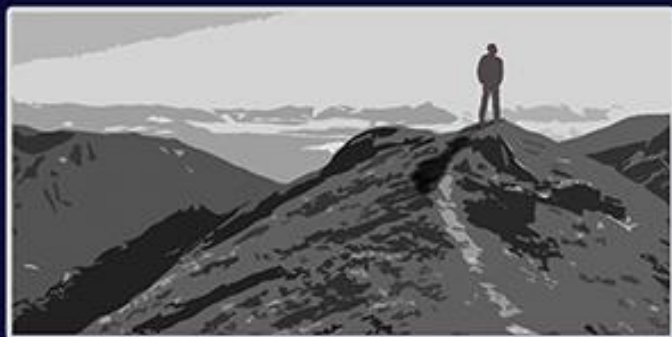


Four Essentials

on How to Audit and Open Your Mind

From the

Team Player Fundamentals for the Workplace
training program



RANDY KENNETT

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Randy Kennett

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Getting off Our Mental Mountain Tops

“Everything has beauty but not everyone can see it.” – Confucius

In so many ways, we all stand on our own mountain tops, attached to our own beautiful views of this world.

What if we all got off of our mountains just a little more often – even just for a moment – climbed up someone else’s, and took a look at their views?

Is it possible that we might just see something that we have never seen before? That we might just see something that we could have never seen from our own mountain tops?

The *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind* prepares us to be successful climbers – down our mountains and up someone else’s.

There are so many more beautiful views to be seen.... Let’s get climbing....

Explore one of the simplest solutions to greater relationships, more teamwork, and better productivity to achieve results.

If we had a universal performance appraisal form used in all organizations, there might be at least one perpetual development opportunity for many of us: open-mindedness. Even if we’re generally more open than closed, many of us have at least one area in this world where we could be more open. As people digest this idea, there is a percentage who may think that they are an exception, with no opportunities. I’ve asked audiences before to raise their hands if they believe that they are open-minded, and the majority of the time, most hands go up. I believe that the question then becomes, “How can we know for sure what the state of our mind is, and whether it is open or closed?” The *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind* are all about checking and adjusting for open- and closed-mindedness, whether we’re a person who thinks we’re open-minded, a person who wants to be more open-minded, or a person who doesn’t even know that our mind is actually closed. (Which is more of us than one may think!)

Imagine the positive impact on our workplaces, including our relationships with others, as well as the organization's performance and results, when we take a proactive approach to opening our minds to truly understand versus interpret, guess, judge, and defend. What would happen to stereotypes and biases? What would happen to conflicts? What would happen with difficult conversations? What would happen with change? What would happen with accountability? What would happen with teamwork?

Communication, morale, culture, engagement, satisfaction, and our health can also all benefit from a conscious approach to auditing and opening our minds. Our colleagues, customers, organizations, and the world need our open-mindedness more than ever.

There is a difference between an opinion and an informed opinion. The 'Four Essentials' unlocks the door.

The Results and Benefits

“An open mind leaves a chance for someone to drop a worthwhile thought into it.” – Zig Ziglar

In the past five years, my training has reached thousands of people and hundreds of teams, successfully shifting participants from a subjective restrictive mentality based on the past to a more objective emboldened mentality for the present and future.

My clients have achieved numerous wins through the *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind*, which is offered as part of my *Team Player Fundamentals* training, consulting, and coaching services. Organizations and their teams have combatted long-standing closed-mindedness – *defined as having or showing rigid opinions and beliefs, or narrow outlooks; being unreceptive and resistant to new and different ideas* – with a systematic approach to being open-minded – *defined as a willingness to consider new and different ideas; being unprejudiced*.

With these four essentials, work relationships and environments improve, as team members can better understand themselves, others, and the organization. The *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind* fosters the challenging and seeking of information, for individuals to expand beyond their own opinions.

Even more specifically, through the use of the *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind*, my clients have enjoyed success by being able to:

- Repair team dysfunction and damaged relationships.
- See decisions and actions from other people’s perspectives.
- Challenge their own beliefs of right and wrong, to distinguish the truth and facts of reality.
- Demonstrate greater respect for diversity.
- Solidify alignment with organizational changes, strategies, and initiatives.

- Achieve higher levels of creativity, innovation, solutions, and overall better ways of working.

In addition to gaining the successes above, this book is also for anyone who:

- Doesn't know the essentials to be open-minded.
- Wants and/or needs to be more open-minded themselves as a fundamental to being an effective team player.
- Wants and/or needs to help someone else to be more open-minded as a fundamental to being an effective team player.

The Problem – Part 1

“What we see depends mainly on what we look for.”
– Sir John Lubbock

Our minds in many ways have evolved to be closed and to judge.

Since the dawn of humankind, our minds have evolved to judge, and thus, in many ways, to be closed. Do you know why this is? Why our minds have developed this way? The number one reason – survival. Since those early primitive days, when life was all about surviving, our minds shaped to quickly make decisions and categorize into polar extremes: life or death, like or dislike, good or bad, friend or foe. Of course not all judgments are bad, especially when we talk about living or dying, and when our judgments are based on more objective information or intuition.

The opportunity here is the idea that our minds have grown to protect us from saber tooth tigers – to decide in mere seconds or fractions of seconds: are we running towards or away? This has become our default operating mode in today’s world, even though we no longer have these same threats, or debatably anything even similar, from our early ancestral days. Our minds constantly scan the world, judging issues and people in terms of life or death, like or dislike, good or bad, friend or foe.

The opportunity here is all the running based on ‘bad’ judgements, or what I’d reference as prejudgments, defined as *forming a judgment, prematurely and without having adequate information*. There are many other words for prejudgments. We could also say: *stereotypes, biases, typecasting, pigeon holing, prejudices, assumptions, and preconceptions*. No matter what word we use, they are all in many ways, guesses at best. We may be right, but we may be wrong.

Once we’ve put issues and people into the categories of life or death, like or dislike, good or bad, friend or foe, it’s like we’ve closed the case. We’ve offered the guilty verdict. What happened to justice and the presumption of innocence in the courts of our minds? Again, we might be right, but we also might be wrong. (Arguably, the chances here of being wrong are even greater than the chances of being right on the very

notion that we're prejudging, which by definition again, is forming judgment, prematurely, without adequate information.)

Effective team players get that the people in their working world are worth more than a guess! More than a guilty verdict!

These prejudgments can also often come from our correlation with 'like' issues and people. I've heard the logic debates of "I've worked with people 'like' them before, and they're like 'this', so reasoning would say that they're going to be like 'this' too."

It's the guilty by association. Certainly, there are generalizations about demographics, but generalizations don't mean everyone, and what if we deal with that 'one' who's different? That's like saying all thirty-four plus million Canadians are the same, because of the Canadians that we know. What possible adequate information could we have that would make all thirty-four million of us the same? Even if we're in a room of a hundred people that are all the same sex, age, religion, race, colour, etc., there can still be differences amongst them, and to prejudge them as the same, would again, be a guess at best, and most certainly, an injustice.

With our minds judging and closing, our behaviours may include:

- Having an 'I am right' and/or 'you are wrong' mentality.
- Dismissiveness.
- Not listening.
- Rejecting other ideas and beliefs without further consideration.
- Resistance to change.
- Not open to trying new ways. Stuck in "This is the way that we always do things."

People have developed theories and done all kinds of research and studies on the mind that can help us understand why a closed-mind can easily stay closed. Outlined below are three of these concepts that may have the biggest impact on closed-mindedness.

1. **Bounded Rationality:** People are limited with their mind's ability to process, interpret, and act on information, which is

called ‘bounded rationality.’ We can all have difficulty in identifying and considering every possible alternative available, based on the thresholds of time, the way our brains work, and the information that we have. Put another way, our *rationale* about anything can only be as *rational*, as we’re open to developing our *rationale*. (Did you get that?) For example, if we don’t particularly like a colleague, this decision about not liking them, is bounded by the current information that we have about them. Of course, there can be more to the colleague than the information that we have, that is not actually part of our decision making process. In every area of our lives, there is so much input from the world that’s untapped by our minds. Thus, closed-mindedness can come from the belief that I ‘know enough,’ and I’ll be bounded by how much I know – where my knowledge falls on a range of low to high in any particular area.

2. **Cognitive Dissonance:** This occurs when we have conflicting information in our mind, or between our mind and the outside world. Dissonance is a term that comes from the musical world which has to do with a lack of harmony. Cognitive dissonance is a lack of harmony within our mind, and particularly the beliefs and information that we have. This conflict can be uncomfortable, and our minds will quickly go to work to become more comfortable. A key principle of cognitive dissonance says that if we are truly connected in some way to our position, even when presented with contradictory facts, we tend to become even more passionate, supportive, and defensive about our original position. Or put another way, we’ll play our music louder to drown out the music that is disharmonious with ours. For example, if we believe someone is disrespectful, and they do something that is actually respectful, we may have cognitive dissonance, as we have conflicting inconsistent information in our minds about this person. In an effort to be more comfortable, our minds want to harmonize the dissonance based on our dominant beliefs, which in this case, is the belief that this person is disrespectful. To achieve this, we may justify and brush off this person’s respectful behaviour i.e. “They must want something.... This is

a one-time miracle.... This won't last...." etc. Thus, closed-mindedness can come from our minds wanting to have harmony and comfort with their dominant beliefs of right and wrong.

- 3. Selective Perception and Confirmation Bias:** We can all exhibit selective perception and confirmation bias, which is our mind's tendency to gather information that supports our dominant beliefs and reaffirms past preferences, and to filter out and discount new information that challenges those beliefs and contradicts past judgments. Our minds are likely to find what we believe to be true and real. Related to selective perception and confirmation bias, we have *selective exposure*, which is our mind's ability to avoid and ignore information that is inconsistent with our dominant beliefs. We also have *selective distortion*, which is our mind's ability to alter the interpretation of information to be more consistent with our beliefs. And lastly, we have *selective retention*, which is our mind's ability to more accurately remember information that is more consistent with our dominant beliefs. For example, if we have a favourite colleague, we can collect – selectively perceive – all of this information that confirms our bias that this person is great. Now, if this favourite colleague of ours does something to someone else or even to us that is not so great, which directly challenges our bias of their greatness, we can have a tendency to employ selective exposure, distortion, or retention of this information – which means that we avoid, ignore, alter, or forget the unbecoming behaviour – in order to support our belief that they are great. Thus, closed-mindedness can come from our minds being selective, saying 'yes' to some information, and saying 'no' or 'missing' other information altogether.

So these are some of the main ways which our minds have evolved to judge and be closed. We have prejudgments and generalizations about different demographics, which become beliefs and biases, that then fuel bounded rationality, cognitive dissonance, and selective perceptions. And again, all of this rolls up into problem number one – our minds in many ways have evolved to be closed and to judge – which in turn, leads to problem number two.

The Problem – Part 2

“Sometimes we find that we like our thoughts so much that we don’t want to let them go.” – Pema Chodron

*“The mind can assert anything and pretend that it proved it.
– D.H. Lawrence*

We can generally be really attached to our points of view as being the most right and the best of them all.

This is related to the fourth concept on how our mind can be closed – the **Overconfidence Bias** – which is about being too optimistic in our own thoughts or performance. Our subjective confidence is more than the objective reality. From my perspective, connected to the overconfidence bias, there are also our *first impressions*, the *self-serving bias*, and *attribution theory*. First impressions are about our mind’s interpretation of someone else, and the thoughts and feelings that we have. We form mental images from our first impressions, which impact our interactions with the individual. The self-serving bias states that our minds can attribute most positive occurrences and successes to ourselves – who we are, and what we’ve done – and most negative occurrences or failures to other factors and people – something external to us. With the attribution theory, and particularly the fundamental attribution error, this is where our minds place the most weight regarding someone’s behaviour on who they are, versus what happened around them.

