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Technology for teaching and learning 1 book pdf

Problem solving is an example of one-cycle learning. You identify the bug and use a specific tool to fix it. But genuine learning involves an additional step in which you reflect on your assumptions and verify the validity of your hypotheses. Achieving this dual learning cycle is more than a matter of motivation, you should think about how you think. Failure makes you think about your assumptions and conclusions. That's why the organization's smartest and most successful employees are often such poor students: they didn't have the opportunity for introspection that fails. So when they fail or are simply unsatisfactory, they can be surprisingly defensive. Instead of criticizing their own behavior, they throw the blame outwards - at anyone or at whatever they can. The idea in practice people often profess to be open to criticism and new learning, but their actions offer a completely different set of guiding values or theories to use: the desire to stay in one-sided control of the goal of maximizing winning, while minimizing the loss of belief that negative feelings should be suppressed by the desire to seem as rational as possible. Taken together, these values betray a deeply defensive position: the need to avoid embarrassment, threat or a sense of vulnerability and incompetence. This closed justification explains why simply encouraging an open investigation can be intimidating for some. This is especially true for the behavior of many of the most highly skilled and well-trained employees. Behind their lofty aspirations is an equally high fear of failure and a tendency to be ashamed when they do not meet their high standards. Consequently, they become fragile and dull in situations in which they do not succeed immediately. Fortunately, it is possible for individuals and organizations to develop more productive behaviors. Two suggestions on how to do this: 1. Apply the same kind of hard reasoning you use to conduct strategic analysis. Collect the most objective data you can find. Make your conclusions clear and check them constantly. Send your findings to the most complex tests of all: make sure they are not self-serving or impossible for others to check. Senior managers must first model the changes they want. When management demonstrates their willingness to critique their own usage theories by changing them as stated, it will be easier for everyone to do the same. Example: The CEO of an organizational and design firm has set an example to address the real challenges posed by intense competition between his direct reports. In one paragraph, he described a meeting he intended to meet with his subordinates. Then recorded what he planned to say, how he thought his subordinates would react, as well as any thoughts or feelings he thought he might possibly not to express for fear of derailing the conversation. Instead of actually holding a meeting, he analyzed the scenario he developed with his direct reports. The result was an illuminating conversation in which the Director General and his subordinates were able to bypass the closed-circuit discussions that characterized so many previous discussions. Any company that strives for success in the tighter business environment of the 1990s must first solve the basic dilemma: success in the market increasingly depends on learning, but most people do not know how to learn. Moreover, those members of the organization, who many considered to be the best in training, are actually not very good. I am talking about well-educated, powerful, highly skilled professionals who hold key leadership positions in a modern corporation. Most companies not only have enormous difficulties in solving this learning dilemma; they don't even know it exists. The reason is that they misunderstand what training is and how to achieve it. As a result, they tend to make two mistakes in their efforts to become a learning organization. First, most people define learning too narrowly as a simple problem-solving solution, so they focus on identifying and correcting errors in the external environment. Solving problems is very important. But in order for training to continue, managers and staff also need to look inside. They need to think critically about their behavior, identify the ways in which they often inadvertently contribute to the organization's problems, and then change their actions. In particular, they must learn to identify and solve problems on their own. I coined the terms Single Cycle and Double Cycle learning to capture this important distinction. To give a simple analogy: a thermostat that automatically turns on heat whenever the temperature in the room drops below 68 degrees is a good example of a single learning cycle. A thermostat that might ask: Why am I set at 68 degrees? and then examine whether or not any other temperature can more economically achieve the heating room goal will participate in double loop training. Highly skilled professionals are often very good at one learning cycle. After all, they spent most of their lives acquiring academic credentials, mastering one or more intellectual disciplines, and applying these disciplines to solving real problems. But ironically, it is this fact that helps explain why professionals are often so bad at double-cycle training. Simply put, because many professionals are almost always successful in what they do, they rarely experience failure. And because they rarely fail, they never learned to learn from failure. So whenever their one-time learning strategies go wrong, they Defensive, screen screen critics, and put blame on everyone but themselves. In short, their ability to learn is