

[Coaching and Mentoring]



Lecture Title:

8. [Coaching and Mentoring: Barriers and Learning]

Lecturer: Paul Gauci

Date: 29 July 2026

13.00hrs-17.00Hrs



Masters in
Human Resources Management

Learning Objectives

Following this session students will be able:

To overcome coachee's resistance to change

To develop specialised knowledge about barriers to coaching or mentoring

To understand how people learn and their learning styles.



Learning Method

- **Lecture focused on learning objectives and core content** as a key instructional process.
- **Formative assessment through participative learning tools and activities** will be utilised evaluating students' comprehension and academic progress throughout - with respect to understanding and applying HRM concepts.



Define resistance in coaching/mentoring contexts

Why Resistance Matters in Coaching and Mentoring



Importance of addressing resistance for successful outcomes

- Understand types and sources of resistance
- Explore evidence-based strategies to overcome it
- Build specialised knowledge of systemic and individual barriers

Understanding Resistance to Change

What Is Resistance?

Definition: Emotional, cognitive, or behavioural opposition to change

- Common manifestations:
- Avoidance
- Defensiveness
- Passive compliance
- Repeated excuses



“People don’t resist change.
They resist being changed.”

Peter Senge

The Heart of Innovation Series

The Heart of
Transformation

Walter Link in dialogue with:
PETER SENGE



GLTV

www.globalleadership.tv

Psychological Roots of Resistance

- Fear of the unknown or failure
- Loss of control or autonomy
- Cognitive dissonance and identity threat
- Comfort with the status quo
- Attachment to existing habits and beliefs



Types of Resistance

Recognising Different Forms of Resistance

- Cognitive Resistance: Rationalising, questioning, over-intellectualising
- Emotional Resistance: Anxiety, frustration, denial
- Behavioural Resistance: Avoidance, procrastination, non-compliance
- Relational Resistance: Distrust, lack of rapport, power dynamics



Barriers to Coaching and Mentoring

Systemic and Individual Barriers

- Organisational culture and leadership style
- Lack of psychological safety
- Inadequate time or resources
- Misaligned expectations
- Coach/mentor-coachee mismatch
- Lack of readiness or motivation



Theoretical Models to Understand Resistance

Frameworks That Illuminate Resistance

- Kubler-Ross Change Curve
- Lewin's Force Field Analysis
- CBC (Cognitive Behavioural Coaching) lens:
Identifying limiting beliefs and assumptions

Exercise: How are they relevant to Coaching and Mentoring?



Strategies to Overcome Resistance

Practical Approaches for Coaches and Mentors

- Build trust and rapport early
- Use active listening and empathy
- Clarify goals and expectations collaboratively
- Explore underlying beliefs and values
- Use scaling questions and reframing
- Celebrate small wins to build momentum



Tools and Techniques

Coaching Tools to Address Resistance

- CLEAR model: Contracting and Listening stages
- GROW model: Exploring Reality and Options
- Motivational Interviewing: Eliciting change talk
- Socratic questioning: Challenging assumptions
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=USo7V6kwfEk>
- Reflective journaling: Encouraging self-awareness



Applying the Learning

- Case Study & Reflection
- A brief case of a resistant coachee.
- Group discussion: Identify resistance type and potential strategies



Case Study: “James, the Reluctant Leader”

- Context:
- James is a newly promoted team leader in a mid-sized tech firm.
- His manager recommends coaching to help him transition into the role. In the first few sessions, James is polite but disengaged.
- He often arrives late, avoids eye contact, and gives short, non-committal answers.
- When asked about goals, he says, “I’m just here because my boss thinks I need this.”



- Coach's Observations:
- James resists setting goals or exploring challenges
- He deflects questions with humour or vague responses
- He expresses doubt about coaching's relevance: *"I don't see how talking helps me lead better."*



Group Discussion Prompts

1. What types of resistance are present?
 - Cognitive? Emotional? Behavioural? Relational?
 - What clues suggest these types?

2. What might be driving James's resistance?

- Fear of failure or exposure?
- Lack of psychological safety?
- Low perceived value of coaching?

3. What strategies could the coach use?

- How might rapport be strengthened?
- What tools or models could help uncover James's beliefs?
- How could the coach reframe the purpose of coaching?



