

Timely Tips

for Workshop Participants

from Thinking Well Consulting
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This week: The Four Stages of Competency

Dear Reader,

You have probably come across this process before -- of how we learn a skill or accomplish something. And yet, it is always good to remember that there was a time we fell off the bicycle before we wobbled on it and eventually learned to maneuver it successfully. It's a useful reminder for managers too, when a new employee is learning their job or an experienced employee is stretching to take on more responsibility.

Four Stages of Learning

A model about how we learn.



Learning can be said to take place in four stages:

I Unconscious incompetence

Blissful ignorance

Confidence exceeds ability, we are not knowledgeable/skillful.

We don't know we don't know.

II Conscious incompetence

We discover a skill we wish to learn - driving a car, riding a bike.

Confidence drops as we realize our ability is limited.

We need to practice to learn. Often this means not succeeding at first.

This is learning; unfortunately, in our culture it is often labeled 'failure'. We feel uncomfortable.

We know what we don't know.

III Conscious competence

We acquire the skill. We have become consciously competent. Our conscious mind can only cope with a small number of new bits of information at any one time.

Our confidence increases with our ability, we have to concentrate on what we know/do.

Can do if know how to.

IV Unconscious competence

Lastly, we blend the skills together and they become habits - we can then do them while our mind is on other things.

We have reached the stage of unconscious competence.

Our confidence and ability have peaked, we no longer have to concentrate on what we know/do; this is the start of the next learning curve.

We can do, but don't necessarily know how we do.

In different areas of our life we will be at different stages on different learning curves.

I. Unconscious Incompetence	IV. Unconscious Competence
II. Conscious Incompetence	III. Conscious Competence

It's important to note the process:

At quadrant I confidence exceeds ability - a drop in confidence is needed to move forward.

At quadrant II ability exceeds confidence - a boost in confidence is needed to move forward.

Our learning curve is constantly moving in all areas of our lives. In what areas are you in stage I? In what areas are you in stage IV? If you find yourself in stage IV in all areas, you are definitely in a place to invite learning and growth and embrace 'unconscious incompetence' all over again.

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Have a joyful day,



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