See—Do—Get—Reflect

"Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results."
attributed to Albert Einstein (1879-1955)

Would you like your life to be better? Stronger relationships? Greater success at work and home?

Let's examine a simple model borrowed from Roger and Rebecca Merrill and Stephen Covey in their 1994 book *First Things First* (pages 28-30).

Can you agree that the results you obtain are usually a function of what you do?

Can you agree that what you do is usually based on how you see (that is, understand and make meaning of) your situation?

We can arrange those words to make a flow diagram showing simple cause and effect:

See ⇒ Do ⇒ Get

Suppose we analyze the results we're producing. What if we're not satisfied with the outcomes in one area? An obvious action step would be to change what we are doing, right?

Despite the clarity of this picture, sometimes people don't (and even appear to refuse to) change. They just keep doing the same thing, hoping they'll somehow obtain a better result! When we see others stubbornly repeating unsuccessful behaviors, we can easily recognize how foolish it is!

Oh, but if we're honest with ourselves, we must admit that sometimes we do the same thing! It's just so much easier to see the folly in others!

Why do we humans repeat the same actions, hoping the effects might be different next time? A big reason is that we haven't fully changed the way we understand or "see" the situation or process. We might consider creating alternative action steps if we could imagine a different perspective. **Seeing differently is often the key to obtaining better results!**

How is it that three different people can observe the same accident, and give three different descriptions? We each "see" a given situation through many filters, such as our history, our habits and tendencies, our motives, and our preconceived beliefs about what is and what should be.

We don't recognize the effect of the filters, and we usually don't even realize the filters are there. It's like wearing dark glasses out in the sun. We forget the glasses are on our faces until we walk inside, sense "this seems odd," and realize that the dark is because our vision is being filtered.

To obtain better results, let's put one more step in our model. We make the model a loop, and we complete the circle by putting the word "reflect" between "get" and "see." That is, we can describe the repetitive sequence this way: **see—do—get—reflect—see—do—get—reflect--see--do**, etc.

What do I mean by "reflect"? How do we do that? We humans can "stand apart" from ourselves and examine our results (what we get), our behaviors (what we do), and our perspectives (how we see the situation and our relation to it). Yet doing so requires some time spent in deep thinking.

Recruiters frequently look for resumes that include the words "**results**-oriented." I've interviewed, and I wonder, "Why?" Results can't be improved directly; they are merely the outcomes of the work. All work is a process, a sequence of events that starts with an input and ends with an output (the result). Thus, I've wondered, "Why isn't being '**process**-oriented' considered a more valuable trait?"

Further, *First Things First* asserts, "If we want to create significant change in the results, we can't just change attitudes and behaviors, methods or techniques; we have to change the basic paradigms out of which they grow."

There's no accepted jargon to describe someone who is "**awareness**-oriented." Yet the biggest single request I make of my clients is to become more aware of the many opportunities to test their entrenched perspectives. In my opinion, opportunities abound daily to become "more aware."

I routinely invite my clients to share the insights and paradigm shifts they've experienced since our latest conversation. I want to know what they have come to "see" differently in their relationship with their direct reports and colleagues. That's where the process breakthroughs are sure to come.

A change in how you "see" often changes what you "do," and leaders often want to know "What can I do that will cause me to be more effective?"

If we take the time to reflect and seek other possible ways to "see" our situations, we can make different choices about our attitudes, methods, and techniques to improve our results.

Is there a simple way that you could do that in your organization? Thankfully, there is. Start asking two questions after each meeting and project. Keep doing it and encourage others to ask them also.

"What did we do well?" encourages people to reflect on what should be retained as they do similar work in the future. "What could we do differently next time?" invites people to learn from what just happened and collectively commit to conducting similar work in a better way in the future.

As you finish this article, consider a result you'd like to improve. Engage a colleague to join you in thinking deeply about what you are doing that delivers that result. Seek to understand together the underlying beliefs or perspectives that cause you to keep repeating that process. How might your feelings, your thoughts, your unintended biases, your history, and your mindset be limiting you?

You are the scriptwriter and director of your life. Reflect on "what is" and think about a more beneficial "what could be" that you'd like to create. Then evaluate the way you "see" yourself and the situations you face. Get some help from colleagues, friends, or a good coach to help you rewrite the script you've been living out. I predict that people will describe you differently, and the results you produce will be more satisfying to you and to those you influence and serve!