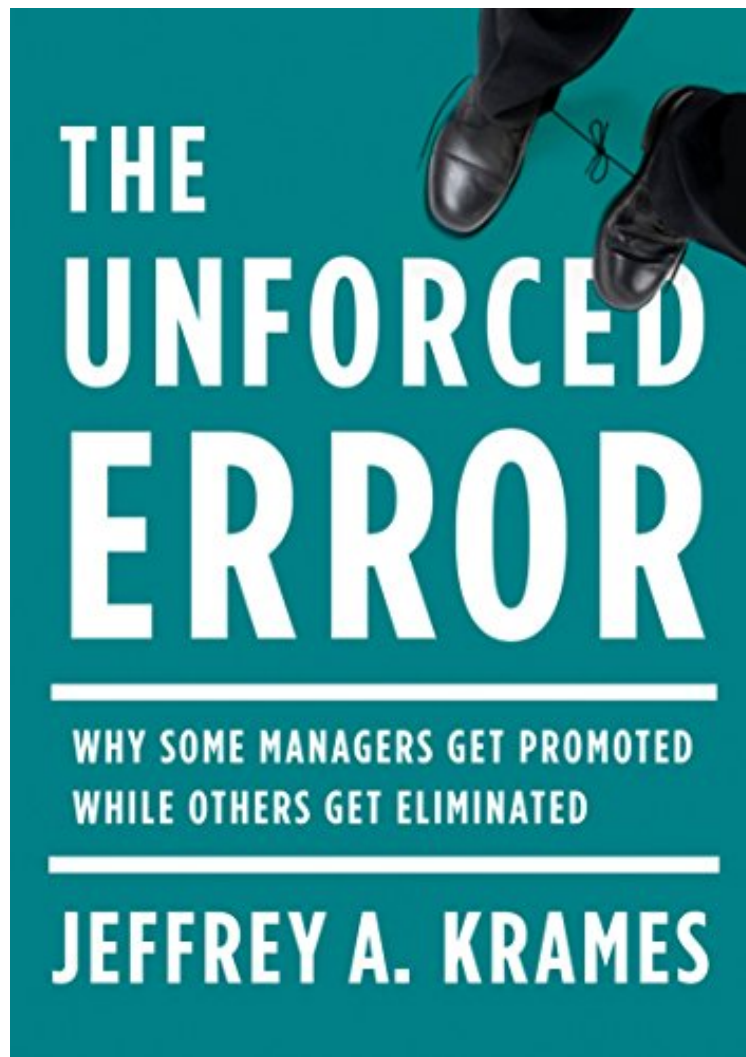


# The Unforced Error: Why Some Managers Get Promoted While Others Get Eliminated

*Jeffrey A. Krames*

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**Jeffrey A. Krames : The Unforced Error: Why Some Managers Get Promoted While Others Get Eliminated**  
before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Unforced Error: Why Some Managers Get Promoted While Others Get Eliminated:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. No real errors, but nothing new By Angela H. Dianetti Decent read, but nothing really new. I guess if you really liked tennis, the metaphors might help you remember the content. 8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. How to eliminate or reduce avoidable barriers on one's career path By Robert Morris I have read and reviewed all of Jeffrey Krames's previous six books that provide a wealth of useful information and valuable insights concerning an impressive variety of subjects: The Jack Welch Lexicon of