Measuring Progress and Readiness

Tracking Change and Engagement

- Use of readiness scales
- Feedback loops and check-ins
- Behavioural indicators of engagement
- Adjusting approach based on coachee's stage of change





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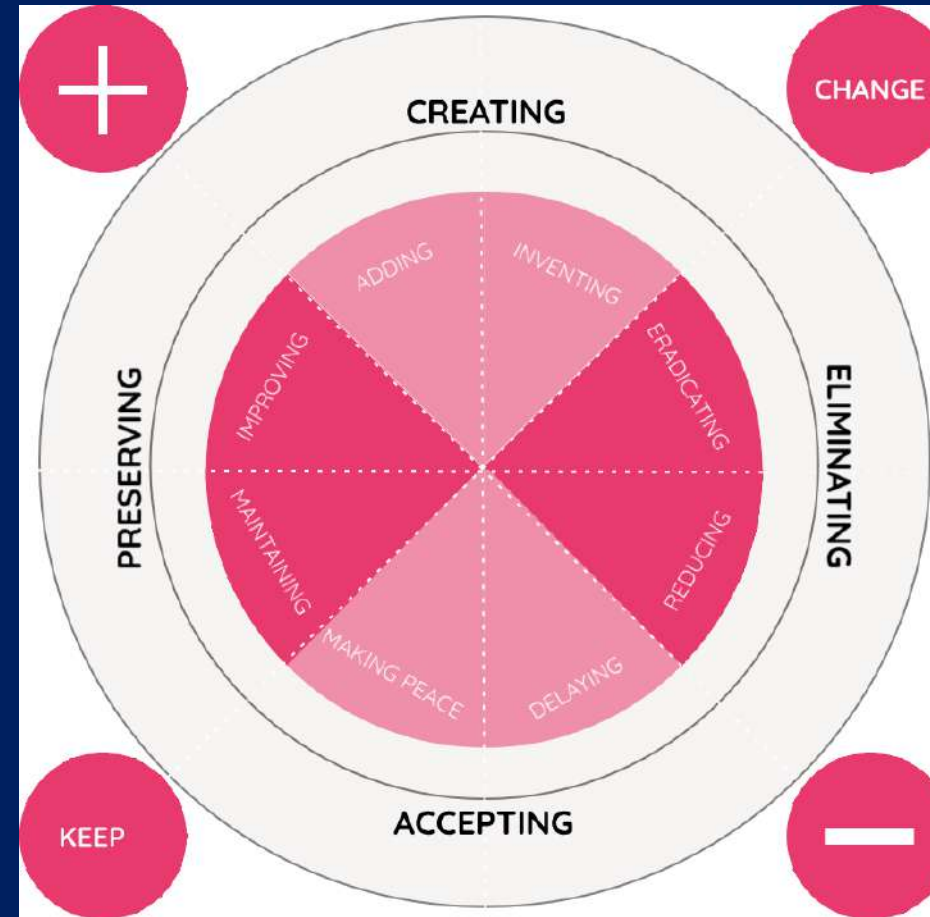
A short activity on Change

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4DDZBIRNdjk>



WHAT IS THE WHEEL OF CHANGE?

- The Wheel of Change is a useful tool created by award-winning coach Marshall Goldsmith, and is designed for individuals to assess their particular skills and behaviours, and therefore to plan their personal development.



The wheel has two predominant axes:

- **keep/change** and **positive/negative**, which divide the wheel into four main quadrants:
- **Creating** - the innovative quadrant of the wheel. **Consider what you add, or what you invent.** How do you go outside of the behavioural norms in order to create new systems, processes, services or products? What can you do differently? On top of this, what can you add to your life which may make you more effective in your professional or personal roles? What can your team add in order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their products or services? What would you like to be able to do?
- **Eliminating** - this refers to the **eradication or reduction of behaviours that are outdated, ineffective/inefficient, or downright harmful.** Consider what you and your team could do less of, or even remove entirely. This could be removing unnecessary bureaucracy, reducing meeting times to improve efficiency, or delegating responsibilities that should not be part of your role.
- **Accepting** - what do you need to **delay or make peace with**? Often, we can spend a lot of time and energy trying to change things, or through the frustration of not being able to do so, when really it is most sensible to make peace with it. Other changes may be practical and possible, but right now it is sensible to delay until you have the time or resources to do so.
- **Preserving** - what do you need to **improve or maintain**? Which skills or behaviours are practical, and should be kept hold of? Which are useful, but can be built upon and developed? Consider which practices have offered you success in the past - though remember that success can be judged based on many different criteria.