turned off at the very moment when they need it most. The propensity of professionals to behave defensively helps shed light on the second mistake that companies make in training. The general assumption is that getting people to learn is pretty much a matter of motivation. When people have the right attitude and commitment, learning is automatically followed. In this way, companies focus on creating new organizational structures - compensation programs, performance reviews, corporate culture and the like - that are designed to create motivated and dedicated employees. But effective double-cycle learning is not just a function of how people feel. It is a reflection of how they think, i.e. the cognitive rules or reasoning they use to develop and implement their actions. Think of these rules as a kind of master program stored in the brain, regulating all behavior. Defensive reasoning can block learning, even if individual commitment is high, just as a computer program with hidden errors can produce results that are exactly the opposite of what its designers planned. Companies can learn to solve the learning dilemma. What is needed is to do the ways in which managers and employees talk about their behavior, the focus of organizational training programs and continuous improvement. Teaching people how to talk about their behavior in new and more effective ways destroys the defense systems that block learning. All subsequent examples include a certain type of professional: consultants on accelerated work in large consulting companies. But the implications of my argument go far beyond this particular professional group. The fact is, more and more jobs, regardless of the name, are taking on the contours of work knowledge. People at all levels of the organization need to combine the skill of some highly specialized technical knowledge with the ability to work effectively in teams, build productive relationships with customers and customers, and think critically, and then change their own organizational practices. And the nuts and bolts of management - whether powerful consultants or service representatives, senior managers or factory technicians - are increasingly composed of the management and integration of the autonomous but interconnected work of highly skilled professionals. As professionals have avoided training for 15 years, I have conducted in-depth research on management consultants. I decided to study consultants for a few simple reasons. First, they are the epitome of highly educated professionals who play a more central role in all organizations. Almost all of the consultants I have studied have an MBA from three or four of the best U.S. business schools. They are also very committed to their work. For example, in one of the more than 90% of consultants responded in the survey that they were highly satisfied with their work and company. I also suggested that such professional consultants would study well. After all, the essence of their work is to teach others how to do things differently. However, I have found that these consultants embody the dilemma of learning. Most enthusiastic about continuous improvement in their own organizations, they are also often the biggest obstacle to its complete success. Professionals embody the dilemma of learning: they are enthusiastic about continuous improvement and are often the biggest obstacle to its success. As long as training and change efforts focus on external organizational factors - job redesigns, compensation programs, performance reviews and management training - professionals have been enthusiastic participants. Indeed, the creation of new systems and structures was exactly the kind of task that well-educated, highly motivated professionals thrived on. And yet, at a time when the desire for continuous improvement has turned into a professional's own performance, something went wrong. It wasn't a bad attitude. The commitment of professionals to excellence was genuine, and the company's vision was clear. However, continuous improvement did not continue. And the longer the continuous improvement efforts continued, the more likely they are to arrive at ever-decreasing returns. What happened? Professionals began to be shy. They were threatened by the prospect of a critical examination of their own role in the organization. Indeed, because they were so well paid (and generally believed that their employers were supportive and fair), the idea that their activities might not be at their best made them feel guilty. Far from being a catalyst for real change, such feelings have forced most to react defensively. They projected blame for any problems from themselves and on what they said were obscure targets, insensitive and unfair leaders, and stupid customers. Let's look at this example. In one of the main management consulting companies, the head of the casework team held a meeting to study the group's activities on a recent consulting project. The client was largely satisfied and gave the team relatively high ratings, but the manager believes that the team did not create the added value that it is capable of and promised by the consulting company. In a spirit of constant improvement, he felt the team could do better. Indeed, so did some of the team members. The manager knew how difficult it was for people to think critically about their work, especially in the presence of his manager, so he a number of steps to make frank and open discussion possible. He invited an external consultant, whom the team knew and to keep me honest, he said. He also agreed to record the entire meeting on tape. Thus, any subsequent confusion or disagreement as to what happened at the meeting can be verified on the basis of a