Leadership: Over 250 Terms, Concepts, Strategies Initiatives of the Legendary Leader (2001), The Rumsfeld Way: The Leadership Wisdom of a Battle-Hardened Maverick (2002), The Welch Way: 24 Lessons From The Worlds Greatest CEO (2003), What the Best CEOs Know: 7 Exceptional Leaders and Their Lessons for Transforming Any Business (2005), Jack Welch and The 4 E's of Leadership: How to Put GE's Leadership Formula to Work in Your Organization (2005), and Inside Drucker's Brain (2008). What Krames provides in his latest book is a synthesis of everything he has learned from the most highly regarded executives (e.g. Welch) and the most highly regarded business thinkers (e.g. Drucker) as well as from what he has learned during his own career thus far as a senior-level executive in two of the most prestigious publishing houses, McGraw-Hill and then the Portfolio division within the Penguin Group. As the book's subtitle correctly indicates, his purpose is to explain "why some managers get promoted while others get eliminated." He invokes an extended metaphor - the game of competitive tennis - to illustrate several of his key insights. For example, the importance of minimizing (if not totally eliminating) unforced errors that help to explain why most matches as well as most career opportunities are lost. Another key point stresses the importance of "keeping your eye on the ball," competing without allowing any distractions to delay or preclude success. Years ago, as I began to read self-improvement books such as Benjamin Franklin's Autobiography, Napoleon Hill's Think and Grow Rich, Dale Carnegie's How to Win Friends and Influence People, and Norman Vincent Peale's The Power of Positive Thinking, I began to formulate a set of questions that I continue to review almost every day: 1. What don't I know but need to know? 2. What haven't I done but need to do? 3. What should I stop doing? 4. What should I begin to do? 5. What should I do less of? 6. What should I do more of? 7. What to delay, for now? 8. What to eliminate from my life? 9. What to avoid? 10. What has changed since I last asked these questions? Note: Through trial and error while answering these questions, I learned to limit my to only two but preferably only one initiative per answer. I try to work my way through the questions at least once a week and always take brief notes. Priorities change because circumstances change but it is imperative, as Krames frequently stresses in his book, to minimize (if not eliminate) unforced errors (e.g. decisions made in haste, without sufficient consideration) and to be sharply focused on what is most important. Krames and I both agree with Stephen Covey that most executives spend too much time on what is urgent and not enough time on what is important. Those who have read any of the recently published books based on Anders Ericsson's research on the basis of peak performance (e.g. Geoff Colvin's Talent Is Overrated, Daniel Coyle's The Talent Code, and Malcolm Gladwell's Outliers) already know about the "10,000 Hours Rule": On average, peak performance requires 10,000 of what Colvin calls "deliberate" practice and what Coyle calls "deep" practice, conducted under the rigorous supervision of an expert in the given field (e.g. chess, music, athletics) who also serves as a disciplinarian. Krames addresses these separate but related subjects - rigorous and repetitive practice and under strict supervision - in Chapters 8 ("Why Focusing on Strengths, Not Weaknesses, Wins Games") and Chapter 9 ("Why Learning [from Expert Coaches] is Such a Critical Success Factor"). Once peak performance has been achieved, how to sustain it? Krames responds to that question in his Epilogue, "Beyond the Unforced Error: For Expert-Level Performance, Keep at It." It is worth noting that during Tiger Woods' career thus far, while continuing to win more tournaments in less time than anyone else ever has, he has made major adjustments of his swing mechanics, not once but twice. Who will derive the greatest benefit from this book? As noted earlier, it offers a wealth of useful information and valuable insights that can be of substantial benefit to almost anyone beyond as well as within the business world. However, I think it offers the greatest benefit to those who are preparing for a career in business or who have only recently embarked upon one. There are no head-snapping revelations, nor does Krames make any such claim. He duly acknowledges all of the sources of wisdom that have been helpful to his own career. Beyond admonitions about avoiding forced errors and hasty judgments, he reveals his pragmatic perspectives when urging his reader to "face reality at all times," to select "partners" in all areas of one's life with great care, to keep in mind The Gambler's strategy to "know when to hold 'em and know when to fold 'em," to know the rules and regulations of the given "game" and always "play by them," to assume responsibility and accept accountability, and to seek constant improvement while "watching the whole court" to "protect your flanks." After I re-read this book, I realized that I should re-examine my list of Ten Questions more often because, in all probability, at least a few need to be revised.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. New frame around traditional picture By Dr. Cathy Goodwin I picked this book up in the library, with no previous knowledge of the author. Krames promises to explain the difference between successful and unsuccessful corporate managers. At first glance this book seems to have little that is new. After all, corporate career planning has functioned the same way for years. Some of the most useful info comes on pages 62-63. When senior managers announce a new program at a meeting, it is a bad idea to give any hint that you are not on board 100% with the new game plan. True, these moves can be career-killers...but I'd wonder why the senior exec chose to announce major changes at a big, public meeting. If he or she followed Krames's advice to hire strong subordinates, wouldn't it be appropriate to solicit their opinions? Another valuable point on pp 67-68 distinguishes personal vs operational values. However, I'd say look at the company's values and see if you agree. For instance, if you work for a soft drink company you will be marketing food that many people believe is unhealthy. Your operational values may need to change but first you need to look at your personal values. It's not just a case of low-end vs high-end, as in Krames's examples. Most important, nearly every situation can be interpreted in multiple ways. The