With all of this in mind and back to the overconfidence bias, some studies have shown that when people say that they’re 100% confident that they are right, or someone else or something else is wrong, they tend to be right as little as 70% of the time. So up to 30 times out of 100 that we are completely confident and sure that we’re right – we can actually be wrong. Even worse statistics, studies have also shown that people, who feel mostly confident at about 70% to 80%, tend to be right as little as 50% of the time. With these numbers in mind, and for example purposes related to this book, people who are completely confident that they are open-minded, may have an overconfidence bias, meaning that the reality is that they are actually not open-minded up to 30% of the time. Think about this for a moment in your own life. Have you ever

been in a situation where you were 100% confident that you were right, and someone or something else was wrong, and discovered at a later time that you were actually wrong? When we take the concept and facts of the overconfidence bias, which can apply to our first impressions, our self-serving biases, and our attributions, we can grasp that there will be a percentage of time that we'll make mistakes and errors with our judgments. Thus, closed-mindedness can come from our minds being too confident in our beliefs about ourselves, others, and our world.

As we reflect on the overconfidence bias, the irony is that most of us are right! Our points of view are right and best ... at least in our own minds. How can this be? Well, we're right and attached to our points of view based on the information that we have. What's potentially the bigger problem here? The information that we have in our minds! Our points of view are only as good as the information that drives our interpretations. The phrase 'garbage in, garbage out' is very applicable to our thought process. Our brains are full of all kinds of information – stories – some is nonfiction and some is fiction.

Can you believe all of the things that people say, do, think, and are in this world? Many of us can't! Why not? Because we're attached to our own points of view about what we think is right and best. If I believe it is right and best for people to say, do, think, and be a certain way in this world, that can make it challenging for me to believe that people may say, do, think, and be differently. Right and wrong, best and worst, is a matter of opinion, but far too often, we confuse our beliefs of what we define as right and wrong for us as individuals in this world, with believing that we know what's right and wrong for everyone in the world.

It's our points of view, these right and wrong mentalities, which can close the mind.

The Promise of This Book

“Once we realize that imperfect understanding is the human condition there is no shame in being wrong, only in failing to correct our mistakes.” – George Soros

With my clients, prior to any training, consulting, or coaching that I do, I hear all kinds of challenges on why they don’t have effective relationships, teamwork and productivity. To name just a few:

“This is the way we are.”

“This is the way that we always do things.”

“Nothing ever changes.”

“Some people will never change.”

“The people who are the problem don’t even think they are a problem.”

“No one will speak up and say what needs to be said.”

“Some of us will do what we’re supposed to do, but not everyone will.”

“We don’t have any accountability.”

And one of my all-time favourites: “This is soft skills stuff, and we don’t have the time or the budget.”

I get all of this. I’ve been there myself and had all of these thoughts. I just want to clarify with this last statement in particular that soft doesn’t mean easy, and soft doesn’t mean less valuable than hard skills. Soft skills can refer to *desirable interpersonal knowledge and abilities related to relationships*, and hard skills can refer to *desirable technical knowledge and abilities related to specific tasks*. I note that both are desirable and needed! I also get that two of our most precious resources, time and money, are in short supply for many of us. Though I would welcome the magic to be able to say to my clients, “Yes, we can get you these results in a fifteen-minute training, coaching, or consulting session, with no follow-up commitment required on your part and even better, for free,” the fact is we all have to make choices on how we invest our time and money.

What I can promise is that the *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind* from our *Team Player Fundamentals* training,

coaching, and consulting programs, provides a fast step-by-step approach to open-mindedness that is proven to help current work environments to have greater relationships, more teamwork, and better productivity to achieve results, no matter how bad or great the current relationships are. What I can promise is that I will share all of my knowledge and experience in this area of open-mindedness that I've acquired for over 20 years as a team player, leader, coach, trainer, and consultant. What I can promise is my commitment to advise and serve you, so you can better serve the people in your life, including your teams and organizations.

Testimonials

“The measure of intelligence is the ability to change.”
– Albert Einstein

Here are some examples of my clients that recognized the problem, didn't let anything stop them, and chose my training to go for greater relationships, more teamwork, and better productivity to achieve results.

Closed to Forgiving

Many years ago, one of my very first clients to learn about the *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind* was a team of fifteen people who worked in the public sector. Fourteen of the team members were united on one common perspective: they didn't like the fifteenth team member. This one team member, who was on the outside, did her fair share in contributing to the animosity. She had some supervisor responsibilities and her biggest challenge was communicating in a respectful manner. The rest of the team was done with her, and the work environment was toxic. This one team member finally understood the gravity of her actions and was committed to improving, but needed a second chance which no one would give her. Her team members had closed their minds. They wouldn't let go of the past. They wouldn't forgive. The *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind* positioned the team to empathize with each other's past to both create and embrace a different future. The team took courageous steps towards each other, and today, is stronger for it.

Closed to Diversity

I worked with a private corporation that struggled with generational differences in the workplace. The battle: “The young people won't listen and conform,” versus “These old people will never listen and change.” More to the heart of it: the ‘young’ people didn't realize that they can benefit from the wisdom and experience working alongside the ‘old’ people, and the ‘old’ people didn't realize that they can benefit from the modern learnings and approaches working alongside the ‘young’ people. Taking this even a step further, the ‘young’ people didn't

realize the value of the ten to forty years of experience of the ‘old’ people, and the ‘old’ people didn’t realize the value of ten to forty years of present day advancements in their field. They had closed their minds to the value of each other. The *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind* provided these employees the opportunity to be objective about where their points of view came from and to notice the value of each other. By doing this, they were positioned to leverage the diversity of the whole, for efficiencies and productivity in their workplace.

Closed to Different Personalities, Work Styles, and Values

Similar to this example with the private corporation, I have many clients who had breakthroughs during our one-on-one coaching engagements with respect to challenging their own engrained perspectives of their way being the best and only way. I’ll share just two examples for you. First, one of my coaching clients valued a strong work ethic more than anything else, being high productivity, efficiency, and effectiveness. Her value of a strong work ethic was her number one priority, and she had no tolerance for anyone who didn’t also have this as their top priority. In her mind, when there is work to be done:

- How could people not work overtime to get the job done?
- How could people actually take their breaks?
- How could people take time to connect with each other personally in the hallway?

The second example of another one of my coaching clients, was a person who valued timelines more than anything else, and particularly, getting things done as soon as possible and ahead of the deadlines. Her value of timelines was her number one priority, and she would be aggravated by anyone who would wait until the very last minute. In her mind:

- Why would people be so inconsiderate to the boss or client?
- Why is no one holding them more accountable?
- Why am I the only one busting myself to get things done early?

The *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind* developed the awareness and skills for both of these individuals to challenge their points of view and understand that their way is just their way. It isn't necessarily the better, best, and/or only way. Both of these individuals were exposed to questioning what they believed to be right and best, ultimately recognizing and appreciating benefits with differences in values, work styles, and personalities.

Closed with Leadership – ‘Us’ vs. ‘Them’

A non-profit client had a team that was negative about leadership. Everything that the leadership team did was viewed as manipulative and political. Whether the leadership team hosted a celebration, planned development opportunities, or communicated through the sharing of information, they did everything wrong in the eyes of this team, who also believed that everyone in the organization felt the same way as them. They had closed their minds to the possibility of good intentions by their leaders, and that with other people in this organization, there might be at least a few people who felt differently. The *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind* prepared them for objectivity by getting them to separate facts from beliefs. Through their deduction, this team realized that ‘everything’ and ‘everyone’ are detrimental generalizations. They also realized that their negativity about leadership isolated and antagonized those that had different views. They had actually become manipulative and political themselves. Today, they have a more balanced perspective. They get that when we’re open, there is good to be found in others, and just maybe, there is more of a ‘we’ than an ‘us’ vs. ‘them.’

Closed Based on Limited Information

A team working in public service was extremely apprehensive about potential organizational changes. They had perceived all of these possible outcomes, and most were not in their favour. This tailspin of worry was ignited six months earlier by this one comment, “We are looking at our current structure.” Now granted, we could certainly scrutinize this leader’s communication – but that aside, none of them had asked for any specifics about what this meant, and their minds certainly began to conceive of all the possible hardships it could mean to them. Through time, many internal conversations in their own minds, and many external conversations with each other, their conceptions became

misconstructions, accepted as facts, which closed their minds and impacted their performance. The *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind* empowered them to really test their logic and expand their points of view. They soon realized that most of their ‘facts,’ while accepted as true in their own minds, were not actually true in reality. They were able to deepen their knowledge and thus open their minds through communication with the actual sources. They got better information, and as we might imagine, the worry subsided.

My Story – Part 1

*“Those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything.”
– George Bernard Shaw*

There was a time that I didn’t like how I was as a leader, or how my team was to each other, and the detrimental environment that resulted.

With high-paced work environments, many of us have multiple competing priorities and not enough time or resources. With the stress and challenges that ensue from our demanding and rapidly changing workplaces, we need team players more than ever, defined *as people who work well as a team, and who are on the same side attempting to achieve a common goal.*

I worked with an organization during the downturn of the economy in 2008. I was one of many leaders employed by the company, and I had a team of people who reported to me. During the hardships of these times, and the need to conduct business differently, many relationships and working environments across the organization became strained. Decisions and changes caused conflict and struggle. Causalities existed. Camps formed. Everyone had their ideas on what was best for the employees, customers, business, and themselves.

My team was no exception, which was a first since we had worked together. Prior to this, we had always felt like a power house. For the first time, my team was failing each other and the organization. We had little to no success. I can remember so many difficult days where I was frustrated with the majority of the team – we were better than how we were being. Their negative attitudes polluted the air. Their closed-mindedness sealed off hope for the possibilities of the future. Their disrespect took down the bridges between people. Their lack of accountability unraveled every present moment. As the leader, I considered myself completely responsible. I just wanted us all on the same side, working well together towards the common goals – being team players. But in general, we weren’t. The strain and weight of opposition was suffocating.

The stress had a toll. Our customers and the organization were the unfortunate recipients. Our results declined. Quite frankly, I believed that the majority of us were also all at risk of losing our jobs, and if we weren't, we should have been. This was one of my lowest moments as a leader. I certainly wasn't proud of myself – What I didn't know at the time: this would become a catalyst to my life's purpose.

We spend so much of our lives at work, and I just wished for the team and environment to be productive for all of us. I just wished for people to realize that we have a choice when it comes to our attitudes, especially in tough times, and our choices can make it better or worse. I just wished for people to recognize the benefits of being open-minded. I just wished for people to be respectful towards each other. I just wished for people to realize that we all have influence, and if a team has challenges, everyone has a role in those challenges.

What I can see so clearly today, but couldn't see then, is that in this situation, we couldn't win. None of us! We couldn't even play the game. And we couldn't play or win because we didn't exercise the aptitudes required of team players.

In some card and casino games, before the game is played, people need to ante up, meaning, *putting our initial stake (share) into the pot*. Similarly, in a work environment, before we can achieve team building and develop teamwork, we need people to ante up as team players. To take the analogy one step further – there is also a minimum ante. In our workplaces, we need people to ante up with some minimum team player skills, because it's the team player skills that make the team building and teamwork possible, which make the results possible, and the greater relationships and better productivity possible.

This was the moment in my career where I truly grasped the necessity for training on fundamental team player skills in a workplace. I was also hit by the reality that team player skills need to be calibrated for teams to be high functioning, to endure the highs and lows of the workplace, to deal with challenges, to maintain greater relationships, and to create teamwork and better productivity to achieve results. Think about this: Many people first learn about being a team player during their upbringing. As a result, people may have learned different information, people may practice what they've learned to different degrees, and

people may have developed some good and bad habits. Then we bring these people together as adults on a team in a workplace, and we rarely take the time to homogenize all of our learnings to define the team players that we want to be for each other.