transcript. Finally, the manager opened the meeting by stressing that no topic had been closed, including his own behavior. I understand that you can believe that you can't stand up to me," the manager said. But I urge you to challenge me. You owe me a duty to tell me where you think the management made mistakes, just as I am obliged to identify everything I believe you have done. And we must all admit our own mistakes. If we don't have an open dialogue, we won't learn. The professionals took the manager on the first half of his invitation, but quietly ignored the second. When they were asked to identify key issues in their customer experience, they looked completely out of themselves. Customers were non-cooperative and arrogant. They didn't think we could help them. At times, our managers were not up to speed before they entered into client meetings. In fact, the professionals claimed that they were helpless to act differently - not because of any restrictions, but because of the limitations of others. The manager listened carefully to the team members and tried to respond to their criticism. He described the mistakes made during the consultations. For example, one specialist objected to the manager meeting on the project. I see that the way I asked questions closed the discussions," the manager replied. I didn't want to do it, but I see how you could believe that I had already made a decision. Another member of the group complained that the manager had succumbed to pressure from his boss to report the project too quickly, given the team's high workload. I think it was my responsibility to say no, admitted the manager. It was clear that we all had a huge amount of work to do. Finally, after a three-hour discussion of his own behavior, the manager began asking team members if there were any mistakes they could make. At the end of the day, he said, this client was no different. How can we be more efficient in the future? the professionals repeated that it is really the fault of customers and their own managers. As one put it: They must be open to change and want to learn. The more the manager tried to get the team to study their own responsibility for the result, the more professionals bypassed his problems. The best team member could suggest for the team the case to promise less, implying that there is really no way for the group to improve their performance. Case team members react defensively to defend themselves, although their manager does not act in such a way that an outsider will consider a threat. Even if their accusations were true - customers may well be arrogant and closed, their own managers are far from them - the way they presented these claims is guaranteed to cease to be learned. With few exceptions, professionals have made attributions about the behavior of clients and managers, but have never publicly verified their claims. For example, they said that customers were not motivated to find out, but never provided any evidence to support this claim. When they were told that there was no concrete evidence, they simply repeated their criticism more vehemently. If the experts felt these questions so strongly, why did they never mention them during the project? According to experts, even this is the fault of others. We didn't want to alienate the customer, claimed one. We didn't want to be seen as nagging, said another. Professionals have used their criticism of others to protect themselves from the potential embarrassment of admitting that they too may have contributed to a team of less-than-perfect performance. Moreover, the fact that they continued to repeat their defensive actions in the face of the manager's efforts to draw the team's attention to their own role shows that this defense has become a reflexive routine. From the point of view of professionals, they did not resist; they focused on the real reasons. Indeed, they should be respected, if not congratulated, for their work as well as in such difficult circumstances. It's not enough to be honest. Professionals can still find themselves talking past each other. The end result was an unproductive parallel conversation. Both the manager and the professionals were frank; they expressed their views with determination. But they spoke to each other without finding a common language to describe what had happened to the client. Professionals continued to insist that the blame rests with others. The manager continued to try unsuccessfully to get professionals to see how they contribute to the state of affairs they criticize. The dialogue of this parallel conversation is as: Professionals: Customers should be open. They have to want to change. Manager: It is our job to help them see what changes are in their best interest. Professionals: But the clients disagreed with our analysis. Manager: If they didn't think our ideas were right, how could we convince them? Professionals: Maybe we need more customer appointments. Manager: If we are not ready properly, and if customers do not think we are trustworthy, how will more meetings help? There should be a better connection between the team and the management. Manager: I agree. But professionals need to take the lead to educate the manager about the challenges they are experiencing. Professionals: Our leaders are inaccessible and far away. Manager: How do you expect us to find out if you don't tell us? Conversations like this illustrate the dilemma of learning. The problem with the claims of professionals is not that they are wrong, but that they are not useful. Constantly turning away the focus from their own behavior to the behavior of others, professionals stop training. The manager understands the trap, but does not know how to get out of it. To learn how to