

The Blueprint For High-Performing Leaders

Self Study Course



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HELPING
GOOD LEADERS
BECOME GREAT

Session 12: Explore Assumptions & Possibilities

Learning Objectives

By the end of Session 12, you will be able to:

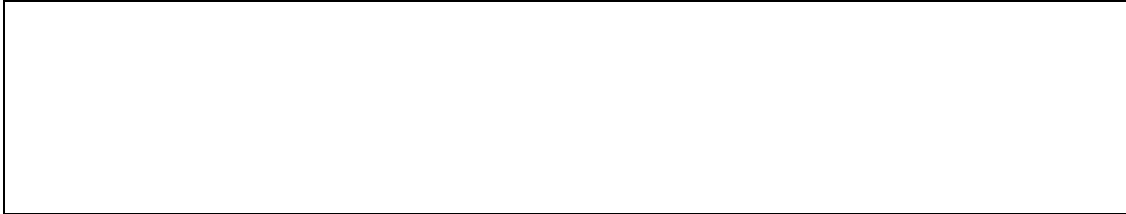
- Artfully uncover Assumptions and Possibilities, Stage 2 of C.O.R.E. Performance Coaching
- Become a neutral observer and ask questions without judgment
- Explore the assumptions that help or hurt someone's success
- Skillfully apply techniques and questions that generate many possibilities
- Recognize signs of "game changer" possibilities

Reality Check

1. What did you learn from **Session 11: Initiate Discovery**? Make note of any successes, updates, and challenges you've encountered from the previous session. Jot down any improvements you'd like to make.

2. Did any of the people you were coaching try to get you to pick what they should focus on? Don't do it! That's a deadly trap. As a leader, you want to build capability and self-generating behavior, not dependency. Dependency harms your ability to lead.

3. Did you notice that it is difficult for some people to get clear on what is really important? Did you cave and jump in to help? Or did you let them struggle and figure it out? It's easier to jump in, but in the long run you become shackled to a team that relies on your brain rather than your influence.



Remember - your role is to evoke excellence and foster your team's development as you achieve results together. It's not to do everything yourself and then cross the finish line with all of them piled on top of your back!

Session 12 Lesson – Explore Assumptions & Possibilities

- Watch the video

Assumptions and Possibilities

Do you notice that many people tend to work from a place of "Fire, ready, aim...uh-oh!" rather than taking the time needed to come up with a sound and robust plan BEFORE they act? Without the important step of exploring assumptions and identifying possibilities, there's a chance you could end up wasting time by moving ahead too quickly on the wrong thing and then having to backtrack.

As a leader, you need to be clear on what assumptions are being made and test them against reality. Assumptions can range from "I stink at prospecting and will never be successful in sales," to "Our clients are so loyal we can do whatever we want with no consequences." The variety and scope of the assumptions we make – and don't even question – is limitless. More often than not, leaders neglect to question or confirm that their assumptions are correct.

One of our clients who has built an incredibly successful and envied organization recently spoke with a group of up-and-coming managers and admitted that after going through the C.O.R.E. Performance Coaching Model she realized she was guilty of assuming her managers could "read her mind." This led to a lot of communication problems – which, of course, she had secretly been blaming on her managers. Uncovering her assumption led to a completely new relationship with her team, one that has resulted in increased productivity, promotions, and a more positive atmosphere for everyone who works at the firm.

It is very true that sometimes you have to take a leap of faith on an assumption based on the information available to you. More often than not, a few key questions about assumptions, whether in coaching or making business decisions, can significantly impact a positive, productive outcome.

A perfect example of this occurred when the CEO of Netflix assumed he could change how they delivered their product along with how customers would be charged for it. Customers were shocked and outraged by an e-mail announcement that informed them it would now be more difficult to get what they had already been getting, while being charged a lot more money for that inconvenience. Netflix immediately lost significant market share to their competitors, was thought to be in a death spiral, and Reed Hastings was voted the worst CEO of that year. Hastings quickly brought together the entire team who then worked very hard to regain trust and loyalty from their customers – staging what has been called one of the all-time “great come-backs” in business! Reed was voted best CEO the year immediately following being voted worst.

Exploring *Possibilities* leads to a variety of potential opportunities that can create high impact right action. Generating several possibilities reveals the best opportunities for the person you are coaching plus, any areas that need attention. It helps both of you determine what paths will expedite reaching their desired goals.

Exploring what’s possible and linking these possibilities to what matters to the person is a very powerful coaching skill. Don’t be tempted to get them to leap into action too soon. Stay in the possibility stage for as long as is necessary.

Look at whether the possibility is plausible, realistic, or has promise even in its raw form; don't kill any ideas prematurely. Entertain all ideas as if they were royalty, because you never know which one will be king!

Exploring possibilities is not limited to one stage in the process. It’s not a once-and-done kind of thing. You’ll be able to jump in and out of this stage as you get more comfortable with the coaching model.

Key Principles Associated with Assumptions and Possibilities

Clarity – The more specific and detailed you have someone clarify the issue or opportunity, will impact the quality of the possibilities that get identified. And, the more thorough you are about identifying several possibilities, the better they will become at selecting the ones most likely to effectively accomplish what they want, in the shortest amount of time.