I also grasped from first-hand experience myself, during this situation, that many leaders don't have an effective tactical approach to help train and attune our employees' team player skills when needed. And today, this calibrating and attuning has never been so necessary with the diversity and challenges within the 21st century workplace. We lack clarity and consistency on what it means to be a team player. Until we're all on the same page with the skills needed, it can make developing a sustainable victorious team very difficult and take a very long time.

There is a lot of great information available in this world on teamwork and team building, which is wonderful. What's not so good is that much of the information on teamwork and team building is based on the assumption that team members have the basic team player skills that make the teamwork and team building all possible. If you've ever done training for teams before on trust, conflict resolution, goal setting, or anything like these topics that hasn't worked, and assuming the training was reputable, lack of team player skills would have to always be an underlying cause. Even if it was just one person, an outlier, who wasn't a team player, that's all that it takes some times. And honestly, I wouldn't recommend doing any team building or teamwork training without doing training on basic team player skills first.

I challenge the phrase, "There is no 'I' in team." From a spelling perspective, yes that's true; from a real life team perspective, no, that's not true. There are 'Is' on teams, that's what they are made up of – Individuals. You have individual players. Before you have a team, you have 'Is' (individual players) that are either team players or 'Is' (individual players) that are not team players, or some combination of the two.

What comes first, a team or team player? I believe it's ultimately a reciprocal relationship whose success or failure or mediocrity lies predominantly in key team player fundamentals. Really, this means that the answer is neither team nor team player! What come first are key fundamentals – knowledge and skills – that make the reciprocal

relationships between team player and team possible. I not only believe this, during this time in my life, I was bound and determined to prove it.

My Story – Part 2

“It is always safe to assume, not that the old way is wrong, but that there may be a better way.” – Henry F. Harrower

The search for team player fundamentals.

Thus my journey began to research, study, develop, and test resources and training on the fundamentals to being a team player. How could I make developing team player skills simple? How could I make developing team players skills happen in the shortest period of time possible? How could I make team player skills become habitual with longevity? How could I help dysfunctional teams be functional, and how could I help high functioning teams be even higher functioning?

I began my endeavor to answer all of these questions and more at this past job of mine, as I committed to rise above the hardships of the times, to help all of us be better team players for ourselves, each other, and the organization. I didn't want to give up on members of my team, being players on my team, without knowing that I did everything that I could as a leader to develop their team player skills. They were worth the effort. These were great people. I needed to do something. I wanted to do something. I just needed to figure out what that something was.

So I started. I was willing to try anything and everything. And I did! I tried a number of different approaches, methods, and resources, to figure out what was successful and not. And with time, some of what I tried started to work.

After supporting my team to a better place, I ended-up leaving this job to pursue my quest further and full time. I started my own business to help teams all over the world have greater relationships, more teamwork and better productivity to achieve results, through defining and prioritizing team player fundamentals.

Over several years, I was relentless in figuring out how to make my training and resources even better and easier and more basic. There were times that my obsession even took me away from making a living. I cared about financial freedom, but I cared more about mastering the

training and resources that I was developing. I worked through mistakes and the subsequent learnings, as I continued researching and testing the training. I delivered countless workshops: designing, delivering, evaluating, and then re-designing, re-delivering, re-evaluating ... repeating this over and over again. Throughout this time, I fell down and picked myself up; I had successes and failures.

My struggle to hone in on the fundamentals of being a team player was challenged further by the competing priorities and needs of my clients. They want greater relationships, more teamwork, and better productivity to achieve results, but they have conditions around the training to support these initiatives! They want it to meet their budget requirements, time requirements, and results requirements. They also want it to apply to all positions and for all types of organizations. They also want it to complement existing training initiatives and organizational policies and procedures. They also want everyone to get it. When I say 'get it,' I mean that they wanted their employees to be changed by the training, with the motivation, knowledge, and skills to be better.

And then I had the organizations' actual employees who have to come to the training. The employees generally want a training experience that's worth their time, as their task list doesn't stop because they attend a training program. These employees want this training program to support greater relationships, more teamwork, and better productivity to achieve results. And these employees want to be better themselves and also want other people to be better too.

And then on the other side, there are the employees who don't think that they need to be better, who don't think that they have anything to improve, and who don't think that the company made a good decision by having them attend the training.

And then there's managing the diversity of employees, where I've got people who have all different points of view on being a team player, based on their experiences, education, beliefs, and values.

All of this has manifested into what I would consider a bit of my opus, composing the *Team Player Fundamentals* in an effort to meet the complete satisfaction of all involved. Through my journey, I've been able to define and prioritize the fundamentals for being a team player to gain

greater relationships, more teamwork, and better productivity to achieve results.

When I think back to when my journey towards the Team Player Fundamentals started, I think of my original team back in 2007, and how I just needed them to be team players. If I had this training and resources like this book to give them, it would have made a difference. These are the musts. These are the fundamentals. These are what we all need team players to bring to the workplace.

So why now a book and online materials around my training for *Team Player Fundamentals*? Well, just as I began a new fiscal year back in the fall of 2014, after finishing my most successful year ever with clients and business, I was finally getting caught up on personal matters that had been on the side lines. First on my list for some time was getting a doctor, and scheduling my annual physical. After a longer waiting period than I would have liked, I had my routine exam. During this visit, something came up that concerned my doctor. Two days later I had an ultrasound, and that afternoon, I found out that I had a mass. Within that same week, after further tests, I got the news that the mass was cancer, and fortunately, all current results showed that it had not spread. Two weeks later, I had an operation to remove the cancer and began a month long recovery. As well, three weeks after the operation, I heard the liberating news that it was the best possible cancer, and with one dose of chemotherapy six weeks after the operation, statistics gave me a survival rate of over 95%.

When you start looking at your survival in terms of percentages, 95% does seem awesome given that it's cancer, and at the same time, 5% for the alternative seems too much. There was also a possibility that the cancer would come back, and if it did, I was faced with the possibility that I couldn't work. I had past and current clients that relied on the training that I offered, and future clients that I knew could benefit from the training someday. I also had my own deep wish to continue to help teams around the world to have healthy relationships, and more positive, respectful, and successful work environments, where teamwork flourished. Until this juncture, because I was constantly improving my training all of the time, making something permanent in a book or online was always the scariest thing to me. For example, what we're calling the *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind* haven't always

looked the way that they do today in this book, or with the name that they have today. And at this time in my life, now that I was confident in the training and faced with the reality of cancer, not having something permanent was the scariest thing to me.

So this is why now. This is what brought me to the creation of this book and other online materials. (I'm also very happy to say, that with a thorough surveillance plan involving bloodwork, x-rays, and CT scans, almost one year later, I'm still gratefully cancer free!)

The Myths

“Listen, everyone is entitled to my opinion.” – Madonna

I may not believe the value of the *Team Player Fundamentals* training myself, which includes the *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind*, if it weren't for both my own experiences and these top ten trepidations debunked!

1. Clients can think that their employees won't get over their excuses for not being a team player. This training confronts these excuses, by providing the opportunity for people to grasp what being a team player is and to reflect on their own contributions as a team player, as well as the choices, influence, and responsibility that we all have.
2. Leaders can think that employees aren't interested in training like this. Well guess what? Generally speaking, employees are starving for the opportunity to be better team players and have greater relationships, more teamwork, and better productivity to achieve results. This training gives them the chance to gain learning and have conversations to make it happen.
3. People might believe that nothing will change, that people can't change – I've trained teams where I didn't think they could change either! There was even one time that I recommended to a leader that they needed a trained doctor in the field of mental health and counselling for their team. To my joyous surprise, even teams like this have changed with my training. (And without further support from a doctor!) People can change with awareness, knowledge, skills, and resources. In addition, the training will also spotlight all of those employees who are now able, but unwilling to be a team player, which is a win as well. This positions the organization to decide where they want to go with those employees – and they can have the confidence that they've done some due diligence through my training.

4. Clients can think that no one will ever agree on the fundamentals of being a team player. That everyone will have different opinions. Well, this training does get everyone on the same page. They can agree. There are fundamentals.
5. Leaders can think that some of their people will just always only be good at the hard skills and never the soft skills. Sure, there are some people who may never be as great as others at soft skills, but they can potentially be better than they are currently. This training supports that.
6. People might believe that because they've already done training for teams and relationships and positive and respectful workplaces that they don't need to do more training. People can believe that if they've done training in these areas before and it didn't work, then why try again. People can believe that their team can't get better, or that their team is good enough. People can believe that 'once you've been to one training program like this, you've been to them all.' Well, once again, this training has proved itself different. Teams have become better. Work environments have become more productive.
7. Clients can think that they don't have the time to go through training like this or do the follow-up work required. Great news: it doesn't take that much time, and the time spent is both enjoyable and worthwhile. You can also go through the training in the modality of your choosing: book, online training, live workshops, monthly membership programs, or coaching – you decide!
8. Leaders might think that it won't work long term, but the training has worked long term.
9. People might say 'but we're not a typical team and our employees are different.' I've had teams and people of all kinds go through this training: small teams of three, large teams of over eighty, teams of all industries, positions, ages, races, sexes, educational levels, religions ... and the feedback is the same: the training has impact.

10. Clients might think that training like ours isn't a priority because of the perceived deficiency in the return on investment. This may be the biggest myth of all! People won't even recommend the training to their boss because there's a cost. If this is you, please consider these thoughts that follow. Teams exist for one primary reason: to get results. The majority of results in an organization can be traced back to a team. The ability for a team to be high functioning is impacted by the awareness, knowledge, skills, and resources that the individuals have on how to be team players. **So the return on your investment in my training is your organizational results that are impacted by team players on teams!** I encourage you to do the math on this. Do the calculations yourself. What's the dollar value in your organization that's impacted by teams, and can that dollar value be increased by more effective team players?

The Solution

“A great many people think they are thinking when they are merely rearranging their prejudices.” – William James

What I realize now is that at the core of most dysfunctional and struggling work relationships and work environments are negativity, closed-mindedness, disrespect, and a lack of personal responsibility. Put a better way, at the core of greater relationships, more teamwork, and better productivity to achieve results are these team player fundamentals: **positive attitudes, open-mindedness, respect, and personal accountability.** What I also realize now is at the core of every successful organization is putting the title and position of ‘team player’ first over all other roles and responsibilities in a workplace – then our second title is whatever our organizations call our positions.

This book is a deep dive into with one of these fundamentals, open-mindedness, through the *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind.*

Background on How We Think

“Life has no meaning. Each of us has meaning and we bring it to life. It is a waste to be asking the question when you are the answer.”

– Joseph Campbell

Before we go further, it’s important to understand some of the basic mechanics of our mind. To keep it simple, we’re just going to refer to the generally accepted conclusion that we have a subconscious part to our thinking. This subconscious part of our mind is like our own personal library that contains all of what we will refer to as our “life stories”: the stories of all the experiences and knowledge and beliefs that we’ve developed until this very instant in our lives. Now, quite frankly, we are all hoarders in the library of our minds. We shelve every story. Like hoarders with belongings in a home, we may not use all of the stories in our subconscious mind all of the time, we may not know where all the stories are, and we may not even remember the majority of the stories that we have, but that doesn’t mean that they don’t still have an impact on how we live.

The flow of information into and out of our subconscious generally begins with an input from the outside world through our senses, so we see, hear, smell, taste, and/or touch something or someone. As soon as the input gets through, we immediately begin to interpret – cross reference – our perceptions with our life stories in our subconscious. This is our way of making meaning of the world. Most of the cross referencing occurs at rapid processing speeds of thousands of miles an hour, without any conscious awareness. Following this, we typically have an output, being our behaviours.

To take you a little further into the pages of our brains, our life stories really contain all of our diversity and our identity. Our life stories are formed by the following:

- Beliefs, Attitudes, Values
- Self-Image, Comfort Zones
- Knowledge, Skills, Education
- Experiences, The Past

- Habits, Passions, Interests, Talents
- Personality Styles
- Colour
- Age, Physical Appearance
- Gender, Gender Identity, Sexual Orientation
- Race, Ethnicity, Culture
- Religion
- Ancestry
- Language
- Physical and Mental Abilities
- Geographical Location
- Political Affiliation
- Employment
- Occupation, Job Title
- Work Location, Department/Unit
- Union Affiliation, Seniority Level
- Marital Status, Parental Status, Family Status
- Income
- Needs, Expectations, Preferences
- Prejudgments

As we digest the above details, and as we can most likely all imagine, when it comes to life stories, no two people have the exact same library in their minds.

