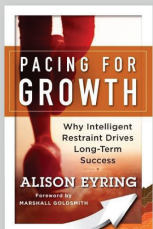


# Book Review

## Pacing For Growth: Why Intelligent Restraint Drives Long-term Success



**Author:** Alison Eyring, Ph.D.  
**Publisher:** Berrett-Koehler Publishers |  
2017 | 192 pages  
**Reviewer:** Anna A. Tavis, Ph.D.

With her new book, *Pacing for Growth: Why Intelligent Restraint Drives Long-term Success*, Alison Eyring joins a movement in organizational consulting that calls for rethinking, if not disrupting, the received norms of corporate and leadership behavior. If growth is the goal, you need to know how to grow sustainably and reliably.

This book is a well thought through user manual for a corporate athlete preparing for a long uphill race toward the pinnacle of growth. Based on the author's more than 20 years of experience consulting with premier global organizations, the new rules of behavior set forth are easy to remember and apply. The comparisons between corporate leaders and endurance athletes are helpful parallels to explore. Just like endurance athletes, leaders need to prepare themselves for the marathon that is business growth, not a sprint toward achieving short-term results.

*Pacing for Growth* is a book with a message to all striving to succeed and excel at work and in their personal lives. To support her case for measured, steady, and focused daily persistence, Eyring created a practical guide to organizing your work and life intelligently and with restraint.

Practice alone, unless grounded in rigorous scientific research, will not deliver results over a long term. The research underlying this study is expertly selected to help bring out the argument for the measured pace to success.

Eyring's road map to living and winning with "intelligent restraint" consists of three core principles and three unarguable rules. The three principles cover the interdependence between capacity, capability, and pace, while the three rules argue for focus over vision, routines over strengths, and recovery to compensate for exertion.

Each one of the six items receives its own treatment

in a chapter illustrated with instructive case studies and supported with the analysis of lessons to be learned. The list of companies and real business situations is impressive. Take the story of Krispy Kreme where "company's potential is swallowed by unchecked growth." Contrasted with Krispy Kreme is the story of Dell, the computer manufacturer that excelled at supply chain innovation but was not able to transfer the competency to other areas of its business.

Of the three rules for intelligent restraint, of particular import is the argument Eyring makes for the need to prioritize focus over vision. After so many years of promoting strategic vision as the hallmark of business leadership, we have witnessed an overwhelming caseload of company failures, despite their lofty aspirations and well-articulated missions—Kodak, Motorola, Nortel to name just a few. What went wrong? What have management gurus missed?

Growth leaders, Eyring insists, "spend far more of their time and energy creating focus and aligning the resources to deliver growth." Visionary leaders, who may be lacking focus, "always seem to do more when they may have achieved more by doing less."

The story of Airbnb's decision to "grow by design" is one such illustration of a winning growth strategy through fo-

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cus. The company's accelerated expansion was dizzying. At times it even felt like things were spinning out of control. The founders pressed the pause button and decided to take a deep reflective breath. By thinking about the future, they had to figure out how they needed to be structured and who they need to partner with first. The absolute nonnegotiable for them was Airbnb's unique culture and employee experience.

Company leaders agreed to redesign the organization with that cultural lens in mind. Operationally, it meant that they slowed down recruitment, rationalized the headcount, and optimized each role for the future they designed to

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create. Airbnb's case is compelling in its simplicity and effectiveness. For Eyring's purposes, it is an excellent example of how intelligent design actually works.

In addition to illustrative cases, each chapter is generously enhanced with tips on every aspect of intelligent restraint. If you are on the go with no time to get through the chapter page by page, not to worry. The tips section could easily be pulled out and every chapter is rich in advice, helpful reminders, and personal insights.

At the end of each chapter, there is a helpful self-assessment section that asks the readers a few topic-related questions and helps them reflect on their own development with full awareness of intelligent restraint.

This practical and timely guide to growth concludes

with Eyring's eight personal favorite insights. They start with, "Always train for the right race" and finish with "never be[ing] intimidated by anyone who looks stronger and faster than you are." In between, there is a blend of personal wisdom and researched-supported tenets of success.

The Appendix, "Pacer for Self-renewal," adds another set of practical recommendations for readers to decide what is most important to them on their road to personal and professional self-fulfillment.

This instructive book's hard-earned wisdom serves equally well those who are just starting and those who have earned their stripes in the trenches of business. Easy to read and helpful, the book is a busy professional's manual for everyday self-management and professional growth. ■■

