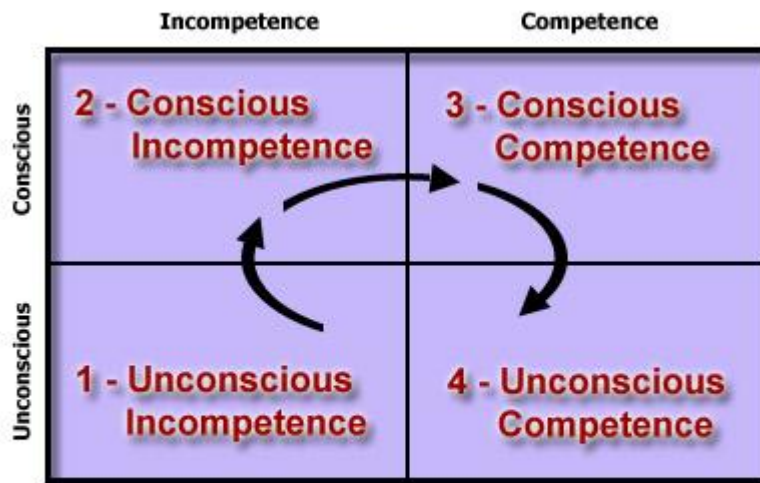


As a Licensed NLP Practitioner, Sports Technique Analyst, Teaching Technician, and Psychologist my work continues to develop and grow from an understanding how we learn new techniques, apply them and develop the skill set to be successful at something. The following model is critical in the work that is done. Whether it is a seminar, sports training, SAT/ACT class, C-Level or Mgmt Training event, or even simple performance coaching, this model helps to explain key elements related to learning and performance and the evaluation of performance. Any learner of a skill ultimately begins at stage 1 - unconscious incompetence, and ends at stage 4 - unconscious competence, having passed through stage 2 - conscious incompetence and - 3 conscious competence.



Conscious Competence Learning Matrix

There is a lot that can be said about this model, yet it is best to keep it simple for the general public's usefulness.

1. All skills begin at number 1 and travel in the prescribed path to number 4.
2. Even the greatest at a particular event, behavior or skill has room for improvement and or to get better if only slightly.
3. A person who is doing something well when asked "what makes you so good at it," will often reply "I don't know" – that is unconscious competence.

4. A student preparing for a test is often at unconscious incompetence. When they have to now remember new things and or remember how to repeat a process to get an answer, they have to realize (first) they do not know the process. (secondly) The learner commits to learn the skill and practice it repeatedly. (thirdly) Having dedicated their time and effort to the learning process the learner becomes familiar with the process and how to manipulate techniques to get a repeatable outcome. (Fourth) Finally, after a period of time the learner “gets it” and truly learns the skill and does it without thinking about it. The skill becomes second nature and in most cases happens without thinking about it such that it seems like it is involuntary. This is true learning!

Trainers often make the mistake of assuming that a learner is at stage 2, and focus their effort toward achieving stage 3, when in fact the learner is still at stage 1. This is a fundamental reason for training failure — because the learner simply has not recognized the need for new learning. Until the learner has achieved awareness of a weakness or a training need ('conscious incompetence'), the learner has no interest, attention or motivation for the learning process. Learners only respond to training or teaching when they are aware of their own need for it, and the personal benefits they will derive from it.

1 — Unconscious Incompetence

The learner is not aware of the existence or relevance of the skill area.

- ▶ The learner is not aware that they have a particular deficiency in the area concerned
- ▶ The learner might deny the relevance or usefulness of the new skill
- ▶ The learner must become conscious of their incompetence before development of the new skill or learning can begin

▶ The aim of the trainer or teacher is to move the learner into the 'conscious competence' stage, by demonstrating the skill or ability and the benefit that it will bring to the learner's effectiveness

2— Conscious Incompetence

The learner becomes aware of the existence and relevance of a skill; he becomes aware that he cannot perform the skill

▶ The learner is therefore also aware of their deficiency in this area, ideally by attempting or trying to use the skill

▶ The learner realizes that by improving their skill or ability in this area their effectiveness will improve

▶ Ideally the learner has a measure of the extent of their deficiency in the relevant skill, and a measure of what level of skill is required for their own competence

▶ The learner ideally makes a commitment to learn and practice the new skill, and to move to the 'conscious competence' stage

▶ In the eastern philosophy of Zen there is a term called "beginner's mind" — it reflects a state of radical openness to learning — deeply felt humility and motivation for continued learning

3 — Conscious Competence

The learner achieves 'conscious competence' in a skill when he can perform it reliably at will

▶ The learner will need to concentrate and think in order to perform the skill

▶ The learner can perform the skill without assistance

▶ The learner will not reliably perform the skill unless thinking about it - the skill is not yet 'second nature' or 'automatic'

▶ The learner should be able to demonstrate the skill to another, but is unlikely to be able to teach it well to another person

▶ The learner should ideally continue to practise the new skill, and if appropriate commit to becoming 'unconsciously competent' at the new skill

Practice is the single most effective way to move from stage 3 to 4

4 — Unconscious Competence

The skill becomes so practical and routine that it enters the unconscious parts of the brain - it becomes 'second nature'

- ▶ Common examples are driving, sports activities, typing, manual dexterity tasks, listening and communicating
- ▶ It becomes possible for certain skills to be performed while doing something else, for example, knitting while reading a book
- ▶ The person might now be able to teach others in the skill concerned, although after some time of being unconsciously competent the person might actually have difficulty in explaining exactly how they do it — the skill has become largely instinctual
- ▶ This gives rise to the need for long-standing unconscious competence to be checked periodically against new standards

This model would be incomplete if it did not acknowledge the idea of a 5th level which has sometimes been called "reflective competence" or even "enlightened competence". The model illustrates how skills become so integrated that they become "unconscious" and instinctual. But if we stopped there, it would give the impression that this "unconsciousness" is the highest stage of learning — such as the artist, dancer, craftsman who practices their skill at the highest level but cannot articulate it or teach it to others. Of course, the level beyond this is the coach, the expert teacher, the mentor, the master craftsman, who can demonstrate a skill in practice and also articulate the fine details of the skill, art or craft.

5 — Reflective Competence

The skill becomes so practical and routine that it enters the unconscious parts of the brain —[second nature] (minimum effort is required for maximum quality output), however, the Practioner can also articulate the fine details of the skill to others.

- ▶ Fluent, highly efficient and accurate performance can occur instinctively and reflexively — no longer requiring conscious, deliberate and careful execution — and is also accompanied by the capability to understand and articulate the dynamic flow and scientific/systems explanation of one's performance.
- ▶ The highest level of performance (and assessment of that performance) involves exhibiting fully integrated metacognitive skills with the primary skill.
- ▶ This level may be awkwardly described as "conscious competence of unconscious competence".