Our life stories are our number-one way to help us understand the world. And the volumes of our life stories are continuously being written, as we either perceive new input or draw new interpretations.

Our life stories not only contain nonfiction, they also have some fiction, which quite honestly, can also take the form of far-fetched fantasies. Whether we know it or not, admit it or not, like it or not, we have some incorrect, missing and made up information in our brains. This can be caused by both previous inputs that we've let in and haven't let in. We don't always check-in the best books or all books to become

part of our minds library. (Remember, the mechanics of the brain: bounded rationality, cognitive dissonance, selective perception, biases, and prejudgments.)

Background to Examples Used

“There is nothing insignificant in the world. It all depends on the point of view.” – Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

As we move through the *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind*, I will take you through an example of individuals and a team that have put the four essentials into action, so you can understand how the concepts apply tactically. The example that I use is based on a real client of mine and real life events. To maintain client confidentiality and for your reading pleasure, the example is presented more as a fable with some creative liberties for illustrative purposes.

The client that I reference works in the new home building industry, and I'll refer to their organization as the Breaking New Ground Corporation. The six employees from this team that are mentioned in this example are:

- Katy, who can be dramatic and caught up in her world.
- Toby, who likes to view the bigger picture.
- Crystal, who focuses on what's black and white.
- Anthony, who can be willing, though doubtful.
- Lea, who worries about not having enough time.
- Clint, who focuses on the challenges.

Here's your critical role as you follow this example throughout this book of the employees from the Breaking New Ground Corporation. This is imperative. As you read the example, bench that voice in your head that may say anything like or a derivative of: “How could they not see the problem and the simple solution.”

You might be able to figure everything out as you read it, but this is a cornerstone theme with our minds: when we're in the situation, our minds are usually much more perplexed and closed. This is just another proclamation that supports the need for a conscious approach to being open-minded.

So with this background on how we think and the client example that we are going to use, we're ready. Let's do this – onward to the *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind!*

Essential #1: Objectivity

“Learning to take responsibility for the nature of our thoughts is the most powerful way to take responsibility for our lives.”

– Marianne Williamson

What’s your point of view on the city of Toronto? What’s your point of view on Australians? What’s your point of view on Oprah? What’s your point of view on Walmart? What’s your point of view on the Olympics? Catholicism? The American Republican Party? Marriage? If required, many of us could – probably quite quickly – provide an answer to all of these questions that expresses our points of view, or at least most of us would have some surface response of ‘like’, ‘neutral’, or ‘dislike’. Wonderful! If I then asked you where your answer came from, your response might not be as quick. Or put another way: Why do you have the points of view that you do? Why do you think the way that you do? What is the source of your points of view? How have you come to know your points of view? We’ll define points of view *as positions from which we consider and think about something*.

The first essential on how to audit and open your mind is *Objectivity*. There are two main concepts involved with *Objectivity*:

1. Where did you get your point of view?
2. What are the facts versus beliefs behind your point of view?

From my experience, there is no shortage of points of view in this world. We’ve all got many of them, in a variety of areas. The deficit can exist in taking time to contemplate the origin of our points of view, and the facts versus beliefs. This is perhaps more of the auditing part of the *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind*. Auditing is about examining and verifying accounts, in this case the accounts are our points of view, which we’ve formed about and around our experiences.

Why is auditing where we got our points of view and separating facts versus beliefs important? Well, this supports Essential #1: *Objectivity*, which by definition means, *being able to investigate the source, to distinguish facts from feelings and beliefs, in search for truth*

and reality. Our points of view are, in essence, subjective. The proximity of our subjectivity to objective truth and reality is directly related to the quality of the origin of our points of view, as well as the quality of our facts and beliefs behind our points of view. All of the benefits of open-mindedness come from both being able to get as near to objective reality as possible, as well as understanding someone else's subjective reality as much as possible.

I want to affirm that I respect the philosophical debate over the varying premises of 'truth' and 'reality.' This book is only lightly dusting the surface here with the possible richness in definitions of these two words. If you want more information, I encourage you to use the *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind* after reading this book, to get yourself as much information and experience as you would like. I also have no delusions that our brains are full of biases, and that we'll always bring our brains to everything that we interpret. This will raise the question: with our interpretations and biases, can we ever truly be objective and open-minded? Again, our goal here with the *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind*, is to get as near to objective reality as possible and at least more objective than we currently are, not necessarily absolute objectivity. To do this, I'll also emphasize the importance to approach points of view through a diversity of information and experiences. So back to these terms, when we talk about 'truth' and/or 'reality,' we will talk in basic layperson common sense language, versus how these terms may be expressed by a scientific or metaphysical professional. In this book, we will define truth and reality as *what corresponds with correct facts and/or rationality.*

Alright, back to Essential #1: *Objectivity.* Reflecting on the basic mechanics of our brains and how we think, we can appreciate that our points of view are only as good as the quality of the information that we base them on. And the quality of the information that we base them on is determined by the *quality of our inputs (experiences) from where we get our points of view* and the *quality of the facts and beliefs in our life stories.*

Where did you get your point of view?

The first concept in the Essential #1: *Objectivity* is 'Where did you get your point of view?' Before the auditing of facts versus beliefs

begins, it can be best to determine the origin of our opinion. What mountain top produced the view? Did we see it from our mountain top, being our own personal experience? Did we hear about the view of another mountain top, being someone else's experience? Or were no particular mountain tops involved at all, meaning we've imagined an experience? These are the three primary ways that we get our points of view: *our own personal experience, someone else's experience, or an imagined experienced fueled by beliefs*. Why do we want to go to the source and determine the origin? It will help us locate the files to audit.

Points of View Based on Our Own Personal Experience

As for our points of view based on our own personal external experiences, this refers to first-hand accounts. What's involved with first-hand accounts? Seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and/or touching directly from the source, ourselves. These first-hand accounts become inputs (experiences), which our minds then cross reference, interpret, and categorize through our life stories, which can then develop into points of view.

When our points of view are based on our own personal experiences, here's what we need to keep in mind that can impact the quality of our points of view based on the input (experience):

- First, our attention has an effect. We can have different focuses and distractions. Our concentration may not always be where it needs to be for a variety of reasons, which may include stress and sleep deprivation. There are also studies which indicate that our minds take mental breaks and check out throughout the day, whether we want it to or not.
- Second, how many experiences serve as the basis of our points of view? Is it one? If so, is one enough?
- Third, how about the quality of our experience through the senses? Did we have a good viewpoint to see? Was the sound loud enough? Were there any other competing smells or tastes? How long did we actually feel it with our own body, if there was a touch sensation involved?

If our attention is off, if we don't have enough experience, or if the quality of our input (experience) is questionable, this can all impact the quality of our points of view based on our own first-hand personal experiences.

Points of View Based on Someone Else's Experience

As many of us know, we don't even have to have our own experience with something to have a point of view, we can get our points of view from someone else's internal or external experience, which is the second-hand account (or third, or fourth, or hundredth, or thousandth...). What's involved with second-hand accounts? Well, this is where we develop an opinion based on what someone shared with us in terms of what they or someone they know directly or indirectly, saw, heard, smelled, tasted, or touched. We can adopt a point of view based on someone else's experience – through family members, friends, public figures, news, social media, books, and the list goes on....

Just like the first-hand account, the second-hand account's accuracy can also be dependent on the quality of the input (experience) into the other people's brains for interpretation based on their life stories. How was their attention? How many experiences serve as the basis of their points of view? How about the quality of their input (experience) through the senses? This is also where the phenomenon of the 'telephone game' or 'lost in translation' can have an impact when we deal with third-, fourth-, hundredth-, or thousandth-hand accounts.

What's even more interesting here, is that if rather than a second-hand account, we were actually with the person or people during the experience, at the exact same time and at the exact same place, there is a high likelihood that we would develop at least a slightly different if not completely different point of view ourselves. Of course, the different point of view would come from us viewing that experience directly, versus indirectly, and interpreting it against our own life stories, versus receiving the interpretation through others' life stories.

Points of View Based on an Imagined Experienced Fueled by Beliefs

Lastly, to have a point of view, we don't even have to have our own first-hand experience with someone or something, or a second-hand

experience, where someone else has shared their experience about someone or something. We do not need to have perceived something personally through our senses of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, or touching, or have heard about what someone else perceived through their senses. We can imagine a point of view.

Points of view from an imagined experience are put together internally in our minds, based on characters and plots of existing life stories in our subconscious, being previous first-hand or second-hand experiences. We're kind of reverse engineering the creation of a mountain from which we see our points of view.

Like points of view based on our own or someone else's experience, the quality of our imagined points of view can be impacted, if we're imagining based on first- or second-hand points of view when our attention was off, when we didn't have enough experience, or when the quality of our input (experience) was questionable. For imagined points of view, I recommend going straight to the next concept of Essential #1: *Objectivity*, 'What are the facts versus beliefs behind your point of view?'

First though, to summarize, these are the three primary ways that we get our points of view: *our own personal experience, someone else's experience, or an imagined experience fueled by beliefs.*

What are the facts versus beliefs behind your point of view?

Once we know the origin of the mountain top that produced the view, this sets us up to explore further for facts versus beliefs. The second concept in the Essential #1: *Objectivity* is, 'What are the facts versus beliefs behind your point of view?' The important questions here are the following:

- What do I know to be true based on the facts? Facts are more typically *undisputable and can be verified as true.*
- What do I think to be true based on my beliefs? Beliefs are more typically disputable. We can define beliefs *as trust or confidence in someone or something.* Please note that nowhere in this definition does it say that beliefs are true, right, and fact; however, we can sometimes have so much

trust and confidence in what we believe that it becomes true, right, and fact to us.

Auditing what are facts versus beliefs, and separating facts and beliefs with our points of view, is the beginning to opening our minds – it's the beginning of exposing what's really true versus what might be true.

In the case of points of view from our own experiences, we need to consider our own first-hand accounts and the quality of our life stories that interpreted the input (experience). Our life stories filter the experience, and our life stories almost always – at least somewhat – alter the reality. We might be mixing beliefs with facts, impacting reality.

In the case of points of view based on someone else's experiences, we need to consider the source of our second-hand account (or third, or fourth, or hundredth, or thousandth), and again, the quality of our life stories that interpreted the input (experience). In this situation, it's not only our life stories filtering the experience that are potentially altering reality, but it's also the life stories of all the other people involved as well that filtered the experience. Again, we, and they, might be mixing beliefs with facts, and all of these second-hand filters might be impacting reality.

In the case of imagined experiences, our imagined account is completely dependent on the quality of our existing life stories. In many cases, imagined points of view may be the most ill-informed, especially those that are based on biases, stereotypes, and prejudices. With our imagined points of view, we need to consider are there any facts, or just beliefs? We need to also consider if we are in touch or out of touch with reality.

Now, if we have no conceivable ideas on what is actually factual or belief-based in our current points of view, with other's points of view, or our imagined points of view, then this is where the third essential helps, which is *Expand* (more on this to come). Let's consider this as the exception though versus the norm.

This is objectivity in relationship to being open-minded. We need to decipher the source and then the facts from our beliefs. When we can

do this, we are a step closer to truths and understanding ourselves, others, and the situation. We are in the realm of open-mindedness.

Essential #1: *Objectivity*, also positions us to be able to advance to Essential #2: *Probe*.

Objectivity in Action

Please remember your critical role as you follow this example. This is imperative. As you read the example, bench that voice in your head that may say anything like or a derivative of: “How could they not see the problem and the simple solution.” You might be able to figure everything out as you read it, but this is a cornerstone theme with our minds: when we’re in the situation, it’s usually much more perplexed and closed!

