage out-of-the-box strategies.

The journey from rock musician to defense analyst and business consultant may seem incongruous or even far-fetched, but Baxter's involvement stemmed from his strongly-held conservative views coupled with an interest in military history and hardware.

#### **Q: Why do you have a perspective on out-of-the-box thinking and creativity? Why are you an expert?**

A: I think it has to do with my transition from the area of music and entertainment as a guitarist to the arena of national security and more specifically in the area of ballistic missile defense. Being a guitarist is so vastly different from advising the folks on Capitol Hill on ballistic missile defense.

#### **Q: Have you studied any great artists? Who is your favorite in any medium and what are the lessons for business?**

A: I'm a huge fan of Ludwig van Beethoven. A lot of his work has fairly simple chord changes. When I listen to much of his music, I think he used the simplicity of simple chord changes to make the music more accessible to people. There is an old adage in music that you have simple chord changes with a complex melody or, the other way around, use complex chord changes with a simple melody. Beethoven was conscious about what the average person can assimilate and, on a lot of levels, he made his music accessible. That's a tenet I try to adhere to when I write music or

when I play it. It's a business lesson as well. Make information accessible – something that average person can assimilate.

**Q: Why should people listen to what you have to say?**

A: Because I wanted to be involved in the national security arena and to do that, I've had to surmount certain obstacles. One obstacle was not having a background in national security. Another obstacle was coming to a place where people have a problem understanding how a musician, with no real understanding of the geo-strategic and geo-political situation, can evolve into an advisor to those with political and military responsibilities. I have a tremendous amount of passion about my country, its security and democracy.

***Carryout:** Take daily or weekly mental vacations to recharge. Learning to play an instrument may infuse creativity in a career. Strive to create products that are accessible to average Americans. Analyze from multiple perspectives.*

**■ Success Needs a Vision – Dean Butler, Founder, LensCrafters**

Sometimes business innovation is as much about serendipity as it is about opportunity; as much about risk as commitment. A good example is Dean Butler, who co-founded LensCrafters and pioneered the concept of "Eyeglasses in an Hour." Three decades ago he had a friend who had inherited a chain of eyeglass offices, and the friend needed some advice.

Within a few years, Butler would leave his job at the Procter & Gamble Co. to open an eyeglass company. But first, he had to buck the eyeglass industry titans that fought him in the courts over whether he could manufacture glasses. He eventually won and finally created a revolutionary company with outlets in shopping centers and strip malls. The concept went global and Butler became an international mogul of lenses through LensCrafters, and later, Vision Express.

**Q: What's the solution for companies that want to be nimble, organizations that want to be innovative?**

A: You have to develop a product that consumers never ask for, but when they experience it, they think it's fantastic. It's true of so many P&G products. How many people buy toilet tissue because they love to buy toilet tissue? Well, Procter & Gamble has sold a lot of White Cloud and Charmin toilet tissue over the years because they figured out how to sell a product in which there is no inherent interest.

**Carryout:** *Successful companies always seek to discover consumers' latent desire for products or services. Opportunity dwells in the seam between need and desire. Being observant will keep you one step ahead of consumer trends and client demands.*

### ■ **Women and Work – Sheila Wellington, Catalyst**

Sheila W. Wellington is the former president of Catalyst, ranked by the American Institute of Philanthropy as the highest rated non-profit in the nation focusing on women's issues. The organization has consistently broken new ground with its studies of gender in the workplace. From her position, Wellington seized the opportunity to evaluate the corporate workplace for women executives. Today, she is clinical professor of management at the NYU/Stern School of Business.

**Q: How do women compensate? Human beings tend to compensate when there's a particular challenge. What are the success factors?**

A: High-visibility assignments and performing above expectations. We have one quote from a woman who said it isn't very hard to perform above expectations because expectations for women like her are so low anyway. Communicating well is another success factor. In the latest study three years ago, we went back to a large sample of these very same women and asked them if we could continue to contact them, and nine hundred said yes. Now, there is some good news in the re-contact study. The first study got a great deal of coverage, lots of media, and lots of corporate response. Essentially, that study pointed out that here is something that can be talked about.

**Carryout:** *Women of color must hack a path to the corner office. Bring influential mentors and informal networking opportunities to minorities on an executive track. Multiple mentors will increase the effectiveness of minority women at work.*

### ■ **The Empire – Sean "Diddy" Combs, Empire Builder**

Rapper, record producer, Broadway actor, clothing designer – music mogul Sean Combs changes careers (and his name) as often as most people change cars. His self-given names are exercises in variety. He has been known as Puff, Puffy, Puff Daddy, P.Diddy and finally, Diddy. Whatever he's called by his pals in the casinos of St. Tropez or the studios of Manhattan, this much is clear – Combs has never stopped achieving.

**Q: Music producer, TV show producer, Broadway actor, rapper, clothing designer. You've got a lot going on. Why get into apparel, such a risky business. It's founded on the whims of fashion.**

A: I felt that I had something to say. I felt I had something that would be special and would just be one company among many. It would be special. There weren't that many companies in the world of fashion that are special. I felt I had more than just fashion, too. I had a brand, a lifestyle brand in the making. If you look at those companies that are lifestyle brands, well, it would inspire anybody to get involved.

***Carryout:*** *Take a chance on unproven initiatives because big bucks may follow. Strive to be special. Create partnerships with titans. Brands can become empires, but you must first reach one consumer. Reach one, others will follow.*

~///~