do this, you need to delve into the dynamics of defensive reasoning and the special reasons that make professionals so inclined to do so. Defensive Reasoning and Doom Loop What Explains The Defense Of Professionals? Not their attitude to change or commitment to continuous improvement, they really wanted to work more efficiently. Rather, the key factor is how they talked about their behavior and the behavior of others. It is impossible to reason anew in any situation. If we had to think through every possible answer every time someone asked, How are you?, the world would pass us by. Thus, everyone develops a theory of action - a set of rules that people use to develop and implement their own behavior, as well as to understand the behavior of others. Typically, these theories of action become so taken for granted that people don't even realize they're using them. One of the paradoxes of human behavior, however, is that master programs people actually use rarely is the one they think they use. Ask people in an interview or questionnaire to formulate the rules they use to manage their actions, and they will give you what I call their supported theory of action. But watch the behavior of these same people, and you'll quickly see that this theory has very little to do with how they actually behave. For example, team case experts said they believed in continuous improvement, and yet they consistently acted in ways that made improvement impossible. When you observe human behavior and you try to come up with rules that might understand this, you discover a completely different theory of action - what I call theory in use. Simply put, people are constantly acting inconsistently, unaware of the contradiction between their supported theory and their theory in use, between how they think they act and how they actually act. Moreover, most theories in use rely on the same set of controlling values. There seems to be a universal human to develop their actions consistently in accordance with four core values: 1. Unilateral control; 2. Maximize winnings and minimize loss; 3. To suppress negative feelings; and 4. To be as rational as possible, by which people mean defining clear goals and assessing their behavior in terms of whether they have achieved or not. The purpose of all these values is to avoid embarrassment or threat by feeling vulnerable or incompetent. In this respect, the master program that most people use is deeply defensive. Defensive reasoning encourages people to keep private premises, conclusions and conclusions that shape their behavior and to avoid testing them in a truly independent, objective fashion. Because attributions that go in defensive reasoning are never verified, it is a closed cycle, surprisingly impervious to conflicting points of view. The inevitable reaction to the remark that someone is talking defensively is an even more defensive argument. With the team's case, for example, whenever someone pointed out the defensive behavior of professionals to them, their initial reaction was to look for a reason in someone else- clients who were so sensitive that they would be alienated if the consultants criticized them or the manager was so weak that he could not accept his consultants raised their problems with him. In other words, the members of the group in the case once again denied their responsibility, externalizing the problem and putting it on someone else. In such situations, the simple act of encouraging a more open investigation often attacks others as intimidation. Those who do the attacking think with their feelings about possibly being wrong, blaming a more open person for arousing these feelings and upsetting them. Needless to say, such a master program is inevitably a short-circuit learning. And for a number of reasons unique to their psychology, well-educated professionals are particularly susceptible to this. Almost all the consultants I've studied have stellar academic records. Ironically, their success in education helps explain the challenges they have with learning. Before they enter the world of work, their lives are primarily full of successes, so they have rarely experienced the embarrassment and sense of threat that comes with failure. As a result, their defensive reasoning was rarely activated. People who rarely experience failure, however, end up not knowing how to deal with it effectively. And it serves to reinforce the normal human tendency to reason in defense. The very success of education professionals helps explain the challenges they have with learning. In a survey of several hundred young consultants in organizations I've studied, these professionals describe themselves as driven internally by an unrealistically high ideal of productivity: Pressure on work is imposed I don't have to. Do a good job. I also have to be the best. The people here are very bright and hardworking; they are very motivated to do an outstanding job. Most of us want not only to succeed, but also to do it at maximum speed. These consultants always compare themselves to the best around them and are constantly trying to better their own performance. Yet they do not appreciate the fact that they are required to openly compete with each other. They feel it's somehow inhumane. They prefer to be an individual contributor, which could be called a productive loner. Behind this high success of aspiration is an equally high fear of failure and a tendency to feel shame and guilt when they do not meet their high standards. You have to avoid mistakes, said one. I hate making them. Many of us are afraid of failure, whether we admit it or not. To the extent that these consultants had success in their lives, they did not have to worry about failure and the