

The Blueprint For High-Performing Leaders

Self Study Course



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HELPING
GOOD LEADERS
BECOME GREAT

Session 11: Initiate Discovery

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of Session 11, you will be able to:

- Masterfully Initiate discovery during stage 1 of C.O.R.E. Performance Coaching
- Discover and leverage openings for effective coaching conversations
- Skillfully apply techniques and questions that help to initiate discovery
- Recognize signs of opportunities for coaching

Reality Check

1. What did you learn from **Session 10: Pulling It All Together?** Also note any successes, updates, or challenges you've encountered from the previous session. Jot down any improvements you'd like to make.

2. Where are you having the biggest impact on your own results and the results of your team, division or organization?

3. Who on your team is stepping up so you can focus on your unique talents and attend to what is critical for your team's success? How are you rewarding them? Who on the team needs to put forth more effort and on what?

4. What's important to continue to put your focus on so that you will more naturally accomplish your goals?

Session 11 Lesson: Initiate Discovery

- Watch the video

Have you ever worked really hard in a coaching meeting and given really great advice only to hear at these statements at the very end?

“That’s not really where I’m struggling.”

“I already tried that, it didn’t work.”

Initiating discovery is your launch pad to gaining access to what is most pressing, concerning, exciting, demotivating or confusing to the person you are having a coaching conversation with. It’s about putting people back in control of their own destiny and results, versus you taking it over for them. *Discovery* is an opportunity to surface, identify and explore an opportunity or gap in performance, test assumptions or create awareness that impacts results.

When coaching, you initiate a discovery process where the person being coached shares an event, situation or project and through the conversation, together you discover fertile ground for coaching. This is their time to identify and guide their development and effectiveness, with you as a success partner.

A good starting point for discovering openings is to focus on what the two of you are trying to accomplish in this meeting. Remember that it’s not about you showing up and being brilliant, it’s about inspiring the best results from the person you are coaching. So let them set the agenda and then determine if you need to add to it. Most people are really good at setting an agenda, they simply have never been asked. The Coaching Prep Form in the Bonus Section is a great tool to help this process be painless.

Some people will jump in right away with pressing issues. Others aren’t clear or may be resistant for one reason or another. Even when people know ahead of time that I will be asking them, “What do you want to focus on during our time together?” they often come to our meetings unprepared to answer. They’re mostly relieved they got to our meeting on time!

In those situations, start by asking, “What’s most pressing right now?”, “What’s been your biggest challenge?” Or you can focus on events. If the person is keeping a work journal (see Bonus Section for the Daily Progress Checklist), ask them what event stands out for them this week (either a positive one or a setback). Both the Coaching Prep Form and the Daily Progress Checklist are great ways to *Initiate Discovery*.

Key Principles Associated with Initiating Discovery

Pay attention to how much you are talking. In a coaching exchange, you will be talking less and usually in the form of a question. If you're doing a lot of talking, it's likely that you're advising, supervising or managing, but you're not coaching. These actions will not lead your team to self-generating behaviors and keeps them dependent on you for the answers!

Discovery of Gaps

A gap refers to where a person *is* compared to where she *should* be, in terms of performance level. A big space between these two states means there is a big gap. The person being coached is usually blind to their own gaps. The key is to surface the gaps in a way that allows a person to take ownership, rather than feel threatened. Making a gap visible is one way to discover a high-impact coaching issue.

Outcomes of Discovery

When coaching, Initiating Discovery allows you to:

- Surface, identify and explore opportunities or gaps
- Place ownership where it belongs: on the person you are coaching
- Confirm what really matters
- Explore what rules them (assumptions and governing beliefs)
- Surface competing commitments

For the person being coached, discovery creates awareness and increased self-development, self-correction and actions that bring positive results.

An event is not considered discovery unless the person you are coaching recognizes it as something **THEY** want to add to their coaching agenda. You can pick it, but it won’t be coaching, it’ll be supervising and telling.

The Coach's Role in Initiating Discovery

Nothing is more exciting, powerful and satisfying than a perfectly placed question. The key is to ask questions that will spark a mindful response and continually clarify an issue until it's crystal clear. Clarity is very important in terms of ensuring you are not working on the wrong thing or that the "thing" you are focusing on is not distracting you from the real issues.

You need to discern which issues are the root cause and not just a symptom of the problem. And, you want to make sure your attention is on the event or issue with the highest leverage, yet make sure it's connected to what the person really wants to accomplish.

Questions for Initiating Discovery

- What would you like to focus on during this time?
- What do you want to accomplish during our time today?
- What's most pressing?
- What's distracting you or your team?
- What one thing could you shift that would create the biggest impact on your effectiveness in your role?
- What's the biggest challenge facing you now?
- What is your primary concern?
- What issues would you like to see resolved?
- What's important?

A well-placed question gets a person's mind pointed toward and focused on desired outcomes.

Assessments: Techniques and Tools for Discovery

Questions are important, but there are other techniques at your disposal as well.

