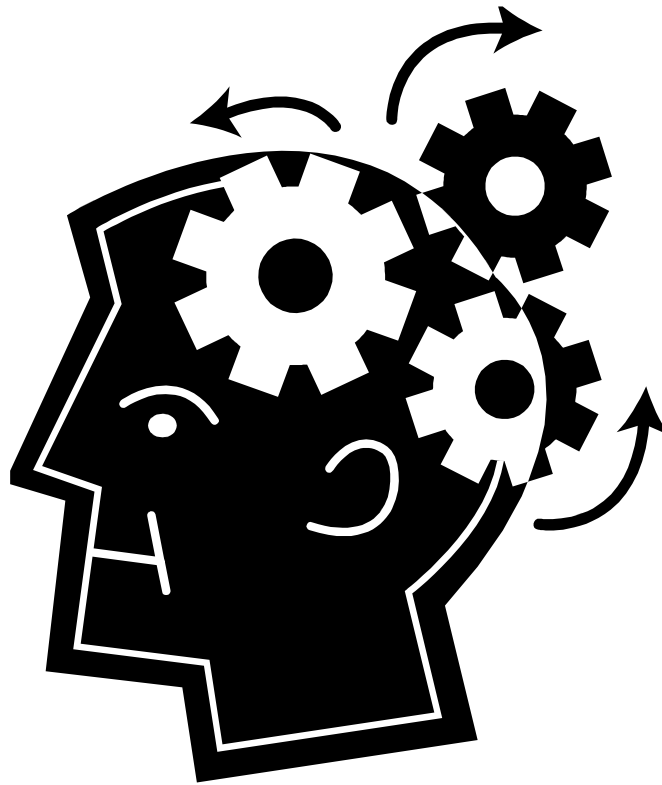


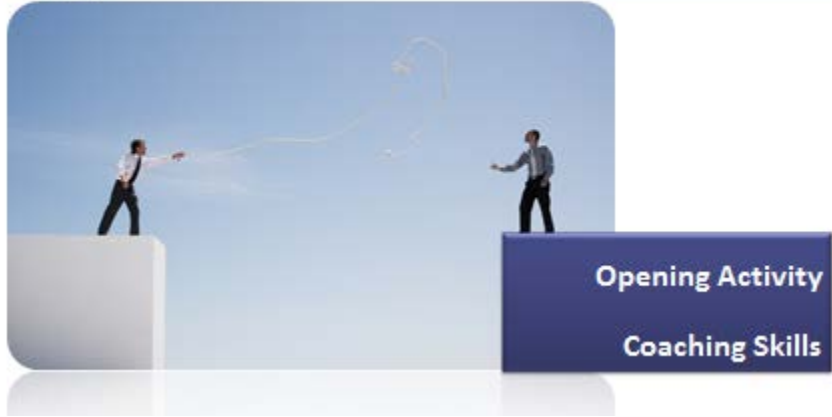
**THE BRAIN AT WORK: CONVERSATIONS THAT  
DRIVE  
POSITIVE CHANGE**



*Participant Guidebook*

**Facilitated by David Byers  
2016 Bringing Administrators Together Conference  
April 14, 2016**

# Introduction



Based on your experience, identify the competencies of an effective coach or someone who helped you succeed and record them below. Then share these with a partner.

## EFFECTIVE COACHING COMPETENCIES

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# LESSON 1: BRAIN-BASED COACHING

## FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

### 1.1 Speak with Intent

**Being Succinct** – make every word count and cut to the heart of the issue when communicating.

**Being Specific** – only being succinct and not specific could cause misunderstanding and confusion.

Being specific helps others understand exactly what you mean.

**Being Generous** – it means going the extra effort to make sure the listener totally gets where you are coming from. It means speaking for the *listener's* benefit rather than for yours.

Being generous is a way of showing you care about the other person, and it helps build the trust required for a constructive work relationship. Coaches need to be generous when coaching coachees, to focus on what coachees *are doing right and to acknowledge their efforts*.

The generous coach also notices how the coachee is growing and changing, and reflects those observations back to the coachee in an encouraging manner.

### 1.2 Listen for Potential

Being a great listener is essential to being a great coach. This skill underlies most competencies of effective coaching, which include being insightful, a mindful communicator and committed to others. Listening for potential is focusing attention toward *a person's strengths, goals, possibilities and potential*. People naturally listen for problems or gaps. Conversely, listening for potential involves listening generously, at all levels, for what people mean and without judgment.