attendant feelings of shame and guilt. But to the exact same extent, they have also never developed tolerance for feelings of failure or skills to cope with those feelings. This, in turn, made them not only afraid of failure, but also fear of failure itself. For they know that they will not cope with it perfectly - their usual level of aspiration. Consultants use two intriguing metaphors to describe this phenomenon. They talk about the nose of doom and doom zoom. Often, consultants will work well on the case team, but because they don't do the job perfectly or get rewards from their managers, they go into the doom loop of despair. And they are not weakened in the nose of doom, they increase into it. When professionals don't do their job perfectly, they increase in a nose of doom. As a result, many professionals have extremely fragile personalities. When suddenly faced with a situation, they can not immediately cope, they tend to fall apart. They cover their suffering in front of the client. They talk about it all the time with their teammates. Interestingly, these conversations usually take the form of bad-mouthed customers. This fragility leads to an inappropriately high sense of despondency or even despair when people do not achieve the high level of productivity to which they aspire. Such despondency is rarely psychologically destructive, but when combined with defensive reasoning, it can lead to a formidable predisposition against learning. There is no better example of how this fragility can disrupt an organization than performance assessments. Because it represents one moment when a professional has to measure his behavior against certain formal standards, assessing performance almost specifically in order to push a professional into a doom cycle. Indeed, a poor score can be reflected far beyond individual involvement sparks defensive reasoning throughout the organization. Performance evaluation is specifically designed to push professionals into a doom loop. In one consulting company, management created a new performance evaluation process that was designed to make assessments both more objective and more useful for those evaluated. The consultants were involved in the development of the new system and were generally delighted because it was in line with their values of objectivity and fairness. Two years after the new trial, however, he became the object of dissatisfaction. The catalyst for this o-face was the first unsatisfactory rating. Senior managers identified six consultants who they considered to be below the standard. Under the new evaluation process, they have done their best to bring their problems to six and help them improve. Managers met with each person individually for so long and as often as a professional asked to explain the reasons for the rating and discuss what needs to be done to improve, but to no avail. Productivity continued at the same low level, and, eventually, six were let go. When the word of dismissal spread to the company, people responded with confusion and anxiety. After about a dozen consultants angrily complained to management, the CEO held two lengthy meetings where employees could sell their problems. At the meetings, the experts made various claims. Some said that the evaluation process was unfair because judgements were subjective and biased and the criteria for minimum effectiveness were unclear. Others suspected that the real reason for layoffs was economic and that the efficiency evaluation procedure was merely a fig leaf to hide the fact that the company was in trouble. Still others argued that the evaluation process was anti-preparation. If a company is really a training organization, as he claimed, then people performing below the minimum standard should be trained how to achieve it. As one of the professionals put it: We were told that the company does not have an up or out policy. Up-or-out is incompatible with training. You've misled us. The Director-General tried to explain the logic of the management's decision by grounding it in the facts of the case and asking the professionals for any evidence that might contradict these facts. Is there subjectivity and bias in the evaluation process? Yes, the CEO replied, but we are trying to reduce them. We are constantly trying to improve this process. If you have any ideas, please let us know. If you know someone has been treated unfairly, please tell us about it. If any of you think you've been treated let's discuss it now or, if you like, privately. Is the level of minimum competence too vague? We are working to better define minimum competence, he said. Answered. In the case of the six, however, their performance was so poor that it was not difficult to reach a solution. Most of the six people received timely feedback about their problems. And in the two cases where people didn't, the reason is that they never took responsibility for finding grades and, in fact, actively avoided them. If you have any data to the contrary, added the CEO, let's talk about it. Were the six asked to leave for economic reasons? No, the CEO said. We have more work than we can do and letting go of professionals is extremely costly for us. Do any of you have any information to the contrary? When a professional performs below the minimum level, the CEO explained. We jointly design a corrective experience with a person. Then we look at the signs of improvement. In these cases, either the professionals are reluctant to take on such tasks, or they have repeatedly failed when they have done so. Again, if you have information to the contrary, I'd like to hear about it. The CEO concluded: This is unfortunate, but sometimes we make mistakes and hire the wrong people. If people don't