

Hidden Competing Commitments Process

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(Revised: 8. October 2007 by Clinton Callahan)

FORMAT:

Various forms.

Duration: about 110 minutes.

PURPOSE:

To reveal the hidden competing commitments that cause inexplicable resistance to achieving goals in personal or organizational change.

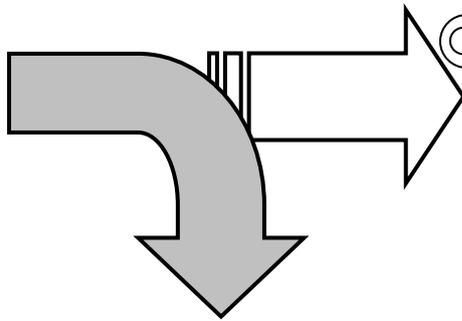
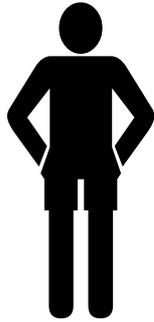
SETUP:

A 7 step assessing/creating process done individually, in groups of three, or simultaneously in a large group. (20 min initial writing process, then 30 min assessment and feedback per person, e.g. in groups of 3 it takes about 110 min)

INTRO / BACKGROUND:

Often a person will have the required abilities to change, genuinely supports the proposed change, and yet inexplicably makes no successful shifts. Although the forces of evolution are powerful, the Box makes human beings immune to real change in certain areas. This resistance to change does not necessarily reflect opposition to the change. The resistance may come from *hidden competing commitments*. Hidden competing commitments are revealed as the inconsistencies between people's stated goals and their actual results achieved. By using the Hidden Competing Commitments Process, a person's unconscious previous but forgotten true wishes can be revealed and then their paradoxical or irrational behavior suddenly makes sense. This process creates clarity for taking new actions.

MAP OF HIDDEN COMPETING COMMITMENTS



These are the actions I *should* take to reach my goals – good for my health, family, finances, and career. I think these are my highest commitments.

These are often surprising actions I actually do take. These actions produce results that may even be opposite to the results I say I am committed to. My actions fulfill (survival) commitments that I made long ago to avoid worrisome outcomes that I assume are likely to occur. Through the *Hidden Competing Commitments Process* I can unveil and re-examine my hidden worries and assumptions in light of present circumstances, and I can make new assumptions if I want to.

INSTRUCTIONS / PROCEDURE:

The seven-step *Hidden Competing Commitments Process* takes a person through

- 1) Assessing their perceived unsuccesses,
- 2) Revealing the associated worrisome outcomes if instead they had succeeded,
- 3) Unveiling the assumptions forming the basis of their worries,
- 4) Re-assessing their assumptions from the perspective of present day circumstances,
- 5) Re-assessing the assumptions from the perspective of intelligent colleagues,
- 6) Having a chance to change any of the assumptions, and,
- 7) Having a chance to design experiments in new behaviors based on the new assumptions. Your flip chart should look like this:

HIDDEN COMPETING COMMITMENTS

Turn your paper sideways, LABEL 5 columns:

1. UNSUCCESSSES – your unachieved goals, failures, and unfulfilled dreams.
2. FEARS IF it had been SUCCESSFUL – what bad things might have happened if instead you had succeeded?
3. ASSUMPTIONS – that made success worrisome. “I assume that if I would have succeeded, then...”
4. MY OPINION – your present opinion about each assumption. Is it still true? False? Why?
5. THEIR OPINION – your colleagues’ opinions about each assumption. Do they think it is true? False? Why?
6. Mark any old assumptions you want to change now. Copy to a new sheet. Clearly write your new assumptions.
7. Under each new assumption design small and radical experiments to test the validity of your new assumption.

In detail the trainer works people through the following questions:

- 1) What would you like to see changed to make you more effective or to make what you do more satisfying? (The answer is usually a complaint, but reveals what the person cares about.)
- 2) What commitments does your complaint imply of you? (Produces a positive statement of the first answer.)
- 3) What are you yourself doing to keep your commitment from being realized? (Shows their creative responsibility.)
- 4) If you imagine doing the opposite, do you detect in yourself any discomfort or vague fears? (The consequences of not doing these actions or inactions is considered. The answer reveals a connection between behavior and an assumption of results.)
- 5) By engaging in this undermining behavior, what worrisome outcome are you committed to preventing? (“By not listening, I am committed to not learning about problems that I cannot fix.” This is self protection, at the center of a big assumption, deeply rooted beliefs about themselves and the world.)
- 6) Bring the big assumptions to light. Invert the competing commitment statement. Have people write, “I assume that if ...”

7) Now we can overcome immunity to change. Observe: notice and record current behavior, look for contrary evidence, explore the history, then test the assumption. Assumptions were created with past evidence to protect us. The old evidence may not apply anymore. Big assumptions are not always false. But once the big assumptions are questioned, more effective behavior can be found. This helps people overcome limitations and resistance to change and growth.

NOTE: If you are doing this process with managers or employees it can be very effective to begin with a step 0. Step 0 is to ask them for their biggest complaint about their job, their company, their working conditions. Whatever complaint they give reveals what this person cares about, what they want changed. They want this thing changed to make them more effective or to make what they do more satisfying. Their complaint is that it has not happened yet, so it is an unsuccess for them. Have the person list this unsuccess as step number one in the instructions above.

DEBRIEF:

Ask participants to share the most impactful item from their original list all the way through the seven steps. Ask them to share about how it was for them to recognize the assumptions. Invite them to choose a partner and make an agreement and a date to report in about the results of their testing experiments.