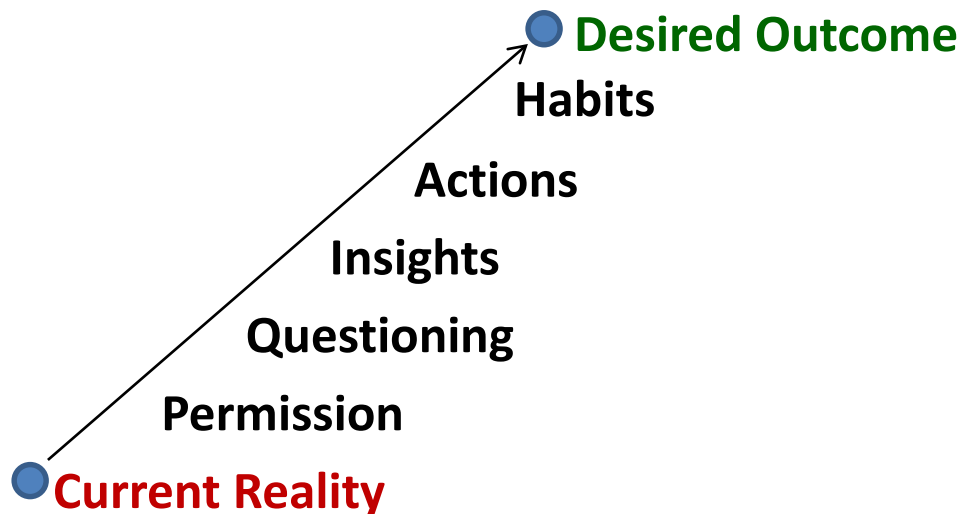
Listening for Potential is listening and allowing employees to develop their own conclusions and insights.

### 1.3 BRAIN-BASED COACHING (RESULTS COACHING)

Results Coaching is built on a theory for how and why coaching works. It is based on contemporary neuroscience with support from systems, change, and learning theory as well as positive psychology. It is also called brain-based coaching. It uses an approach that ensures coachees develop their best insights, take ownership of the problems, and are accountable for the solutions.

It is facilitative coaching that helps drive great performance by helping coachees be better thinkers, take new actions, and develop new habits. In order to achieve the best outcome, Results Coaching follows the change model shown below.

#### Performance Change Model



In order to move from the current reality to the desired outcome as shown above, Results Coaching utilizes structured approaches that help the coach and the coachee achieve success. A foundational approach used is the *Dance of Insight*: **Permission, Placement, Thinking Questions, and Clarifying**. Other approaches used are listed below as acronyms to help you remember and follow them. They are:

**CREATE** new thinking and habits: **C**urrent Reality, **E**xplore **A**lternatives, **T**ap Energy

**CRAFT** actions: **C**lear, **R**ealistic, **A**ccurate, **F**ocused, and **T**imely

Follow up with **FEELING**: **F**acts, **E**motions, **E**ncourage, **L**earning, **I**mplications, **N**ext **G**oals

## LESSON 2: THE DANCE OF INSIGHT

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- 1. Permission** – Getting permission is a way to reduce the likelihood and impact of the threat response, and makes the coachee’s thinking more effective. When the coach asks for permission, the coachee is given the power of choosing where a coaching conversation will go. Having permission puts coach and coachee on equal status in regard to the direction of the conversation and can make both feel more comfortable.
- 2. Placement** – It is letting someone know exactly where you are in a conversation, what is about to happen, and what you are trying to achieve. Placement puts two people at the same point in a conversation, so you are both able to focus on the issue together. It creates certainty for the coachee, which reduces the threat response. Placement in the conversation also ensures that both people have equal status.
- 3. Thinking Questions** – The essence of being a facilitative coach is to ask thinking questions that lead a coachee to think about his/her dilemma and make new connections by themselves. This can lead to positive change through improved thinking and new habits. Simply put, thinking questions involve focusing on the coachee’s thinking.
- 4. Clarifying** – Clarifying is repeating a statement in a way so it is clearer. It helps get to the bottom line in a conversation. Clarifying is saying something back in a way that adds greater value to the coachee and to the conversation. It is stating something that wasn’t quite said, or wasn’t said clearly. It is voicing the core essence of what is being said.

## 2.1 The Dance of Insight Examples

### *Improving Performance (Initiated by Manager)*

#### **Permission**

"I need to talk with you about a problem. Would it be all right if I schedule some time on our calendars?"

"I have a suggestion on how you can improve. Are you interested in hearing it?"