Alright, time to introduce you further to the client example that I’ll be using, the Breaking New Ground Corporation, who work in the new home building industry, and was dealing with several customer complaints about their field team who had responsibilities around repairs. This field team wasn’t delivering the customer service that was expected and required.

We brought the team together for training on the *Team Player Fundamentals*, and when we got to the topic of the *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind*, the first essential of *Objectivity* was the perfect place to launch the conversation around customer complaints.

I asked them for their points of view on the negative customer feedback, and here’s what Katy said:

“All of the time, they totally take advantage of us and our company, including the warranties and guarantees for things that have nothing to do with us. It’s just small stuff, normal wear and tear. They think that everything’s an emergency, that they should be the center of our universe, that we should drop everything for them, as if they are our only customers and we have all the time in the world – which we don’t.”

As everyone nodded in agreeance, I now knew their point of view. It was time to find out where they got it, which we all knew would either

be from their own experiences, other's experiences, or imagined experiences.

“How did you come to this conclusion and develop your point of view?”

Crystal piped-up, “Our own first-hand experience!”

I now knew that we were on their mountain tops. “How often has this happened with the same customer and how often does this happen with all customers?”

Toby replied, “Well it seems to happen more with certain customers from certain areas of town, but it can also happen with anyone, anytime.”

Now I knew that it happened more than once, but they initially said that it happened all of the time, so we needed to discuss facts versus beliefs. I responded, “How do you know that your customers are trying to take advantage of your time and the company?”

Clint quickly shot back, “Because they call us all of the time about the smallest things.”

I asked, “What's all of the time?”

Crystal commented, “Weekly and daily sometimes.”

I continued, “And by them calling all of the time, this means that they're taking advantage?”

“Yes.” Lea entered the conversation, exasperated at even the thought.

I genuinely inquired, “And what makes their concerns small to you? And do you think the client thinks they're small.”

“They're just the littlest details, and they should know that they're small.” Crystal's patience with this line of questioning was dwindling.

“And you think these are facts? Have they told you that they are trying to take advantage and monopolize all of your time? Have you asked them if they are trying to take advantage and monopolize all of your time? Do they know that these are small things and not emergencies?” For the record, as I asked these questions, I was well aware that they were trivial to some degree, but they certainly were a starting line for helping to open closed-minds.

“We just know. That’s what you do when you try to take advantage.” Katy was a little pretentious with her statement.

“You mean that’s what we just *believe* people do when they try to take advantage.” They knew that I was walking them through Essential #1: *Objectivity* here.

“Come on Randy. You’re making light of what’s a very frustrating part of our jobs.” I was so glad that Toby said this comment, which I knew that they were probably all thinking.

“I can appreciate why you would say that. I’m actually trying to *shed* light on this very frustrating part of your jobs, not *make* light of it. These points of view that you have are impacting your job satisfaction and your performance. In turn, your defensiveness and confrontational styles with your customers cause the complaints about you being disrespectful. I care about you and how you’re feeling. I’m concerned and trying to help you, and I believe that as a start, it will help to move from the subjective to the objective.”

Anthony was confused. “So why do you think the customers behave the way they are? You actually think there’s another reason?”

“I’m not sure. What I know now is that we’re here together because of complaints on your performance. And right now, your performance is declining because you believe that customers try to take advantage of you and your company. The only facts on the table are that some customers call about issues. The beliefs on the table are that they call too much, that they take advantage of you and your company; that the issues are small, that they think you have the time for their emergencies which should be the center of your world, and that they

don't think you have any other customers. Can we agree on that?" I looked around the room making eye contact with each of them.

There was hesitant nodding of heads for agreeance. I could tell that they had so much confidence in what they believed that it had become fact and reality to them. It was time to *Probe*....

Your Turn to Put Objectivity into Action

Think about areas in your life where you might be closed-minded, or put another way, where you might be able to be more open-minded. Maybe it's a conflict that you have with someone either personally or professionally? Maybe it's a change that's happening at your work or in the world? Maybe it's a decision or choice that you're trying to make for your own life?

With the area of your life in mind that you want to be more open-minded, let's explore *Objectivity*, the first essential to auditing and opening your mind:

What is your point of view?

Where did you get your point of view? Your experience? Someone else's experience? Imagined experience?

If the point of view was from your own experience (first-hand account):

- How was your attention to the experience?
- How many experiences serve as the basis of your point of view?
- How was the quality of your experience through the senses?

If the point of view was from someone else's experience (second, third, fourth, hundredth ... account):

- How was their attention to the experience?
- How many experiences serve as the basis of their points of view?

- How was the quality of their experiences through the senses?

For all points of view, including imagined points of view:

- Separate the facts from the beliefs of your points of view.
- What are facts, being verifiable truths?
- What are the beliefs, being trust and confidence in what is true, that may not be verifiable?

Essential #2: Probe

*“Discovery consists not in seeking new lands,
but in seeing with new eyes.” – Marcel Proust*

As a Canadian, when I train on the *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind* in the United States, I like to engage my American friends in this topic by asking them what the best country in the world is. What do you think they’re resounding answer is? That’s right, the United States of America. Before I go further, I want to be clear that I could ask this question in any country and more often than not, national pride would prevail. There is nothing wrong with loving your country. This is an example to illustrate the benefits of probing.

Probe is the second essential on how to audit and open your mind. There are two main concepts involved in probing:

1. Challenge your point of view. Why might it be incorrect, or not totally accurate?
2. Empathize with someone else’s point of view. Why might it be equally correct, if not more accurate than yours?

In the above scenario, I follow-up further on the best country of the world question, by asking them ‘why’ they believe that the United States is the best? As you can probably imagine, they have so many amazing and valid reasons, I have to cut them off, just for the interest of time. I then gently ask them what they think my answer would be to the best country in the world? By this time in our training program, most of them already know that I’m from Canada and we have developed a level of rapport and connection. As this question hovers over the room, there is usually silence – followed by a few smiles – and sometimes even followed by people saying, “Well based on what we just shared about our country, you must think America is too.”

I then unemotionally provide my answer, which is “Canada,” and then casually tell them all my reasons on why. If you wonder how this answer flies, there’s usually no turbulence. There was only once that I actually thought that one of the participants wanted to take a swing at me

because I said Canada. There was just something about the look in his eyes, like when two boxers meet in the center of a ring prior to the first round that said, ‘I’m coming at you with all I’ve got.’

Anyway, that one exception aside, the participants generally listen contently to what I have to say. I then ask them, “Who’s right?” Meaning, “What is the best country in the world?” And the answer to this question is usually the same: They are! America is. What? They’re right. To who? Well to them of course! But guess who’s also right? Me! Canada is. What? I’m right. To who? To me!

I then ask them, “Who’s wrong?” Meaning, “What country is not the best?” And the answer to this question is usually the same: I am! What? I am wrong! To who? To them! But guess who’s also wrong? They are! What? To who? To me!

If you’re following this, the score is tied. We’re both right in our minds, and we’re both wrong in the others’ minds. So some people might think that this is cute and all, but then it eventually comes back to, “Well, who is really right, and who is really wrong?” Sometimes I’ll have participants reference the three hundred million plus Americans who would agree with them, and how that outnumbers the thirty-four million plus Canadian population. At this junction, knowing the mechanics of how the brain works, and bounded rationality, cognitive dissonance, selective perception, biases, and prejudgments, there may never be a winner here, but there certainly won’t be a winner without at least probing further into each other’s points of view: probing being the act of *exploring, searching, uncovering, examining, and investigating.*

While the first essential of *Objectivity* determines what we think is ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ based on where we got our points of view, and our facts and beliefs, the second essential of probing includes the concept of challenging what we think is ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ and empathizing with other’s ‘rights’ and ‘wrongs.’

Challenge your point of view.

Why might it be incorrect, or not totally accurate?

Let’s take for granted that we’ve already done the first essential, where we’ve objectively identified where we got our points of view, as

well as the facts versus beliefs. This first concept of Essential #2: *Probe*, challenging your point of view, is about a deeper exploration into those facts and beliefs that we uncovered through Essential #1: *Objectivity*. Probing takes further steps towards being open-minded – it’s about doing more research on the stories of our minds by using more of the whole library of our minds.

This concept of challenging your points of view penetrates these unknown or at least ill-considered questions: “What if what I think is right, is wrong, and what if what I think is wrong, is wrong?” To do this, I encourage people to put on their devil’s advocate hat against themselves. If we were to be the devil’s advocate, why might our points of view be incorrect, or not totally accurate?

Just so we’re all on the same page, I’ll paraphrase what a Devil’s Advocate is, as defined by the great Wikipedia:

A Devil’s Advocate is someone who, given a certain discussion, takes a position he or she does not necessarily agree with, for the sake of the discussion. This stance can sometimes be seen as unpopular or unconventional. The purpose of such a process is typically to test the quality of the original discussion and identify weaknesses in its structure, and to use such information to either improve or abandon the original position.

With this working definition in mind, this is the application to the context of auditing and opening our minds for the purpose of being a team player:

We want to take a position that challenges our own points of view for the sake of reconsidering what we think is right and wrong. Though we really like our current points of view, and would prefer to spend our mindshare on something else, we know this is part of playing well with others on a team. This process is beneficial as it opens our minds to the accuracy of our original points of view and identifies potential weaknesses. We can then use such information to either improve or abandon our points of view of right and wrong, increasing our connection to the team and the value to the organization.

How great is this? Being a Devil's Advocate and challenging our points of view provides us the opportunity to probe further into the facts and beliefs of our life stories. *Probe*, like *Objectivity*, is part of the auditing process of the *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind*. This auditing supports the opening of our minds, so we can become more aware of our current awareness. This is using our brains. Were you ever told when you were younger something like "you're not using your brain" or "you aren't thinking"? Gosh, maybe you're still hearing or saying this to yourself now at whatever age you are? Well, our brains are always working, certainly at a subconscious level, but they are mostly working to support our current points of view, based on the current information that we have. This relates back to the mechanics of the brain. In many ways, our brains can be on automatic pilot, where we're not consciously using them and thinking.

Here's the big deal though – we cannot rely on our brains to consistently tell us the truth about the world! Why is this? For all the reasons that we've already mentioned related to the mechanics of our brains, and how we process the world based on our life stories, and how our interpretation is only as good as the information that we have. We cannot just let our brains run on cruise control when it comes to our points of view, as they may not take us to the best destination.

For most of us, when our brain comes to a conclusion, we can be inclined to believe it as true. Our own brains can be very convincing to us personally, and may be the biggest sales force in our lives – and we can sell ourselves short.

The meaning that we give to anything that we perceive in the outside world is only as good as the information that we have in our brains, on which we base the meaning. Put another way, what we believe to be true about the world may not be true, for two primary reasons:

- We could be missing stored information (knowledge and experiences) to determine the true meaning of what we perceive in the outside world.
- We could have inaccurate stored information (knowledge and experiences) to determine the true meaning of what we perceive in the outside world.

Challenging our points of view is taking the time to check the references behind our life stories. Challenging our points of view is taking the time to explore the facts and beliefs from the first essential of being objective, and assessing why they might be incorrect, or not totally accurate.

Now, if we have no imaginable ideas on how our points of view might be incorrect, or not totally accurate, then the third essential can help, which is *Expand* (again, more on this to come). We'll consider this as the exception though versus the norm.

Empathize with someone else's point of view. Why might it be equally correct, if not more accurate than yours?

This concept of empathy, as part of Essential #2: *Probe*, is about a deeper exploration into the facts and beliefs of the other person. We're still taking further steps towards being open-minded – this time though, it's about doing more research on the stories that the other person has. Assuming here that the other person/people have different points of view than us, empathy can support us to penetrate these unknown and often ill-considered questions: “What if what the other person thinks is right, is right, and what if what the other person thinks is wrong, is right too?”

