



## Spend 90% of Your Time on 10% of Your Decisions

May 18, 2026

**Bruce Gordon, a mentor and coach at The ExCo Group, shared his insights with Adam Bryant. Key themes include the power of deep listening and direct honesty in effective mentoring, why leaders must recognize and communicate their own value, and how the 90/10 rule of prioritization can help executives stay focused on what truly matters.**

**Bryant: What do you consider to be the keys to effective mentoring?**

**Gordon:** One of them is being a really great listener. I don't interrupt people when they talk, and I listen closely so that I can ask good questions. I also tell my clients that I will love them like a family member would love them. What that means is I root for them all the time, and yet I have no problem telling them what I think, and always with the best intent.

I also tell people that I am "anti-vague." If I have an opinion, I will tell you what it is, and you can disagree, but you don't have to ever wonder what I'm saying. And I encourage my clients to be anti-vague in their roles. As a leader, you have to always be reading the room and thinking about how you can make your point in a way that is understood and agreed to.

Fifty years of being in business has also given me a lot of experience to draw on so that I can help my clients navigate their challenges. As just one example, there are many parallels between the internet in

2000 and AI today. Living through that earlier time helps me ask questions about this moment that are informed by experience.

**Bryant: What is the best advice that you heard from a mentor of yours over your career?**

**Gordon:** Early on, I was CFO of a local TV station for ABC. I was in the New York headquarters of ABC, and I bumped into Mike Mallardi, who was the CFO of the overall company. He invited me up to his office and at one point, he said, "Let me tell you something that is important for you to hear. You make more decisions in a day than I make in a month. The only difference is that mine have more zeros, but you have a way harder job than I do."

My takeaway was to recognize the value that you bring to companies. Leaders who may be a few levels below the C-suite have really hard jobs that require a lot of decisions, many of which they have to make on their own. You have to value that and make sure that people understand that you value the work that they do.

**Bryant: What are some "Bruce-isms" that you've repeated often over the years?**

**Gordon:** One of them is to spend your time helping B students become A students, rather than C students become B students. I also talk about the 90/10 rule, which is that you should spend 90 percent of your time on 10 percent of your decisions and 10 percent of your time on 90 percent of your decisions.

**Bryant: How do you help your clients not feel overwhelmed in this really challenging environment?**

**Gordon:** I'm very big on prioritization, and it goes back to what I just shared about understanding the 10 percent of your decisions that are most important and require your time. By doing that, it helps downgrade the other 90 percent, because not everything is important.

You just have to decide where you want to place your bets. I often tell people that in these senior roles, every decision is part of a portfolio of decisions. And just like in the stock market, you are not going to bat a thousand on your portfolio of decisions.

So recognize that and recognize which decisions are the important ones and do your best to get that right. And know that you're not going to get them all right, and don't beat yourself up for that.