



TOOLS, TECHNIQUES & MODELS FOR COACHING

A Wacky and Unique Tool to Use With Clients

by Ruby McGuire (UK)

The Coaching Session Model
by Gary Gasaway (USA)

A Musical Leadership Quadrant

by Rosen Rashkov
– iCN Journalist (Bulgaria)

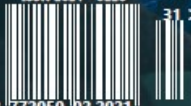
QUARTERLY COLUMN

Create Learning Tasks to Invite Active Client Engagement

by Keith Merron (USA)

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Does your Client Need an Upgrade?

by Richard Boston (UK)



SUCCESS



Most coaching clients are facing increasing amounts of change, complexity, uncertainty and ambiguity. What if there was a simple but highly effective way to help us all – clients and coaches alike – to ‘upgrade’ our capacity to deal with all that complexity?

Have you ever had a sense that some of the people you work with seem to be at a different stage in their development than others? Perhaps they are quicker to find patterns and carve a path through the complexity, or more able to step back and see situations from a different perspective, or more willing to question their thinking, their values and even their own identity.

In *Upgrade*, Karen Ellis and I look at those differences in terms of four mental capacities that we all rely on to deal with complex, fast-moving environments:

1 Sense-making

to find patterns and clarity in the mass of complex, interconnected data that assail us every day

2 Perspective-shifting

to ‘zoom out’ to see things from different points of view

3 Self-relating

to understand and manage ourselves, and drive our own development

4 Opposable Thinking

to notice, understand and work with opposing ideas, positions or values

All of us have all four of these capacities. We just vary in our ability to use them. In *Upgrade*, Karen and I differentiate between a number of different levels in each capacity. Each is a massive step-change in how people think about themselves, the world, and everyone and everything in it. Each ‘upgrade’ from one level to the next makes us better at handling ‘VUCA’* situations; better at handling transitions into bigger, more complex jobs. When you and I come across clients who are struggling, stuck in a rut, plateauing in their careers, or repeating counter-productive behaviours time and time again, they are almost certainly in need of an upgrade.

Understanding what level we and our clients are at makes a huge difference to the quality of our coaching. It helps us meet them where they currently are, and helps us help them progress to the next level – should they wish to do so. The levels are rooted in the hard science of adult development**.

So, there is real rigour to the case studies, tools and exercises we've offered in *Upgrade*. But you don't need the book or an appreciation of the levels to use the capacities as a powerful tool in coaching.

The simplest, easiest way to use them is to ask your clients to look at the challenges they are facing using each capacity in turn. Each sheds a very different kind of light on the situation. Each generates a different line of inquiry. Each suggests different kinds of coaching questions and different coaching tools, many of which you will already have in your toolkit.

