

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



701 The Four Stages of Learning – With a Twist

Would you say that your level of competence is conscious or unconscious? And in the times when you've been incompetent — I know this probably doesn't apply to you personally — was that conscious or unconscious? I'm Jerry Roberts and inquiring minds want to know, and they will, next, on The Extra Point.

About 50 years ago, a model called *The Four Levels of Teaching* was created. It would describe where somebody was in their journey from just starting out and having no particular ability in a certain skill, all the way to mastery. Later, it became known as *The Four Levels of Learning* or *The Four Levels of Competence*.

Maybe we'll be covering new ground for you today, or perhaps you might be familiar with this concept, so today's Extra Point will be a refresher for you. If that's the case, stay with us because we'll have a twist on how you understand it at the end.

Stage 1 is being Unconsciously Incompetent. I've always referred to this as "I don't know what I don't know." It's all a blank slate, and you're just getting started. You bump into a lot of furniture at this level, and progress can be painful.

The important thing is to come to the realization that there's a whole bunch that you don't know about the subject matter. The manager or teacher needs to make sure this is understood. Now wait, it's actually a good thing, because now you can move to the second level...

Stage 2, being Consciously Incompetent. Here's where "I know what I don't know." Why is this good? Because once you know what you don't know, you can begin to learn the things you don't know. You know?

Yes, there is hope. Some people ask, "Isn't this cause for embarrassment? I mean, if I'm

just now figuring out what I don't know, do you think others knew it before I did?"

My advice is, don't go there. This is not embarrassment, it's a cause for celebration — because now I'm on the road to improvement. That takes me to...

Stage 3, which is being Consciously Competent. This is where you can say to yourself, "Now I know, and it's starting to show." At this point you get it, and you're good at what you do. A consciously competent individual dedicates him/herself to the improvement of their particular skill or talent. They're careful to follow the steps to success, conscious of every point along the way.

They enjoy the fact that their boss feels more comfortable in relying on them to get a job done, with little or no supervision. When you get here, it's only a hop, step, and a jump to...

Stage 4, Unconsciously Competent...or as we described it earlier, mastery of the skill. You might say, "I know what I know, and I just go." People who are unconsciously competent are those who can do it, as they say, "in their sleep."

Your body seems to take over and you just perform. Sometimes, when you get done, you don't even remember being there. Yet, the work you delivered is great.

Okay, I mentioned a twist. I visited the Oxford University medical site, based in England, and they had a unique take on this. Stay with me.

In order to get a driver's license we take a test, and in this test we are so careful, functioning in the conscious-competence mode. If we pass and get the license, we then increasingly perform in the unconscious-competence mode.

(Con't.)

We learn to drive while listening to the radio and talking to passengers, even taking our eyes off the road ahead for a second or two.

The more familiar we become with driving, the better we handle the vehicle. The longer we stay in unconscious competence, we may also develop some bad habits, like expecting other drivers to drive intelligently, or talking on our phone, or going over the speed limit, or improperly changing lanes, and then BAM! — fender bender. The Oxford people suggest there is a next stage, and it's...

Stage 5, a regular and deliberate return to Conscious Competence. If you will, “I know what I know, and back I go to get some mo.” This is refreshing our perspective. We can review what we know and pursue the learning of new things about our skill.

By stimulating the conscious competence stage, we can eventually get back to unconscious competence, and perform more effectively for a longer period, until we repeat the process.

So, it's unconscious incompetence, to conscious incompetence, to conscious competence, to unconscious competence, and then back to conscious competence, which will eventually lead us back to unconscious competence.

And if you're still conscious...

That's The Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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