

Conscious and Unconscious Competence

Purpose

To help me recognise that there are patterns relating to what I know, how I develop skills and my capability for passing them on.

Opportunities for use

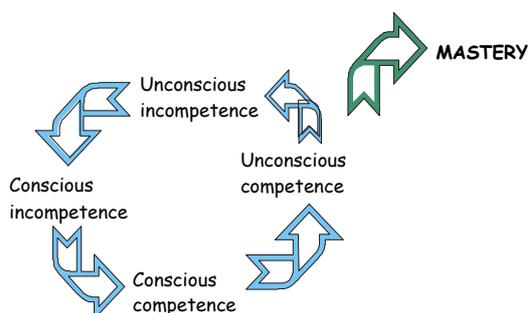
When learning new skills, passing on skills or coaching others to develop new skills.

Benefits

- ✓ Makes me much more aware of the process by which I learn.
- ✓ Being more sympathetic to the difficulties that people might be experiencing.
- ✓ Helps to indicate where different people can be 'blocked' in personal learning.

Outline of this tool

I can view where I am in terms of;



I don't know what I don't know

Unconscious incompetence [UI]

I know what I don't know

Conscious incompetence [CI]

I know what I know. It takes effort to do it

Conscious competence [CC]

I know what I know and can do it without thinking

Unconscious competence [UC]

I know what I know so well that I am able to pass on my skills to others

Mastery [M] This is a sought after and usually transient stage.

This is not viewed as a linear sequence. It is more effective to think of the stages as a loop or a spiral as in the diagram.

A good metaphor to illustrate this model is learning to drive!! When I first get in the car I am:

1. Unaware of all the difficulties that I
2. suddenly become aware of as soon as I try to engage the clutch, get in the right gear, look forwards and in the mirrors 'all at the same time' etc. It quickly becomes apparent that there are lots of things that I cannot do competently. Then as I grow in competence I
3. can drive OK as long as I think hard about things and eventually
4. I realise that I have driven 20 miles without consciously thinking about anything!

How to use this tool

- Notice where I am in the model when seeking to learn
- The model helps me to reflect on learning
- The model assists me when coaching

Some experiences

Analytical people often find it hardest to move from Conscious Incompetence [CI] to Conscious Competence [CC] because the latter implies a level of uncertainty they are often uncomfortable with. For intuitive people the difficulty is often between Unconscious Competence and Mastery because they question the need to 'understand it'. Reflect on the possibility or risk that I 'flip' from one stage to another, missing one out along the way.

UC can decay to UI through changing environments and standards: hence the need for life long learning.

References

TP's tools: *Learning styles*.