produce and repeatedly fail to improve, we don't know what else to do other than fire them. It's just not fair to keep poorly performing individuals in the company. They receive an unfair share of financial rewards. Instead of responding with their own data, the professionals simply repeated their accusations, but in a way that consistently contradicted their claims. They stated that a truly fair evaluation process would contain clear and documented performance data, but they could not provide first-hand examples of the injustice they implied by the assessment of the six laid-off staff. They argued that people should not be judged by conclusions unrelated to their actual work, but they judged the leadership in this way. They insisted that management set clear, objective and unambiguous standards of performance, but argued that any humane system would take into account that the work of a professional could not be accurately measured. Finally, they presented themselves as learning champions, but they never offered any criteria to assess whether a person might be unable to learn. In short, professionals seem to hold management to a different level of performance than they have kept themselves. In their conversations, they used many of the ineffective assessments they denounced - the lack of data, for example, and dependence on the circular logic of head we win, tails you lose. It's as if they were saying: Here's a fair performance evaluation system. You have to abide by them. But we don't have to when we evaluate you. Indeed, if I explained the behavior of professionals by formulating rules that should be in their heads so that they would act the way they did, the rules would look like this: 1. When criticizing a company, state your criticism in a way that you consider valid, but also in a way that others do not decide for themselves whether your claim is the right one. 2. When you are asked to illustrate your criticism, do not include any data that others might use to decide for themselves whether the illustrations are valid. 3. Make your findings so as to hide their logical consequences. If others point to these consequences for you, deny them. Of course, when such rules were described to professionals, they found them disgusting. It is inconceivable that these rules could explain their actions. And yet, in defending themselves against this observation, they almost always inadvertently upheld the rules. Learning How to reason productively If defensive reasoning is as widespread as I believe, then focusing on a person's attitude or commitment is never enough to produce real change. And, as the previous example shows, no new organizational structures or systems are created. The problem is that even when people are truly committed to improving their work and management has changed their structures in order to encourage the right kind of behavior, people are still locked in defensive reasoning. Either they don't know about it, or if they realize it, they blame others. However, there is reason to believe that organizations can break out of this vicious circle. Despite the power of defensive reasoning, people sincerely seek to produce what they intend. They appreciate a competent act. Their self-esteem is closely related to behavior consistently and effectively performed. Companies can use these universal human tendencies to teach people how to reason in new ways, in fact, to change master programs in their heads and thus change their behavior. People can be taught to recognize the reasoning they use in designing and implementing their actions. They can begin to identify inconsistencies between their supported and actual theories of action. They may encounter the fact that they are unconsciously designing and implementing actions that they do not intend to do. Finally, people can learn how to determine what people and groups are doing to create organizational protection and how these protections contribute to the organization's problems. As soon as companies begin this learning process, they will find that the kind of reasoning needed to reduce and overcome organizational protection the same hard reasoning that effective use of ideas in strategy, finance, marketing, manufacturing and other management disciplines. Any complex strategic analysis, for example, depends on the collection of reliable data, its careful analysis and constant testing of the findings derived from the data. The most complex tests are reserved for conclusions. Good strategists are convinced that their conclusions can withstand all kinds of critical questions. It is the same with productive discussions about human behavior. The standard of analysis is also high. Human resource programmes should no longer be soft-spoken, but should be as analytical and data-based as any other management discipline. Of course, this is not the kind of reasoning consultants used when they ran into problems that were embarrassing or threatening. The data they collected was hardly objective. The conclusions they made rarely became apparent. The conclusions to which they came were largely self-serving, impossible for others to verify, and, as a result, self-sealing, impervious to change. How can an organization start turning this situation around, teaching its members to talk productively? The first step is to get the executives at the top to study critically and change their own theories to use. Until senior managers realize how they have discussed the defence and the counterproductive consequences that lead to this, there will be little real progress. Any change of activity will probably be just a fad. Until senior managers realize how they think defensively, any change activity is likely to be a whim. Changes should