#### **Placement**

"I would like to talk about the problem you are having with completing the project. It should take about 30 minutes."

"Now that we have examined some alternative solutions, let's set some goals on how to solve this problem."

#### **Thinking Questions**

"What do you think you need in order to perform better at this?"

"How can you improve your performance?"

"What do you think is your next step?"

#### **Clarifying**

"So you do not feel you understand what is expected of you?"

"You don't seem to be motivated to tackle this problem."

### *Facilitating Great Performance (Initiated by Employee or May Be Manager Initiated)*

#### **Permission**

"Is there something you would like to talk about now?"

"Would you like to brainstorm some ideas on how to solve this problem?"

#### **Placement**

"Since we have determined the nature of your dilemma, let's explore some possible solutions."

"Let's now create an action plan."

#### **Thinking Questions**

"How long have you been thinking about this problem?"

"On a scale of 1-10, how satisfied are you in your thinking?"

#### **Clarifying**

"Essentially you feel stuck between helping the customer and meeting your other goals?"

"Basically you're concerned about being considered for a promotion?"

## LESSON 3: ACTION PLANS

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Once an insight emerges, it's important to bring the insight into reality by setting actions. Insights can emerge during any phase of the CREATE Model, or any time during coaching. To help the coachee and coach best see and know their next steps, we **CRAFT** actions that are:

- **Clear** – Both parties must understand exactly what the action entails. If there is ambiguity, the action may not get done or not in the way that was planned.
- **Realistic** – It is important that the actions set are challenging, and they must be realistic, actionable, and achievable.
- **Accurate** – To ensure that the coachee does the action, it can be useful to include precise numbers in the wording of the action. Be accurate with details. The coachee is much more likely to complete the action or know the progress if metrics are defined.
- **Focused** – When creating actions, make sure the action is relevant to the coachee's objective, strategy, goal, or insight. This ensures that coachees stay on track and move toward the achievement of the desired outcome.
- **Timely** – When setting actions, make sure both parties are clear about the timing of the action. In other words, be clear about the deadline for completion of the action.

Including all elements of CRAFT in coaching helps create certainty for coachees and encourages them to follow through on their actions.

## LESSON 4: BRAIN SCIENCE

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### 4.1 Brain Facts (Read on your own and record your thoughts at the bottom of the page.)

- 1 The brain is a connection machine – the brain makes millions of connections each second. The brain wants to connect, and when we are unable to make a connection, we have an impasse. Coaching helps people resolve impasses that they have not been able to solve.
- 2 No two brains are alike – everyone has a unique set of connections for how they think about things. How **you** solve a problem is just how **you** would solve a problem, but other people are likely to use different mental pathways.
- 3 The brain hardwires everything it can – new ideas or behaviors use working memory, a very limited resource in the brain. Therefore, any behavior, thought, or activity that is repeated becomes hardwired so we don't have to pay attention to it. Coaching involves getting people out of automatic thinking and into a more conscious view. This takes significant effort.
- 4 Hardwiring drives automatic perception – our perceptions are driven by deeper hardwired circuits and old habits, much more than by receiving data fresh from the world. As a result, people perceive according to their beliefs and attitudes, rather than seeing things as they are or could be.
- 5 It's practically impossible to deconstruct our wiring – attention itself creates change in the brain. So trying to get rid of circuits is often ineffective and ends up deepening them instead. This explains why focusing on problems creates more awareness of problems, whereas focusing on solutions creates more solutions.
- 6 It's easy to create new wiring – the brain creates new connections all the time. The key, if we want to create a long-term circuit, new belief and new habit, is to pay lots of attention. Attention, in the form of quality and quantity of focus, is what changes the brain over time.

### NOTES

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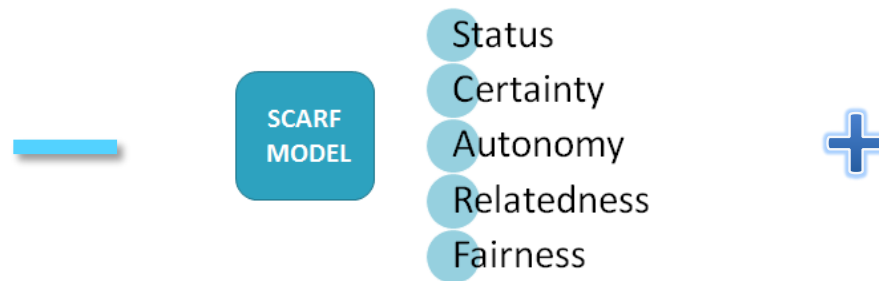
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## 4.2 SCARF