These questions are different than the one's we asked ourselves, and we definitely don't want to ask the same, which would sound like this: “What if what the other person thinks is right, is wrong, and what if what the other person thinks is wrong, is wrong?” This would be challenging their points of view, and being the Devil's Advocate on their points of view. We want to empathize and have what I'll call an empathy connection, defined as:

Projecting ourselves into the reality of the other person, to experience and better understand why they think, feel, or behave the way that they do, and to identify mentally and emotionally with them.

Now empathizing with the other person's points of view may naturally occur as part of challenging our own points of view, but if not, then we need to go there. Going there, in simple terms, means the

following in the context of auditing and opening our minds for the purpose of being a team player:

Projecting ourselves into the life story of the other person's points of view, as if we had the starring role in their life story, so we can experience, understand, and better identify with their facts and beliefs of right and wrong. Though again, we really may not like their current points of view, and would prefer to spend our mindshare on something else, we know this is part of playing well with others on a team. This process is beneficial as it opens our minds to different views. We can then use such information to either improve or abandon our points of view of right and wrong, increasing our connection to the team and the value to the organization.

How great is this? Empathy provides us the opportunity to probe further into the facts and beliefs of someone else's life story as part of the auditing process of the *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind*. This auditing supports the opening of our minds, as we can become more aware of someone else's points of view. During this step, empathizing is really an internal reflective process. This is where we want to imagine what it's like to be in the story of the other person, picturing ourselves on their mountain, with their views. What would that be like? What would that feel like?

Now, if we have no imaginable ideas on how this person could feel or think the way that they do, then again, the third essential can help, which is *Expand* (the next essential – more on this to come). Let's consider this the exception though versus the norm. If we really use our brains and really think hard, many of us have the ability to empathize. If empathizing is a struggle, I would encourage all of us to think about where we might be able to connect at least on a values level – Even chickens and apple trees have similarities!

Think about this for a moment: How is a chicken like an apple tree? At first, you might be thinking, there's nothing a like or very little. With some further thought though, there are similarities. They're both living things. They both need water. They both reproduce. They both need air. And there's more. I've had groups identify on average up to 15 similarities between a chicken and an apple tree.

What's the argument here? If there is common ground between a chicken and an apple tree, there's a good chance you can empathize with another human being at some level from a human values perspective.

One last thought: this whole concept of empathizing with someone else's point of view is based on the assumption that we have some knowledge or idea of what their point of view is. Now, if we have no knowledge or ideas about the other person's point of view, then Essential #3: *Expand* will help.

For now though, that's Essential #2: *Probe*. This is probing in relationship to being open-minded. We need to challenge the accuracy of our facts and beliefs, and empathize with the accuracy of others' facts and beliefs. When we can do this, we are a step closer to truths and understanding ourselves, others, and the situation. We are in the realm of open-mindedness.

Essential #2: *Probe*, also positions us well to be able to advance to Essential #3: *Expand*.

Probe in Action

Let's revisit the example of my client that we call the Breaking New Ground Corporation, who was dealing with several customer complaints about a field team who had responsibilities around product repairs.

As we continued the training on the *Team Player Fundamentals*, and the topic of the *Four Essentials on How to Audit or Open Your Mind*, the time came to move from the Essential #1: *Objectivity* to the Essential #2: *Probe*.

As a reminder, the primary fact involved: customers are calling about issues. The primary beliefs involved around these customers: they call too much, the issues are small and nonemergencies, and they are taking advantage of the company and the team's time.

This is always an interesting discussion, as we can never really know for sure where it's going to go. I started, "Alright, so let's *Probe*

and put our Devil’s Advocate hats on, and challenge what we think is right and wrong here.”

Someone usually makes some kind of light hearted comment during this question. This moment was no exception, as Anthony commented. “What do you mean? We’re never wrong,” There was some laughter in the room, which bordered nervous giggling, knowing that, of course, we’re also rarely completely right either, which we were about to expose.

“I know that we’re getting into mind-boggling territory here.” I stated sarcastically. “Let’s just for a moment, for the sake of the discussion, discuss how we might possibly be wrong.” After I said this, eyes were looking down to avoid contact with mine. I get it, who wants to be the first one to burst the bubble of their rightness? But almost always, with time and even some uncomfortable silence, someone always does.

“Well I guess – with my devil’s advocate hat on – the problem here is that there are issues. That’s a fact. So what do we expect them to do, not call?” Toby’s confidence in his own statement increased as he verbalized his thoughts.

“Fine. But they’ve got to realize that they aren’t emergencies, and that we have other customers.” Lea’s stress level was elevated.

I jumped in. “Let’s stay with being the Devil’s Advocate on what we think is right and wrong. We don’t want to be the Devil’s Advocate on our Devil’s Advocate.”

Anthony spoke up, “It’s a good point, and they should call. And why should they care about other customers. We’d all call if it were us.”

This was the perfect opening to move into the second concept of probing, so I said, “If we’d all call if it were us, let’s empathize with why the customer might be right here?”

Anthony engaged again. “They’ve made a big investment in our products.”

Toby looked for reactions from others as he added, “This is part of their life savings for many of them.”

Even though Crystal didn’t like the direction of the conversation, as she wanted to remain angry at the customers, she stated, “And there shouldn’t have been any problems with the product in the first place.”

“I’d want it fixed right away.” Katy added to the momentum.

“I wouldn’t care about anyone else either. This is my investment. This is my money. If I didn’t get what I paid for, I would fight until I did.” Clint was diplomatic as he said this.

Sometimes these conversations are long, and sometimes they’re short. This was going to be a shorter one. Empathy was alive and well. We were bordering a deeper connection here, like a chicken and an apple tree, so I asked, “What do you think the customer values?”

Crystal expressed, “A good product and good service!”

I replied, “All great outlooks, thank you. And why do they value good products and services?”

“Because it’s what they paid for.” Crystal was on a roll.

“Yes and why do they value getting what they paid for in this circumstance?” I looked to others in the room for answers.

“This involves their homes.” Anthony was feeling for the customers.

“Excellent, and why do they value their homes?” Again, I looked around the room so anyone could respond.

Lea who hadn’t really empathized at all yet verbally, had some stored up thoughts that she was now prepared to share. “It’s their life savings. It’s where many of them are going to spend the rest of their days. It’s where they’ll visit with family and friends. It’s where they may die. It’s what they’ll leave behind as an inheritance.”

In what were probably milliseconds, but felt like slow motion, everyone looked at her, then looked at me, and then looked at each other. This was a sun rising moment. We had an empathy connection.

During the Essential #2: *Probe*, sometimes we bridge Essential #3: *Expand*. We have a more informed point of view, by simply getting out of our shoes, and imagining being in the shoes of someone else. This team was already moving into Essential #3: *Expand*. They were now connected to their customers on shared values, as they all value their own homes, and all that having a home means.

Your Turn to Put Probe into Action

With the same area of your life that you want to be more open-minded, which you identified earlier when completing the ‘Your Turn to Put Objectivity into Action’ section, let’s explore Essential #2: *Probe* to auditing and opening your mind.

Challenge: Why might your point of view be incorrect, or not totally accurate? Be the Devil’s Advocate against what you think is right and wrong!

Empathize: Why might someone else’s point of view be equally correct, if not more accurate than yours? Imagine being in their story, and why they might be right about what they think is right and wrong.

Essential #3: Expand

“Once the mind has been expanded with new experiences and new ideas, it will never again be comfortable returning to its original size.”

– Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr.

Have you ever changed your mind? Even just a little bit? I have – Lots! Do you know of anyone else who’s changed their minds? I do – Lots again! If you really thought about this, you probably have and do too. So what’s the catalyst? How does anyone – ever – change their minds? Well, this is one reason that I know for sure: new information. That’s the catalyst – at least one of the main ones. Based on the mechanics of our brains, our minds are usually made up based on the information that we have. Our points of view are where we’ve closed the book and written “The End.” It’s only when we get new information, new awareness, that we may make up our minds differently and change them.

Before we go further, I want to emphasize here, that being open-minded doesn’t mean changing our minds, but it most certainly, and almost always means expanding our minds. And it’s through this process of expansion, that we’ll potentially also change them.

Expand is the third essential on how to audit and open your mind. There is one main concept involved in expanding:

- What new information and experiences can you seek to have a more informed point of view?

Expanding can be defined as *increasing, stretching, and ultimately, enlarging something or making it fuller*. When it comes to our minds, expanding is reopening the book and going beyond ‘The End.’ Expanding is about what alternative endings could there be to a certain story – or maybe even new chapters, or new stories altogether. This is more of the opening part of the *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind*. When I use the word opening, I mean both *a beginning and an act of unsealing something that has perhaps been closed*. People have also viewed *Expand* as taking a beginner’s mindset, approaching others and situations with a clean slate of mind.

Reflecting on the basic mechanics of our brains once again, our minds tend towards wanting to write the ending and close the book. With bounded rationality, cognitive dissonance, selective perception, biases, and prejudgments, the subconscious mind doesn't actively want new information, unless the new information supports the current information, and the already made up mind. *Expand* is about taking a conscious approach to having a more robust subconscious of stored life stories.

What new information and experiences can you seek to have a more informed point of view?

Let's take for granted that we've already done the first essential, where we've objectively identified where we got our points of view, as well as the facts and beliefs that we have. Let's also take for granted that we've already done the second essential, where we've probed by challenging our own points of view and empathized with someone else's points of view. *Expand* is now taking further steps towards being open-minded – it's about getting out of our story and imagined stories, and into the world.

Prior to *Expand*, here's what we've currently worked through with the essentials of auditing and opening our minds:

- Essential #1: *Objectivity* determines what we think is 'right' and 'wrong' based on where we got our points of view, and our facts and beliefs.
- Essential #2: *Probe* challenges what we think is 'right' and 'wrong' and empathizes with others' 'rights' and 'wrongs' based on either the current information that we have or that we can imagine.

This is where we're going with *Expand*, the next essential of auditing and opening our minds:

- Essential #3: *Expand* is about sidelining 'rights' and 'wrongs,' at least momentarily, to gain new information and experiences, so we have a greater arsenal and potentially better aim with all the rights and wrongs currently involved, and even ammunition for new rights and wrongs.

Again, *Expand* is about getting out of our stories and out of imagining someone else's stories, and more into the world of possible stories, gaining more information and experiences to be more informed.

Once again, there's a difference between a point of view, and an informed point of view, being the idea of *having factual, reliable, and up to date knowledge*.

Where do we start when trying to expand our points of view? Well, I always recommend prioritizing the following as our starting hit list for getting more information and experiences:

- Prioritize any holes, being lack of information that we may have discovered with our own facts and beliefs from Essential #1: *Objectivity*. As part of this first essential, we may realize that we don't have all the information and experiences that we need.
- Prioritize any holes, lack of information that we may have had when challenging our points of view and empathizing with their points of view in Essential #2: *Probe*. As part of this second essential, we may realize that we don't have all the information and experiences that we need.
- Prioritize checking out our current understanding of others' points of view.

Now that we know where to start, the next question is, how do we get out and into the world to get more information and experiences to be more informed? Well, there's lots of ways – be curious, read, research, travel, take further education, meet new people, and the list goes on. Perhaps most importantly though is this: communicate with others, ask questions, and listen! Communication includes checking out your current understanding of other points of view.

And that's all that's needed for Essential #3. This is *Expand* in relation to being open-minded. We need to seek new information and experiences to have a more informed point of view. When we can do this, we are on the home stretch to being closer to truths and understanding ourselves, others, and the situation. We are once again in the realm of open-mindedness.

Essential #3: *Expand*, also positions us well to be able to advance to Essential #4: *Notice*.

Expand in Action

Let's revisit the Breaking New Ground Corporation, my client example who was dealing with several customer complaints about a field team who had responsibilities around product repairs.

As we continued the training on the *Team Player Fundamentals*, and the topic of the *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind*, the time came to move from Essential #2: *Probe* to Essential #3: *Expand*.