start at the top, because otherwise defensive senior managers are likely to disavow any changes in reasoning, other models, and other models. If professionals or mid-level managers begin to change the way they reason and act, such changes may seem strange, if not actually dangerous to those at the top. The result is an unstable situation where top managers still believe it is a sign of care and sensitivity to get around and hide difficult issues, while their subordinates see the same actions as defensive ones. The key to any educational experience designed to teach senior managers to think productively is to connect the program to real business problems. The best demonstration of the usefulness of productive reasoning is that engaged managers can understand how they can make a direct difference in their own activities and the effectiveness of the organization. It's not going to happen overnight. Managers need a lot of opportunities to practice new skills. But only they understand the powerful impact that productive reasoning can have on actual performance, they will have a strong incentive to reason productively not only in the training session, but in all their working relationships. One simple approach that I used to start this process is to get participants to produce rudimentary examples. This topic is a real business problem that the manager either wants to deal with or has tried unsuccessfully to solve it in the past. Writing an actual case usually takes less than an hour. But then the case becomes the focal point of the extended analysis. For example, the CEO of a major organizational development consulting company was concerned about the problems caused by the intense competition between the various business functions submitted by his four direct reports. Not only was he tired of having problems on his lap, but he was also worried about the impact of interfunctional conflicts on the flexibility of the organization. He even calculated that the money spent on ironing out the differences is hundreds of thousands of dollars a year. And the more fights there were, the more defensive people became, which only increased the cost of organizing. In one paragraph, the Director-General described a meeting he intended to attend with his direct reports to address the problem. He then split the paper in half, and on the right side of the page, he wrote a script of the meeting, similar to the script of a film or a play, describing what he would say and how his subordinates were likely to react. On the left side of the page, he recorded any thoughts and feelings he would probably have during the meeting, but that he would not express for fear that they would derail the discussion. But instead of holding a meeting, the CEO analyzed this scenario with his direct reports. The case was the catalyst for a discussion in which the CEO learned a few things about how he acted with his management team. He found that his four direct reports often perceive his conversations as counterproductive. Under the guise of diplomatic, he would pretend that there was a consensus on the issue when it did not actually exist. Unintended result: Instead of feeling confident, his subordinates felt cautious and tried to figure out what he was actually getting on. The Director-General also realized that the way he had handled competitiveness among department heads was completely contradictory. On the one hand, he continued to urge them to think about the organization as a whole. On the other hand, he continued to call for action, such as cuts in the budget of departments, which directly challenged them to each other. Finally, the CEO found that many of the tacit assessments and attributions he listed proved to be wrong. Since he never made these assumptions, he never found out how wrong they were. What's more, he learned that much of what he thought he was hiding came before his subordinates anyway, but with the added message that the boss was covering up. The CEO was also aware of his own ineffective behavior. They're Them studying their own behavior as they tried to help the CEO analyze his case. They also learned by writing and analyzing the cases themselves. They started to see that they too tended to get around and hide the real problems, and that the CEO was often aware of it, but didn't say it. They also made inaccurate attributions and assessments that they did not express. Moreover, the belief that they should hide important ideas and feelings from the CEO and from each other, so as not to upset anyone, was wrong. In the context of the discussions on this case, the entire group of senior managers is quite ready to discuss what has always been unusual. In fact, an example of exercise legitimizes talking about problems that people have never been able to address before. Such a discussion can be emotional, even painful. But for managers who have the courage to persist, the payoff is great: management teams and entire organizations work more openly and more efficiently and have more room for agile behavior and adaptation to specific situations. Learning to reason productively can be emotional, even painful. But the payoff is great. When senior managers are taught new reasoning skills, they can have a big impact on the performance of the entire organization, even if other employees are still thinking defensively. The Director-General, who led the performance evaluation meetings, was able to defuse the discontent because he did not respond to the criticism of the professionals on the face, but instead gave a clear presentation of the relevant data. Indeed, most participants took the CEO's behavior as a sign that the company had indeed acted on the values of employee participation and