

FOUNDATIONS OF LEARNING & COACHING IN POLICING

Purpose of this Presentation

#1 Explain WHY the Agency is Changing Training

We are building a ‘**Distributed Performance Culture**’.

This means:

- Normalizing coaching and feedback
- Introducing core human performance concepts
- Building buy-in
- Reducing threat responses to feedback
- Establishing a common language throughout the agency

Definition

A **Distributed Performance Culture** is an organization where learning, coaching, feedback, and skill development occur continuously throughout the organization—not just during formal training events.

In a Distributed Performance Culture, every supervisor, FTO, trainer, and officer contributes to maintaining and improving performance through questioning, reflection, coaching, and practice.

#2 Provide Actionable Tools to Support This Change

This class introduces practical tools that can be immediately applied in the field:

- The 4 Individual AAR Questions
- Pulling rather than Pushing through effective questioning
- Using the Thing–Reason Model to understand performance
- Understanding Transfer and how people learn in open environments
- Improving attention, reflection, and adaptation

Key Idea

Performance is not built through exposure.

Performance is built through:

- Attention
- Reflection
- Retrieval
- Coaching
- Adaptation
- Repetition over time

Learning, Performance and Transfer

An increase in performance immediately after training does not necessarily mean learning has occurred. This is sometimes called the '**Illusion of Learning**'.

Performance refers to temporary improvements that occur during or immediately after practice.

Learning refers to relatively permanent changes that allow an officer to perform effectively long after training has ended.

The ultimate goal is **Transfer**: the ability to apply knowledge, skills, and decision-making in situations that differ from those experienced in training.

The street is an **Open Environment**. Open environments are constantly changing, unpredictable, and rarely present the exact same problem twice.

Success depends on an officer's ability to:

- Recognize change
- Adapt to new information
- Solve novel problems
- Apply prior learning to unfamiliar situations

The goal is not simply to improve today's performance.

The goal is to improve future performance in situations the officer has
never encountered before.

The Learning Loop

Experience → Reflection → Understanding → Adjustment → Improved Performance → Repeat.

Learning is not created by experience alone.

Learning occurs when experience is **examined, understood, and adjusted**.

The Thing & Reason Model

Whenever an officer acts, there are four possibilities:

1. Right Thing / Right Reason

The goal.

Reinforce both the action and the thinking behind it.

THING REASON		THING REASON	
✓	✓	✓	✗
✗	✓	✗	✗

2. Right Thing / Wrong Reason

Good outcome, fragile understanding.

Explore the reasoning.

A correct action based on faulty thinking may fail under different circumstances.

3. Wrong Thing/ Right Reason

The reasoning may be sound, but execution failed.

Coach execution and skill development.

4. Wrong Thing / Wrong Reason

An opportunity for learning and development.

Explore both the action and the thinking behind it.

Remember:

Good outcomes can hide poor thinking.

Poor outcomes can hide good thinking.

Coach the process, not just the outcome.

‘Pull’ with Questions, Not ‘Push’ with Your Thinking

People learn more effectively when they actively **retrieve, explain, and examine their own thinking**. This means ‘pulling’ by asking them questions, so they engage in their own reflection.

Instead of immediately telling them what you see and think, ask questions to uncover theirs.

Useful coaching questions include:

- Tell me about your decision.
- What stood out to you?
- What were you noticing?
- What options did you consider?
- What led you toward that option?
- What were you expecting to happen next?
- Looking back, what might you do differently?

When we immediately provide solutions, we are often ‘pushing’.

Pushing attempts **to replace another person's thinking with our own**.

Pulling uses well-formulated questions to reveal how an officer perceived, interpreted, predicted, and acted within a situation. This process allows for far more learning to take place.

Only after understanding their thinking can we then guide or correct it.

Be Careful with "Why?"

The issue is not the word "why." The issue is when and how it is used.

When asked too early, "why" can cause people to:

- Defend
- Justify
- Rationalize

before they have fully explored their own thinking and other options they may not have previously considered.

Consider using:

- Tell me about...
- Walk me through...
- Help me understand...
- What led you to...
- What were you seeing?
- What were you expecting?

Once you understand the officer's reasoning, asking "why" can be valuable for reinforcing sound thinking and successful decision-making.

Attention is Foundational – Drives Performance

You cannot react to what you never noticed. You may not notice because other information has hijacked your awareness.

Bottom-Up Attention

Something captures your attention.

Top-Down Attention

You intentionally direct your attention.

A critical performance skill is the ability to **redirect attention** when circumstances change.

In policing, officers often become focused on information that initially captured their attention.

Expert performance requires recognizing when attention should shift toward more relevant information.

The goal is not to eliminate attentional capture. The goal is to become aware of it and intentionally redirect attention toward task-relevant information.

Individual Officer AAR Questions – minimum questions for deliberate practice

1. What went well for me?
2. Why did that go well?
3. What is one thing I need to work on?
4. How am I going to work on that?

Team AAR Questions – Same 4 questions for a team environment, just about the team.

A 5th question for teams that I have found extremely beneficial and quite an eye opener is:

#5 “What was the largest risk we took and got away with?”

These questions help transform experience into learning and create ownership of future improvement.

Coaching Reminder

The first answer should not come from the coach.

Ask – Listen – Understand – Then guide.

Coach the thinking that drives the action—not just the action itself.

Jeff Johnsgaard
website: www.OnPurpose.Training
email: Jeff@OnPurpose.Training
cell: (423) 457-5463



TRAINING
ON PURPOSE, BY DESIGN