As a reminder, here's how far we've come with the first two essentials:

- The primary fact involved (Essential #1: *Objectivity*) – Customers are calling about issues.
- The primary beliefs involved (Essential #1: *Objectivity*) – Customers call too much, the issues are small and nonemergencies, and they are taking advantage of the company and the team's time.
- The primary challenge to our own point of view (Essential #2: *Probe*) – When there are issues, we can't expect them not to call and not to want them to be addressed immediately.
- The primary empathy connection to their point of view (Essential #2: *Probe*) – The purchase is their customers' life savings. It's where many of them are going to spend the rest of their days with family and friends. It's what they'll leave behind as an inheritance.

Now as mentioned, during Essential #2: *Probe*, sometimes our minds are already opened a lot. By simply challenging our own points of view, and getting out of our shoes, and imagining being in the shoes of someone else, we can accomplish more informed points of view and new understanding. This particular team accomplished this during Essential #2 *Probe*. They were connected to their customers on shared values, as they all value their own homes, and all that having a home means. This

informed point of view and new information would position them for greater client relationships and a more productive work environment. To be clear once again, the main end benefit of being open-minded in the workplace is exactly this: greater relationships, more teamwork, and better productivity to achieve results.

Like this team, even though we can already be more open from the second essential, we can still benefit by going further into the third essential of *Expand*. So during the training with this team, and as we continued to work through the *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind*, we were onto Essential #3: *Expand* and I asked them:

“What other new information and experiences can you seek to have a more informed point of view?”

Clint thought he could minimize the discussion. “I think that we’re all good.”

“Yeah, I agree. We know where our customers are coming from now, and with empathy, we can be more respectful.” Lea was on the same wave length as Clint.

“Do you know for sure where your customers are coming from?” I looked at others in the room for their thoughts.

“Randy, are you kidding us here? What are you talking about?” Crystal pierced her glance in my direction.

“Well, you know that you have upset customers. You think that this is because their homes are their most valuable possession for a variety of reasons. This makes sense to me, and you’re probably right, but how can we know for sure? We want an informed point of view, meaning having factual, reliable, and up to date knowledge.” I used my most nonjudgmental and logical voice.

“Okay, I get what you’re saying. You mentioned that for Essential #3: *Expand* that a good place to start is with any holes that we may have, lack of information, with Essential #1: *Objectivity* and Essential #2: *Probe*.” Toby reflected back on his participant workbook.

“We’re not lacking any information.” Clint shook his head.

“So let’s say that you’re not lacking information, then what?” I asked.

“Well we need to make sure that it’s informed.” Anthony said with interest.

“Perfect, and how do you do that?” I urged them along.

“We could go back to our clients and ask them questions.” Anthony cautiously guessed.

“What kind of questions could you ask them?” I looked at Anthony to reassure him.

“We need to confirm or correct our point of view on their point of view?” Katy’s intuitive statement surprised her team.

“Perfect again, and how do you do that?” I smiled.

“Well, in this example, I think it would be best to let them know that we value our homes too, let them know what we will address all their issues as timely as possible, and ask them if we’ve understood them correctly and if they have any additional thoughts?” Toby had thought this response through as we were talking.

I was proud of them. We were moving quickly through this conversation. “This is another great question to ask, with questions being one of the ways to be more informed. You’re also checking out your current understanding of their points of view. Through all of these questions, we’ll potentially expand our current points of view, which again means increasing, stretching, and ultimately, enlarging it or making it fuller. As you check your understanding and ask for additional thoughts, this will inform your point of view on their point of view.”

“But what if we can’t make their issues a priority or fix it as fast as the customer wants?” Crystal brought up a great question.

“You’re not going to like my answer.” I replied.

“Why?” Clint hesitantly asked.

“Well, this is another potential example of where you could apply the *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind*. Your point of view that ‘we can’t make their issue a priority or fix it as fast as the customer wants,’ could actually be considered a prejudgment or a closed-minded perspective, which we could explore further through *Objectivity, Probe, and Expand*.” I anticipated push back.

“Are you kidding me, where does this end?” Katy was not impressed.

I clarified. “Well, in a work environment, the process of being open-minded usually ends with someone making a final decision, maybe the team or the leader, and hopefully it’s an informed decision. The process of being open-minded could also end by consulting the organization’s policies and procedures, which outlines final points of view on how the organization is run from those in decision making roles. In the world, it either ends with someone making a final decision, hopefully an informed one, or with the laws that govern society, or with the morals that guide the individuals.”

“So there are times when we close our minds – where we make final judgments and close the book?” Toby said constructively.

I responded, “Yes – there are times when through the process of being open-minded we can make more sound judgments versus those initial prejudgments based on inadequate information.”

Lea demonstrated hope. “I’ve been thinking – by using the essentials for auditing and opening the mind, I can see how we could find some potential solutions to fixing customer issues in a timely matter and as a priority.”

“But what happens if we couldn’t?” Clint challenged.

I wanted to leave no doubts. “Well then, through the process of the essentials of opening your mind, at least you’re coming from a more informed point of view.”

Crystal had concerns, “And what if the customer is closed-minded or doesn’t like our timeline to fix their issue?”

I nodded my head to express my understanding. “Well in this case, more often than not, your ability to be open-minded and at very least empathize with their point of view, will support a greater relationship.”

“And if not?” Clint said calmly.

“If not – if we’ve done what we can, and been open-minded – then you’ve been the best team player that you can. And being the best team player that you can, doesn’t always lead to a win. We will lose sometimes. From a work perspective, this includes losing customers.” I knew that this would disturb some of them, if not all.

“Well that’s kind of a downer – why bother being open-minded at all then?” Katy was serious, and spoke her truth, and I knew it.

“Because it increases your chances of winning.” I was serious too, speaking my truth, and they knew it.

After this conversation, the team began to use the *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind* to figure out some ways to expedite remedies to client issues, which included the supervisor being more involved with identifying reoccurring product problems. At a later time, members of the team also followed-up with some of their customers who had reoccurring complaints, and were able to confirm that these customers were concerned for their investment in their home. In addition, the team learned that the customers were also concerned about the warranty timelines. With this expanded information, the field team was able to honour an extended warranty, extending some timelines for repairs, making the customer happy while also managing their workload.

Your Turn to Put Expand into Action

With the same area of your life that you want to be more open-minded, which you identified earlier when completing the ‘Your Turn to Put Objectivity and Probe into Action’ sections, let’s explore *Expand*, the third essential to auditing and opening your mind.

What new information and experiences can you seek to have a more informed point of view?

Remember, when trying to expand your points of view, a great place to start is:

- Prioritize any holes, being lack of information that we may have discovered with our own facts and beliefs from Essential #1: *Objectivity*. As part of this first essential, we may realize that we don't have all the information and experiences that we need.
- Prioritize any holes, lack of information that we may have had when challenging our points of view and empathizing with their points of view in Essential #2: *Probe*. As part of this second essential, we may realize that we don't have all the information and experiences that we need.
- Prioritize checking out our current understanding of other points of view.

Remember as well, to get out and into the world to be more informed, we can be curious, read, research, travel, take further education, meet new people, and the list goes on.

And also remember, perhaps most importantly: communicate with others, ask questions, and listen! Who can you communicate more with? Have you checked out your current understanding of other points of view?

Essential #4: Notice

“In all tests of character, when two viewpoints are pitted against each other, in the final analysis, the thing that will strike you the most is not who was right or wrong, strong or weak, wise or foolish...but who went to the greater length in considering the other's perspective.”

– Mike Dooley

Three of the words that might be most powerful in the workplace with closing the mind, negatively impacting relationships, teamwork, productivity, and results:

I am right.

Three more words that might be even more powerful in the workplace at closing the mind, negatively impacting relationships, teamwork, productivity, and results:

You are wrong.

Honestly, even just thinking ‘I am right’ or ‘You are wrong’ can lead to actions of closed-mindedness, negatively impacting relationships, teamwork, productivity, and results. The often misconstrued dichotomy of right and wrong in points of view can be further exposed through reflecting back on the first three essentials to auditing and opening the mind.

Notice is the fourth essential on how to audit and open your mind. There is one main concept involved in noticing:

- What new understanding do you have?

Noticing can be defined as *an act of perceiving, discerning, observing, and becoming aware*. When it comes to opening our minds and going through the first three essentials, noticing is all about how are the latest editions of the stories in our minds now different and potentially better than the previous editions? Going through the essentials to auditing and opening our minds is like an author writing a new edition to a previous book. When an author republishes their work, isn't that the purpose? Isn't there something at least different, and ideally better? Augmented or supplemented in some way? Enhanced and deepened?

Reflecting on the basic mechanics of our brains once again, our minds tend towards wanting to revert back to the first editions. With bounded rationality, cognitive dissonance, selective perception, biases, and prejudgments, the subconscious mind actually gravitates towards the dichotomy of right and wrong, particularly with the self being ‘right’ and the other person being ‘wrong.’ Like *Expand*, *Notice* takes a greater conscious approach to the stored life stories in our subconscious, by making note of the updated version of our life stories based on the new information and new understanding acquired through the first three essentials.

Again, I want to emphasize here that being open-minded doesn’t always involve changing our minds – though potentially we will – but it almost always means new understanding. Noticing brings light to the new understanding and the potentially changed mind.

What new understanding do you have?

Prior to Essential #4: *Notice*, the concepts of the first three essentials are mandatory:

- Essential #1: *Objectivity*, where we objectively identified where we got our points of view, as well as the facts and beliefs that we have.
- Essential #2: *Probe*, where we probed by challenging our own points of view and empathizing with someone else’s points of view.
- Essential #3: *Expand*, where we sought new information and experiences to have more informed points of view.

Noticing is taking further steps towards being open-minded – it’s about taking the new information and experiences that we have from the first three essentials, and converging this new information and experiences with our current information and experiences.

As a reminder, prior to *Notice*, here’s what we’ve worked through with the auditing and opening our mind essentials:

- Essential #1: *Objectivity* determines what we think is ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ based on where we got our points of view, and our facts, and beliefs.
- Essential #2: *Probe* challenges what we think is ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ and empathizes with others’ ‘rights’ and ‘wrongs’ based on either the current information that we have or that we can imagine.
- Essential #3: *Expand* is about sidelining ‘rights’ and ‘wrongs’ momentarily, to gain new information and experiences, so we have a greater arsenal and potentially better aim with all the rights and wrongs currently involved, and even ammunition for new rights and wrongs.

This is where we’re going with *Notice*, the next essential of auditing and opening our minds:

- The fourth essential – *Notice* – is about what we may understand differently about the rights and wrongs.

Notice is about, ‘Do we have an updated new edition of right and wrong when it comes to the stories that we have and others have?’ Do we have new understanding, being the idea of *having comprehension and intelligence, balanced by insightfulness, thoughtfulness, and sound judgment?* Our understanding can be enriched through appropriately completing and then reflecting on the first three essentials:

- What new understanding do we have from Essential #1: *Objectivity*?
- What new understanding do we have from Essential #2: *Probe*?
- What new understanding do we have from Essential #3: *Expand*?
- Overall, how would we summarize all of our new understanding? Have we changed our points of view?

Notice is where we can break the cycle of running based on ‘bad’ judgements, which I referenced as prejudgments, defined as forming a judgment, prematurely and without having adequate information. This is where the guesses and guilty verdicts of our prejudgments and closed-

mindedness are met with mature and adequate information to either corroborate or disprove are initial prejudgments. This is where we become more effective team players who base points of view on more than a guess or a guilty verdict.

And that's really all that's needed with Essential #4. This is *Notice* in relationship to being open-minded. We need to identify what new understanding we have. When we can do this, we can be fully in the realm of open-mindedness about the original rights and wrongs of our own and others' points of view.

Whether we change our minds or not, new understanding is always the true measurement of success to being open-minded. If we don't have new understanding, then we need to revisit our performance with the first three essentials: *Objectivity*, *Probe*, and *Expand*.

