

See—Do—Get—Reflect

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

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 related to what you do?

Can you agree that what you do is usually based on how you see and understand your situation?

We can put those words in order to make a flow diagram showing simple cause and effect:

See ⇒ Do ⇒ Get

Suppose we analyze the results we’re producing. We’re not satisfied with the outcomes in one particular area. The obvious action step would be to change what we are doing, right?

Despite the clarity of the picture, sometimes people won’t 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 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 that the effects might be different next time? A big reason is because we haven’t really changed the way we understand, or “see,” the situation or process. If we had a different perspective, we might consider creating some alternative action steps. **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 face until we walk inside, when the dark room reminds us that our vision is being filtered.

In the interest of obtaining 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” in between “get” and “see.” That is, we can describe the repetitive sequence this way: **see—do—get—reflect—see—do—get—reflect**

What do I mean by “reflect”? How do we do that? We humans have the capacity to 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 understanding of it). Yet doing so requires some 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 being “**process** oriented” isn’t 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." I invite my clients to share the insights (paradigm shifts) they've gained since our latest conversation. I want to know what they "see" differently in their work and their relationship with their direct reports and colleagues. That's where the process breakthroughs will come.

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 to 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 you 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 some result you'd like to improve. Engage a colleague to join you in thinking deeply about what you are doing that delivers that result. What underlying beliefs or perspectives cause you to keep repeating that process? How might your mindset be limiting you?

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