

## Growing Influence: A Story of How to Lead with Character, Expertise, and Impact

**Ron Price**

**Stacy Ennis**

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*Growing Influence is a powerful, friendly, and wholly atypical leadership book focused on achieving balance.*

Stacy Ennis and Ron Price's narrative-driven business book *Growing Influence* is aimed at helping leaders grow at work and at home.

Most business books are brimming with bullet points, action items, and alliterative mantras, but this book is different. Harnessing the story of a character named Emily, it is approachable and invites introspection. The title, subtitle, and cover images strike a balance between nonfiction and fiction vibes, letting the reader know what to expect.

Emily is a thirtysomething trying to excel at her job at a tech company while also balancing family responsibilities. She can't seem to get ahead—a dilemma that's easy for many people, especially other women, to relate to. Then Emily meets David, a retired CEO, who coaches her to help her grow as a person and a leader.

Relationships are central to the book, including Emily and David's friendship, the relationships that help and hinder Emily, and those that define who she is and what her priorities are. Emily's story is warm and uplifting—a refreshing, people-first approach to business and leadership. Emily's voice and roles as a wife, mother, and professional echo the longing and dilemmas represented in modern attempts to find work-life balance. The focus on women's issues belies the universal applicability of its lessons, though.

A strongly narrated allegory, the book's dialogue is realistic, and details about characters and settings make it easy to picture what's happening, even though it's not a story brimming with action. Lessons and exercises are embedded in the text, which is framed within the story of a coaching relationship; those lessons are delivered realistically, if they are driven by Emily's eagerness to get to the application points and bring theory into practice.

Emily and David's conversations move quickly into deep subjects and sometimes feel rushed. Some answers feel a bit too easy, even magical; there's not always a lot of hard work and sacrifice evident.

The text will be inviting for those who are tired of standard business books. It is not a book designed for skimming, and its lessons are embedded rather than presented as an easy-to-apply strategy, which may cause frustration for those looking for quick answers. Still, the text is compelling, sparking audience interest in finding coaches of one's own and achieving balance.

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MELISSA WUSKE (October 23, 2018)

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