Notice in Action

For one last time, let's revisit the Breaking New Ground Corporation, my client example who was dealing with several customer complaints about a field team who had responsibilities around product repairs.

As we continued the training on the *Team Player Fundamentals*, and the topic of the *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind*, the time came to move from Essential #3: *Expand* to Essential #4: *Notice*.

As a reminder, here's how far we've come with the first three essentials:

- The primary fact involved (Essential #1: *Objectivity*) – Customers are calling about issues.
- The primary beliefs involved (Essential #1: *Objectivity*) – Customers call too much, the issues are small and nonemergencies, and they are taking advantage of the company and the team's time.
- The primary challenge to our own point of view (Essential #2: *Probe*) – When there are issues, we can't expect them not to call and not to want them to be addressed immediately.

- The primary empathy connection to our own points of view (Essential #2: *Probe*) – The purchase is their customers’ life savings. It’s where many of them will spend the rest of their days with family and friends. It’s what they’ll leave behind as an inheritance.
- The primary new information and experience that we’ve gained to be more informed (Essential #3: *Expand*) – The supervisor will track reoccurring product problems to follow up with manufacturers. Also, customers were concerned about warranty timelines, which were then extended.

During the training with this team, and as we continued to work through the *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind*, in relation to Essential #4: *Notice*, I asked them:

“So what new understanding do you have?”

Crystal held her head, “This is hurting our brains!”

“Let’s go back to Essential #1: *Objectivity*.” I held up their participant workbook, as I wanted them to use their resources.

“Well with this essential, we were judging our customers unfairly in the beginning based on beliefs versus facts.” Anthony consulted his notes.

“Good, and with Essential #2: *Probe*?” I prompted them to continue.

“We would probably act the same way as them if we were the customer, because we’re talking about a home here. Who wants to be in a new home that has defects after spending all that money?” Katy recalled the comments from earlier.

I was pleased that they were remembering. “Good, and with Essential #3: *Expand*?”

“There could be some root manufacturing problems that need to be addressed? We could also take some pressure off with respect to

timelines by extending some of the warranties.” Lea was excited about these possibilities.

I’m never sure how far this will go, it just goes until it goes, and the end of my questioning was near. “Good, and thinking about them altogether, what do you notice?”

Clint was reluctant. “I hate being wrong – we were wrong here about our customers.” There was a long pause....

“I agree – and I hate admitting it.” As Crystal said this, unspoken tension in the room was released through some laughter.

“Well that’s one way to look at this. Another way is that you just didn’t have all the information, so perhaps you were right based on the information that you had at the time. And now that you’ve been open-minded and have more information, you also have the benefit of having new understanding. By noticing the wrongs, you’re now right. This will happen. In some case you’ll realize that you’re wrong, but sometimes the outcome will be different: you’ll notice the rights of your rights, and the rights of your wrongs – or you’ll notice the wrongs of their rights, and the wrong of their wrongs – or any combination in between – and sometimes you’ll notice a new right and a new wrong that you never saw before. You’ll be on a new mountain top, with a new view.” They all listened contently – nothing like light bulb moments for a facilitator!

This new understanding would position them for greater relationships, more teamwork, and better productivity to achieve results. As I’ll continue to say, that is the main end benefit of being open-minded in the workplace: greater relationships, more teamwork, and better productivity to achieve results.

Your Turn to Put Notice into Action

With the same area of your life that you want to be more open-minded, which you identified earlier when completing the ‘Your Turn to Put Objectivity, Probe, and Expand into Action’ sections, let’s explore *Notice*, the fourth essential to auditing and opening your mind.

What new understanding do you have from Essential #1:
Objectivity?

What new understanding do you have from Essential #2: *Probe*?

What new understanding do you have from Essential #3: *Expand*?

Overall, how would you summarize your new understanding?
Have you changed your point of view?

If you don't have any new understanding, go back through the first three essentials again: *Objectivity*, *Probe*, and *Expand*.

Summary Time

“The greatest deception ‘people’ suffer is from their own opinions.”
– Leonardo da Vinci

Congratulations! By reading this far, you’ve now opened your mind to what’s involved with opening your mind. In the simplest outline, here are the *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind*:

1. Objectivity:

- Where did you get your point of view?
- What are the facts and beliefs behind your point of view?

2. Probe

- Challenge your point of view. Why might it be incorrect, or not totally accurate?
- Empathize with someone else’s point of view. Why might it be equally correct, if not more accurate than yours?

3. Expand

- What new information and experiences can you seek to have a more informed point of view?

4. Notice

- What new understanding do you have?

As an extension to this brief summary, I’ve also included some ‘Tips For Success’ and ‘Next Steps’ for you in the following pages.

For now, as we near the end of this book, I both thank and applaud you for investing your time with the *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind*. We are all gifted as human beings with the extraordinary and innate abilities of choice and action and thus influence. Using these essentials to open our minds is a positive choice, positive action, and thus a positive influence that’s benefited my clients, their relationships, their organizations, their communities, and their families. I hope the same for you – through your choice, your action, and your influence – create the positive.

Tips for Success

“We've spent our entire lives living in our heads; it takes time and work to change this.” – @mindfuleveryday

Now that we've learned the *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind*, I have some additional advice to support your progress and success with being open-minded. Here are my top six ideas that I encourage you to focus on as you start to take action on being open-minded in your professional and perhaps even your personal life:

1. “Check-in and be aware of the state of your mind, by applying OPEN”

If you haven't realized already, the *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind* can be conveniently remembered through the acronym OPEN: *Objectivity, Probe, Expand, and Notice*. As for our minds, let's not just think that they're open; let's know with confidence that they're open. This requires conscious effort, check-in, and awareness. OPEN, done in order, can help. Think about what you're thinking.

2. “Prioritize truth over who's right and who's wrong.”

Truth is a loaded word. Right and wrong are loaded words. The idea here is that we suspend our attachment of right and wrong, and get curious and commit to learning more about others points of view, as well as our own. As part of this, you'll need to curb your emotions. Many of us will have a level of discomfort around both temporarily acknowledging that we could be wrong and that someone else could be right. Back to the mechanics of our brain, this isn't our most natural response. This tip for success links well with the next one....

3. “Commit to Understanding.”

Remember, OPEN isn't about changing your mind (though that may happen), it's about greater

understanding. This isn't necessarily about surrendering your beliefs. This is about allowing space for consideration of other rights and wrongs in the world that are different from your own, and to gain greater understanding of these other points of view on rights and wrong. Even with the most unpleasant or offensive points of view – those perspectives and opinions where you might say, “I would never agree with...” – Remember, the quest is greater understanding. Commit to understanding through OPEN, and during *Expand*, asking others for more information on their points of view, as well as asking others for their points of view on your points of view.

4. “Decide to be open-minded because that’s who you are versus being closed-minded because that’s how the other person is.”

Closed-minded people are everywhere. Don't let their closed-mindedness stop you from being open-minded. Are you only going to be open-minded if someone else is open-minded, or are you open-minded no matter what kind of mind someone else has? This is an important distinction. I'm saying that the idea here for success is to decide to be open. Period. This is a ‘take the high road’ and ‘not stoop to their level’ situation.

5. “This is about you being open-minded, not getting someone else to be more open-minded.”

Put another way – this isn't about getting someone to understand your points of view. This is about you being open to another human being. This is about you noticing new understanding, through *Objectivity*, *Probe*, and *Expand*. Ideally, as an added bonus, the other person will be open-minded as well, or be open-minded in return, but that certainly isn't a guarantee.

6. “Points of view can take many different forms.”

Open-mindedness is not just about being open to someone else’s opinions or decisions or values or beliefs or needs and wants, though that has certainly been a focus in this book. Open-mindedness is also about being open to situations, that may call for change or something different than your current points of view may support.

Call to Action

“In order to carry a positive action we must develop here a positive vision.” – Dalai Lama

Alright, so here we are at the end, which is a beginning really, with where to start as the potential question. Now that you’ve learned the *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind*, and now that you know my tips for success, I have some more additional advice to support your progress and success with being open-minded. What follows are my recommendations on where to start.

First of all, we’re not talking about turning your whole mental world upside down, and examining every judgment that you have. We’ve narrowed the focus to prejudgments, which is where we’ve *formed a judgment, prematurely and without having adequate information*. Again, not all judgments are bad. It’s these prejudgments where we want to be mindful. We’ve also narrowed the focus further to be your workplace. I remind you that the premise of the *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind* is that being open-minded is one of the fundamentals to being an effective team player and contributing to greater relationships, more teamwork, and better productivity to achieve results. That’s our end game here.

So your starting position is to look at prejudgments that you might have in your workplace. To do this, we recommend that you look at the different areas of your organization where you may have some closed-mindedness, for example:

- Employees
- Customers
- Community
- Profit
- Sales
- Operations
- Competitors
- Goals
- Mission/Values

- Marketing
- Services/Products

Now, write a list for yourself of where you're open-minded and closed-minded in the above areas of your organization, or other areas that are more applicable to your job.

And finally, just pick one thing from your closed-minded list, where you believe being more open-minded would make you a better team player, thus contributing to greater relationships, more teamwork, and better productivity to achieve results. Now, with this one thing, apply the *Four Essentials on How to Audit and Open Your Mind*.

If you'd prefer, or in addition to, you could also do this with another person, or if you're in a leadership role, with your team!

As a reminder, you'll know that you're successful if you have greater understanding.

So who cares about greater understanding anyways? Where does that get you? Well, better understanding can potentially get you better behaviours. ***Thoughts precede performance.*** This notion brings us to one more call of action. If you've found this book valuable, and want to learn more about my services, including the *Team Player* training program, please email me directly at rk@randykennett.com or call my organization, Hone Consulting, at 1.855.438.9565. You can also visit our websites: www.teamplayerfundamentals.com or www.honeconsulting.com.

For now, and always, happy climbing up other mountain tops – I sure hope that you enjoy the many more beautiful views that are available!

The End Beginning!

Appendix

Being Open-Minded Worksheet

Essential #1: Objectivity

What is your point of view?

Where did you get your point of view?

- Your experience?
- Someone else's experience?
- Imagined experience?

If the point of view was from your own experience (first-hand account) or someone else's experience (second-, third-, fourth-, hundredth-, thousandth-hand account.):

- How was your/their attention during the experience?

- How many experiences serve as the basis of your/their point of view?

- How was the quality of your/their experience through the senses?

Essential #1: Objectivity (Continued)

For all points of view, including imagined points of view, separate the facts from the beliefs:

- What are the facts, being verifiable truths?

- What are the beliefs, being trust and confidence in what is true, that may not be verifiable?

Essential #2: Probe

Challenge: Why might your point of view be incorrect, or not totally accurate?

- Be the Devil’s Advocate against what you think is right and wrong.

Empathize: Why might someone else’s point of view be equally correct, if not more accurate than yours?

- Imagine being in their story, and why they might be right about what they think is right and wrong.

Essential #3: Expand

What new information and experiences can you seek to have a more informed point of view?

Remember, when trying to expand your points of view, a great place to start is:

- Did you discover any holes, being lack of information that you had, with your own facts and beliefs from Essential #1: *Objectivity*?

- Did you discover any holes, lack of information that you had when challenging your points of view and empathizing with someone else's points of view in Essential #2: *Probe*?

- Have you checked out your current understanding of other points of view?

How can you get out and into the world to be more informed? Can you get more curious and read, research, travel, take further education, meet new people, or?

Who can you communicate more with to ask questions and listen?

Essential #4: Notice

What new understanding do you have from Essential #1: *Objectivity*?

What new understanding do you have from Essential #2: *Probe*?

What new understanding do you have from Essential #3: *Expand*?

Overall, how would you summarize all of your new understanding? Have you changed your point of view?

If you don't have any new understanding, go back through the first three essentials again: *Objectivity*, *Probe*, and *Expand*.