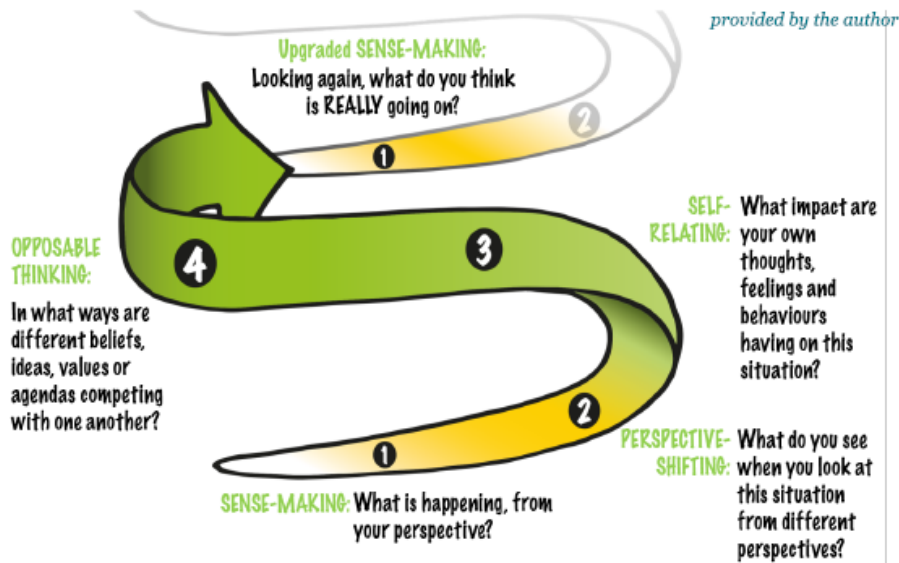


Where might this fit into your current coaching practice? At whatever point you are encouraging the client to share, explore or assess their perceptions, beliefs and assumptions about the challenge they are facing, before you move to potential solutions. For instance, if you are familiar with the GROW model, then you would draw on these four capacities for a deep, rich exploration of the R – the client's current Reality.

The spiralling image below shows one of the most impactful ways to work through the four capacities, starting at the bottom and working our way to the top.

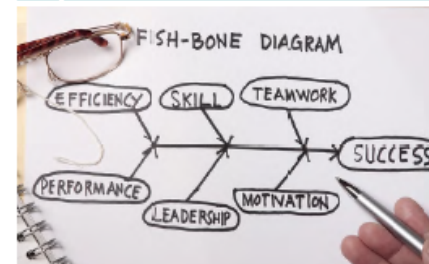
Many clients will follow this route quite naturally, but with your help they will do that work more consciously, artfully and effectively. In the image above, you have a potential opening question for each of the four stages. You may well feel happy to take it from there, asking your own questions and using your own tools to deepen the exploration.

Key, of course, is to challenge the client's current beliefs and assumptions, helping them develop a more sophisticated and enabling 'mental model' of the problem so they can find a way forward that they might not have found otherwise.



However skilled you are as a coach, you might also find the following suggestions useful:

1. Sense-making:



encourage clients to draw a 'map' of the problem they're facing. Some people choose to create stakeholder maps. Others use 'fishbone' or 'multiple cause' diagrams, which you will find explained online. Others prefer to be more abstract and metaphorical. Whatever approach you and your client prefer, having something physical to look at makes things a lot easier and more effective.

2. Perspective-shifting

when asking clients to take a different person's perspective, ask them to stand up and move to a different chair or place in the room – even if you are working virtually or over the phone. Very, very few people will *truly* step out of their own fixed perspective unless you physically move them.

3. Self-relating



FOOTNOTES

* VUCA: Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous

** For example, the work on 'adult constructivist development' by the likes of Robert Kegan, Bill Torbert, David Rooke, Elliott Jacques, Jennifer Garvey Berger and Terri O'Fallon.

ask the client to name at least three emotions they are feeling with regard to this situation. Then explore the effect those emotions are having on their beliefs, assumptions, expectations and behaviours. You might also dig into the *true* source of those emotions.

4. Opposable Thinking

be sure to explore the opposing beliefs, ideas, values and agendas *within* your client, as well as those around them. Most of us have internal dilemmas, conflicts and inconsistencies. As with all coaching, it pays to be patient and probe far beyond your client's first answers when it comes to Opposable Thinking.

Looking at the image above, you will notice that, when we have been through the four capacities once, we spiral back around to Sense-making. It won't be the same Sense-making, though. The work you have done already will have greatly refined your client's understanding of the situation and the challenge they are facing.

I would recommend asking them to share that revised 'map' of the problem, perhaps even updating their drawing or creating an entirely new one. Then, you will be in a really good position to start working on potential solutions. You will find those solutions come quickly and easily and are much better quality than they would have been otherwise.

Ultimately, one of the benefits of coaching is the way it helps clients get better at solving problems for themselves. These four capacities work like muscles. Using them in this structured, explicit way gives those muscles a really good workout. It means they will be stronger the next time your client encounters a challenge. So, just by adding these four capacities to your normal coaching practice, you will have been giving your client an *Upgrade*.