- ◆ **Status:** When people realize that they may compare unfavorably to someone else, the threat response kicks in, causing some of the same effects as sleep deprivation and anxiety. Giving a person unsolicited advice threatens status because it implies to their brain that the person giving the advice is superior. *Status can be elevated by praise or when people master a new skill. Status can also be elevated when a manager recognizes an employee's development efforts. Seeking permission to have the conversation and on which direction to go in the conversation puts people on equal status.*
- ◆ **Certainty:** The minute the brain registers ambiguity or confusion, it reacts with a threat response. Working memory is diminished and tension is present. The perception of uncertainty frequently undercuts focus and performance. *Placement helps you and your employees know where you are and where you are going in a conversation. This increases certainty for the employee.*
- ◆ **Autonomy:** Studies show that the degree of control available during stressful situations determines whether the stressor will undermine the ability to perform. As long as people feel they can execute their own decisions without much oversight, stress remains under control. A perception of reduced autonomy can easily generate a threat response. By contrast, the perception of greater autonomy increases the feeling of certainty and reduces stress. *Permission facilitates autonomy with your employees as does involving them in identifying the problem, solution, and plan for success.*

- ◆ **Relatedness:** Fruitful collaboration depends on healthy relationships, which require trust and empathy. In the brain, the ability to feel trust and empathy is shaped by people perceiving they are part of the same social group. *Leaders who strive for inclusion and minimize situations in which people feel rejected create an environment that supports maximum performance. Sharing how you feel about your employee's performance, being generous, helps you relate to your staff and builds trust.*
- ◆ **Fairness:** The perception that an event has been unfair generates a strong response (fight or flight), stirring hostility and undermining trust. As with status, people perceive fairness in relative terms. In organizations, the perception of unfairness creates an environment in which trust and collaboration cannot flourish. Like certainty, **fairness** is served by transparency. *Leaders, who share information in a timely manner keep employees engaged, motivated, and demonstrate fairness. Being succinct, specific, and generous promotes transparency and also promotes trust and fairness.*

## NOTES

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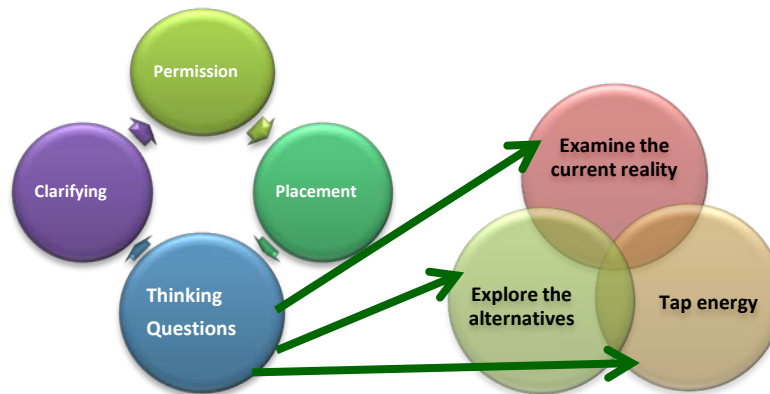
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## Additional Communication and Coaching Tools

### CREATE New Thinking and Habits



#### Step 1: Examine Current Reality (CR)

When we start our conversation with a coachee who has a problem or wants to get better at something, we begin by examining their **Current Reality**. We do this by asking thinking questions. Once coachees clearly understand their current reality, they are ready to **explore alternatives**.

#### Step 2: Explore Alternatives (EA)

After we have helped the coachee determine the current reality by asking thinking questions and clarifying for understanding, we then move to the next step of **exploring alternatives**. When coachees have an insight for a possible alternative to their dilemma, they are energized and inspired to take action. Usually the first alternative that people come up with is one they are most comfortable with, not necessarily the best one. We keep asking questions to stretch them to explore more alternatives. When they develop one they are truly committed to, move to **tap their energy**.

#### Step 3: Tap Energy (TE)

After we have explored alternatives and are certain we have discovered the best one, the next step is to **tap the energy** the coachee has from their insights. The key here is to direct the conversation toward the coachee's place of energy. Listen for emotive words, feelings and energy in the coachee's voice, and focus your questions there. Set actions by CRAFTing a plan.

## References and Resources

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**Training:** For Information on the course "Coaching: Conversations that Drive Positive Change" contact Dave Byers at [davbyers@illinois.edu](mailto:davbyers@illinois.edu), 217-333-2401.