The Coaching Prep Form can do wonderful things in terms of identifying objectives, challenges, opportunities and openings for coaching to take place. (See the form in the Bonus Section)

Besides applying the C.O.R.E. Performance Coaching Model and asking clarifying questions, McCauley & Company uses many different assessments with clients to help them Initiate Discovery and identify opportunities and gaps:

1. *Emotional and Social Competency Inventory (ESCI): A Leadership 360° Feedback Assessment.* Research has discovered that 90% of star performers have high emotional intelligence. In studies done by the Hay Group, IQ is only a 45% predictor of success. Emotional intelligence is coachable if the person wants to improve and you can identify where their strengths and gaps are. Our assessments involve getting feedback from a variety of stakeholders, such as your boss, Board of Directors, peers, direct reports, clients or suppliers. People who are vested in helping you achieve your professional best as a leader.
2. *Leadership Style 180°:* Designed to analyze a person's leadership style and how they are currently leading their team. Research has shown that 70% of the success or failure of an organization, division, or team is directly tied to the leader. People leave leaders, not companies. Remember that when you're doing a 180°, you're hearing from your direct reports only.
3. *Climate 180° Feedback Assessment:* This focuses on comparing your assessment of the work environment you intend on creating, with how your direct reports experience the climate you've created. The assessment shows what is getting in the way of your team's effectiveness and what you can do to help your people show up and do their best every day.

There are usually plenty of openings revealed once you Initiate Discovery. As a leader, it's just a matter of helping your people identify and focus on the one that will have the most positive impact.

Feedback from assessments like these can reveal a myriad of openings for coaching opportunities. For more detailed information about these assessments, and to find out how to purchase and use them, please visit www.mccauleyandco.com/talent-assessments.

Indicators of Success

When successful at Initiating Discovery, the person you are coaching will:

- Clearly express a desire to focus on the opportunity, event or challenge – there's no resistance; they're eager and willing.
- Be energized and ready to move forward and engage in the process.

- Begin talking about the issues and make the leap to Exploring Assumptions and Possibilities.
- Identify high impact opportunities.

Common Ways Initiating Discovery Can Go Wrong:

- Being more focused on the process, rather than what the person is saying – your job as a leader and coach is to listen to what a person says, including any non-verbal or body language cues.
- Focusing on your own agenda – The person you are coaching will sense if you have a hidden motive. If you are solely focused on *their* success, however, the conversation becomes riveting. There is nothing more compelling to people than achieving their personal and professional dreams.
- Not focusing enough on *connecting* or helping to *clarify* the root cause.
- Not using the concept of right action and causing them to work on the wrong thing.
- Using a technique that doesn't fit the person's agenda or preferences – if the only tool you have is a hammer, every problem will be perceived as a nail. This happens when you attempt to change a person's way of thinking. You need to address that person's mindset, assumptions and beliefs before picking a solution.

What's Ahead for Session 12

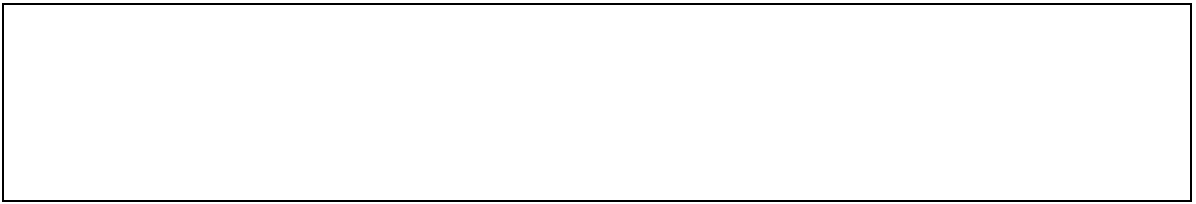
Get ready to **Explore Assumptions & Possibilities**. In the next session we are going to show you how to masterfully uncover assumptions and possibilities for a faster path to success.

Exercises:

1. The easiest way to Initiate Discovery is to ask, “What do you want to focus on during the next 30 minutes (or however long you have scheduled) for this to be a successful meeting?” Other good choices are:
 - What’s the biggest challenge facing you now?
 - What needs to happen for you to say this has been a successful year/quarter/month/week?
 - What's been happening this week that's got your attention?

Who on your team will you Initiate Discovery with first?

2. Take the Coaching Prep Form in the Bonus Section and modify it for your team. You can ask them to fill it out as best they can and use it to prepare for each developmental or status meeting with you. It’s a great way to surface openings, especially around areas that have the most leverage for you as a leader! Fill it out for yourself.



3. How is your team reacting to your coaching? What can you improve upon to get the outcomes you are looking to create with coaching? Pay attention to how this changes your effectiveness as a leader, and how quickly they begin coaching themselves before they come to you for answers!



Session 11: Initiate Discovery - Notes

The three most important things I learned from Session 11 are:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Here's how I plan to apply what I have learned:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Key Terms (See Glossary)

- **Initiate Discovery**

Extra Notes...