participation that it supported. Of course, the ideal for all members of the organization to learn how to reason productively. It happened in the company where the group was meeting on the case. Consultants and their supervisors can now address some of the most difficult issues of the relationship between the consultant and the client. To get an idea of the difference productive reasoning can make, imagine how the original conversation between the manager and the cause of the team may have gone on were all involved in effective reasoning. (The next dialogue is based on actual sessions that I have attended with other teams to work with other cases in the same company since the end of the training.) First consultants would demonstrate their commitment to continuous improvement by being prepared to explore their own role in the difficulties encountered in the consultation project. No doubt they would identify their managers and clients as part of the problem, but they would go on to admit that they contributed to this as well. More importantly, they would be with a manager that as they explored the different roles of clients, managers and professionals, they they make sure to check any assessments or attributions they may make regarding the data. Each person would encourage others to question his or her reasoning. Moreover, they would insist on it. And, in turn, everyone would understand that the act of interrogation is not as a sign of distrust or invasion of privacy, but as a valuable opportunity for learning. To question other people's reasoning is not a sign of distrust, but a valuable opportunity for learning. The conversation about the manager's reluctance to say no may look something like this: Professional #1: One of the biggest problems I've had with the way you handled this case was that you didn't seem to be able to say no when neither the client nor your boss made unfair demands. (Gives an example.) Professional #2: I have another example. But I would also say that we never told you how we felt about it. Behind your back we badly mouthed you, #1 because he's such a wimp, but we never came straight and said it. Manager: It would certainly be helpful if you said something. Was there anything I said or did that gave you the idea that you better not raise this with me? Professional #3: Not really. I guess we didn't like to sound like we were whining. Manager: Well, I certainly don't think you say how you whine. But two thoughts come to mind. If I understand you

correctly, you have complained, but complaints against me and my inability to say no have been covered up. Secondly, if we discussed this, I could get the data that I need to be able to say no. Please note that when a second professional describes how consultants covered up their complaints, the manager does not criticize her. Rather, it rewards her for being open by answering the same thing. He focuses on how he, too, may have contributed to the cover-up. Reflecting unreasonably about their own role in this problem, it allows professionals to talk about their fears, seem to whine. The manager then agrees with the professionals that they should not become complainers. At the same time, he pointed to the counterproductive consequences of concealing their grievances. Another unresolved issue at the group's meeting concerned the alleged arrogance of clients. A more productive conversation about this issue can go like this: Manager: You said that customers were arrogant and did not cooperate. What did they say and do? Professional #1: One asked me if I had ever met a salary. Another asked how long I had been out of school. Professional #2: One even asked me how old I was! Professional #3: It's nothing. Worst of all when they say that all we do is interview people, write a report based on what they tell us and then our fees. Manager: The fact that we are usually so young is a real problem for many of our clients. They get very defensive about it. But I would explore whether there is a way for them to freely express their views without our getting defensive... What bothered me about your initial responses was that you assumed you were right in calling customers stupid. One thing I've noticed about consultants - in this company and the other, is that we tend to protect ourselves, badly mouthing a client. Professional #1: Right. After all, if they're really stupid, then it's obviously not our fault that they don't get it! The professional #2: Of course, this position is anti-debloom and excessive. Assuming they can't learn, we free ourselves from necessity. Professional #3: And the more we all go with a bad mouth, the more we strengthen each other's defenses. Manager: So what's the alternative? How can we encourage our clients to express their defense and at the same time rely constructively on it? professional #1: We all know that the real problem is not at our age; is whether we are able to add value to the customer's organization. They have to judge us by what we produce. And if we don't add value, they should get rid of us, no matter how young or old we are. Manager: Maybe that's what we have to tell them. They learn about their own group dynamics and solving some common problems between client and consultant. The ideas they have received will enable them to act more effectively in the future, both as individuals and as a team. They not only solve problems, but also develop a much deeper and textured understanding of their role as members of the organization. They lay the foundation for continuous improvement, which is really continuous. They learn to learn. A version of this article appeared in the May-June 1991 issue of Harvard Business Review.

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