Testing conclusions – Be curious about the conclusions they have come to and what other possibilities exist. This will help you both forecast potential *competing commitments* and *stage 3 learning* opportunities.

Four states of knowing identified in the Johari Window model – These are:

1. *What you know*
2. *What you know you don't know*
3. *What people know about you that you don't know*
4. *What you don't know you don't know* (your blind spots)

As a leader and coach, your job is to bring attention to the last two categories. Shining a light on what people *don't know they don't know* as well as *what others know about them that they don't know* will help transform their thinking and performance.

The Leader's Role in Exploring Possibilities

Your responsibility is to help extend and expand the range of possibilities, AND explore which one is best applied to the issue at hand.

Helping people get more clarity around what's possible allows you to understand their assumptions, what they believe about themselves and others, and how their beliefs can limit them. Your role is to test business reality against the possibilities that are personally appealing to the person you are coaching.

Questions for Exploring Possibilities

- What have you done so far?
- What have you considered doing?
- What are some ways to address this issue?
- What are other possibilities?
- What does your ideal look like?
- What do you imagine the person you admire most would do?

Questions for Exploring Assumptions

- If there were no limits on time, money, or anything else, what would you do?
- What would you do if there were no consequences?

- What would you do if you weren't afraid?
- What's stopped you before?

As you listen to the answers, suspend judgment on what possibilities will or will not work. Don't dismiss any idea that has not been fully explored. And don't forget to ask "what's important about this?" It helps people determine if what you are discussing really matters, or is a distraction from the big game!

Indicators of Success

The person will easily be able to select the possibility that appears most appropriate and will enthusiastically move towards the next stage in the coaching model.

You both are satisfied that you have ample possibilities, and that you have explored them fully along with the assumptions that go with each one.

Common Ways Possibilities Can Be Missed

- You're talking too much! Apply the 80/20 rule and only talk 20% of the time – use C.O.R.E. Performance Coaching questions.
- You or the person you are coaching are killing ideas prematurely.
- Not staying with each idea long enough to explore the depth and outcomes it offers.
- Not exploring or addressing assumptions long enough to seek out deeper, more meaningful solutions, i.e., change their thinking, not just their actions.

A note of caution: When people generate possibilities on their own, they are more likely to choose the "easy," or more obvious possibility, rather than the most challenging, or uncomfortable route. When coaching them, you can help ensure their actions are aligned with *right action*.

As a leader and coach, you are their thought partner and you provide a safe environment for them to think through things they never would have thought of on their own. You are lifting people up to the next level of performance!

What's ahead for Session 13

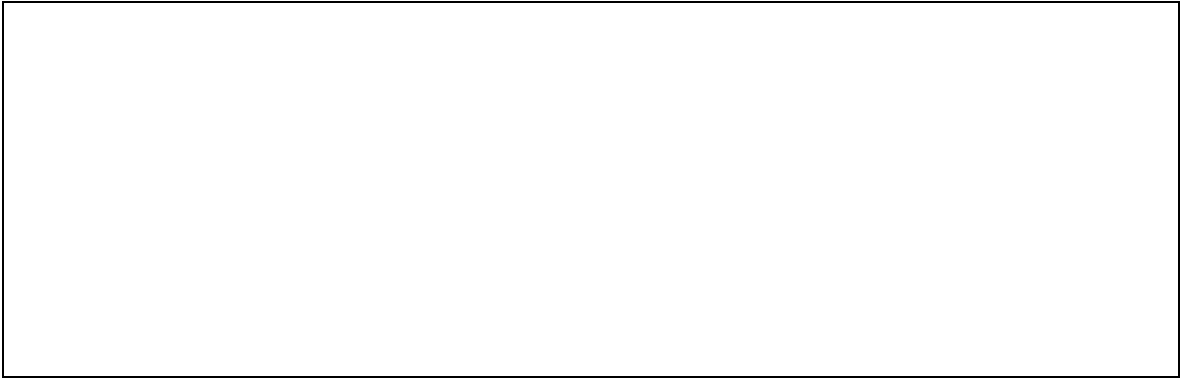
Get ready to **Develop Plans & Action Steps**. We will discuss tools and strategies to help you put together a roadmap for success!

Exercises:

1. When you are coaching for assumptions and possibilities, be sure to ask, “What have you considered or done so far?” You’ll be impressed at how far along people already are when they come to you asking for your help. Then help them to consider all angles. Make a list of several “go to” key questions you can use for this phase in the space below.
 - “What is your ideal vision? Imagine there are no constraints, road blocks, and everything is aligned to make it happen?”
 - “What would it look like if your adversaries got on board with your plans?”
 - “How can you involve your team to accelerate progress?”



2. Remember, although the C.O.R.E. Model is heavily weighted towards asking questions, you want to balance that with the techniques of making statements, challenging beliefs/perspectives, sharing ideas and giving meaningful feedback. Using the right technique in each moment will keep you connected! Who on your team will you practice this with now? How will you prepare?



Session 12: Explore Assumptions & Possibilities - Notes

The three most important things I learned from Session 12 are:

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

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

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

Key Terms (See Glossary)

- **Explore Assumptions & Possibilities**

Extra Notes...

