



LEARN WHAT ZONES YOUR EMPLOYEES ARE COMING FROM

BY [JOSIANE FEIGON](#)

Have you ever talked to your team and noticed how differently each person listens?

I've found that people usually fall into one of **Four Zones** that influence the way they listen and learn. Managing your *whole* team effectively means you need to know which zone each person is in and have a strategy for coaching to that zone and perhaps influencing change.

First, let's define these zones:

01. THE DEAD ZONE

People in this zone have checked out. Basically, they just don't care. These folks are probably your low to medium performers. They've plateaued, and have no desire to advance further.

02. THE COMFORT ZONE

People in this zone are sitting comfortably in their own little world. They are complacent. They resist any change that is happening around them. These average performers will do just enough to get by, and won't show initiative for anything else.

03. THE PANIC ZONE

People in this zone feel anxious, nervous, frazzled, and overwhelmed. They care a lot — a bit too much. They are ambitious, but afraid to say no or to honestly assess their limitations, leading them to take on too many projects.

04. THE STRETCH ZONE

People in this zone are excited (but not over-excited), enthusiastic, and ambitious; they have new goals, ideas, and strategies. They care a lot and want to do things differently. These are probably your top performers and the ones you want to influence the team.

NO ONE STAYS IN THE SAME ZONE FOREVER

For example; a new hire may begin in the Stretch Zone. But once they learn what exactly is involved in the job, they may jump to the Panic Zone. As time passes and they get to know their job really well and move into automatic pilot, they may start resting in the Comfort Zone. If they've been passed up for a promotion, or they have a lousy territory, they may start caring less and less and end up in the Dead Zone.

Once you've determined which zone each team member falls into, you can tailor your coaching to meet their needs.

COACHING IN THE DEAD ZONE: This zone is dangerous because people who no longer care are resistant to trying anything new – they are very close to leaving the organization. When coaching them, find out what got them into this zone — it could be for personal or professional reasons, or both. Then have that tough talk with them. Ask them if they think they are in the right role; you may want to encourage them to moving into a different role or department. Many managers fail to recognize when someone is in the Dead Zone. They think that giving them new hires to mentor will help them feel needed and get them out of their “funk.” Big mistake! The Dead Zone can easily infect your new hires.

COACHING IN THE COMFORT ZONE: Salespeople who have been part of the old sales regimen may fall into this comfort zone. They are low-risk about adopting new ideas and they're stuck. But they can be coached, because they really care. When you coaching someone in the Comfort Zone must, include strategies that shake them up and change their routine, their territory, their product responsibilities. or perhaps their vertical. It might also include putting them on a new project to manage. giving them the opportunity for recognition and reward. Be careful! Someone in the Comfort Zone who isn't managed properly can eventually find themselves in the Dead Zone, where it might be too late for change. You might try sitting your Comfort Zone rep next to someone in the Stretch Zone — they just may share some needed energy.

COACHING IN THE PANIC ZONE: These people can be new hires who finally realized what is expected of them and are running scared; or they may be senior team members who are overachievers with low self-esteem who panic at the end of the month to hit their numbers. Help them understand that panic isn't the answer, and help them separate things that really need their attention from those that can wait. Be gentle. The last thing they need is pressure from you — they are putting enough pressure on themselves. Prioritize with them. Help them slow down, sort through, and organize what's in front of them.

COACHING IN THE STRETCH ZONE: We wish all our team members could be in the Stretch Zone. Nonetheless, coaching someone in this zone is delicate — you don't want to kill their spirit, just keep them on task. Coach them to stay focused, enthusiastic, and ambitious, but keep them in check.

WHAT PERCENTAGE OF YOUR TEAM IS IN EACH ZONE?

Ideally, you want your team to have some zone-balance. But — depending on your team structure, their seniority, and the time of the sales quarter — your team is likely to be squished into one or two zones. For example, if you have a senior team and 80% of them are in the Comfort Zone, you are going to have a difficult time motivating them and changing behavior. Or, if your team is young and still ramping-up, but Q4 is bearing down on everyone, you're likely to see more Panic Zone in the team and you will need to focus on being a calming and organizing influence.

About the Author

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