section on watching the whole court is quite good. I like the advice to avoid office politics but not remain unaware. However, Krames describes a newspaper editor whose reporters complained about her story decisions. Since her boss said nothing she ignored the complaints. When her boss "promoted" her to a less important job, he cited the complaints as a reason. However, I can't help wondering if the boss didn't have a hidden agenda. Why did he wait to discuss the complaints with this editor? If he's happy with her work, and only a few people complained, why didn't he divert the complainers or at least discourage them from going over her head? Without being there I'd say you must at least consider the question of sabotage (especially with a female manager). I'd also wonder about the advice to meet with a boss regularly. My own experience is that bosses don't want too many requests for feedback. You can come across as seeming needy. It's always a judgment call. The chapter relating to experimentation is good but seems relevant only if you are a CEO. He's talking about company policies rather than individual. Overall, this book would be a good choice for new managers as well as veterans who want a refresher. I suspect almost everyone will recognize an episode from his or own past and cringe a little while hopefully learning for the future.

A guide to help managers prepare for whatever comes over the net. In tennis, the player with the fewest unforced errors usually wins. The same is true in business- all too often, the mistakes that sabotage a career are completely avoidable, if you can anticipate them early enough. Bestselling management writer Jeffrey Krames adopts the metaphor of tennis to show how to spot and sidestep the types of faults that do the most damage. He shows how businesspeople can develop and practice good habits so they'll be ready for an unusually fast serve or wicked backhand. Drawing on stories about famous CEOs like Jack Welch, Robert Goizueta, and Lou Gerstner, Krames shows how to avoid some of the biggest "career killers." His advice includes: Never say, "The ball was out by a mile"; face reality at all times. Choose your doubles partner carefully; bad people decisions (hiring, firing, promoting) can be fatal. Keep practicing your best shot; enhancing your strengths is more effective than trying to fix your weaknesses.

From Publishers Weekly Krames (*Inside Drucker's Brain*) employs an extended tennis metaphor to explain why some managers succeed and others fail. In professional tennis, the player with the fewest unforced errors usually wins, he writes. The same is true in business. The unforced error— a mistake that is committed without a cause by a player with the ability to keep the ball in play— is used to describe a variety of career-killing moves (e.g., choosing an unsatisfactory work partner, being ill-prepared). Citing statistics of the growing number of CEOs who have lost their jobs as a result of inadvertent errors, Krames shows how easy it is for even the most talented managers to fall victim to these mistakes. Like a good coach, he guides readers to improve their game with numerous examples from the careers of such business luminaries as Jack Welch and Peter Drucker as well as tennis greats Steffi Graf and John McEnroe. Each chapter also includes a bulleted list of key chapter points for easy skimming. Insightful and with an original presentation, this book will be of great interest to managers and executives hoping to avoid unforeseen and costly pitfalls. (Oct.) Copyright copy; Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. About the Author Jeffrey A. Krames is the author of *Inside Drucker's Brain*, *The Welch Way*, *Jack Welch and the 4E's of Leadership*, and other books. He has written for *The New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Financial Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, and other publications, and has also been a book editor for the past twenty-five years.