Exercise Title: “Mapping Your Change Commitments”

Learning Objectives:

- Understand the dynamics of competing commitments and immunity to change
- Apply the Wheel of Change to a personal or professional development goal
- Practice reflective questioning and peer coaching

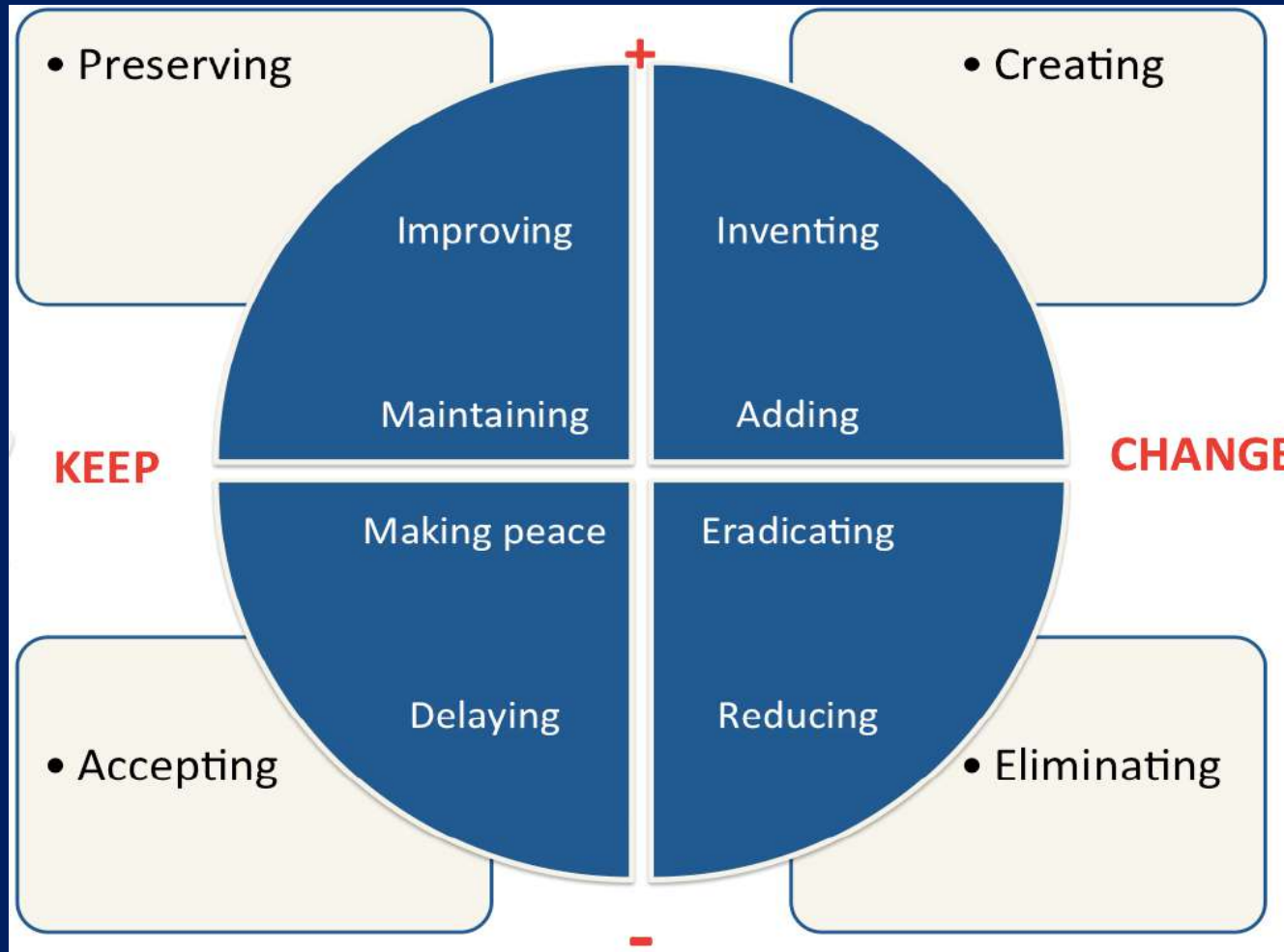


Introduction to the Wheel of Change

The Wheel of Change helps individuals explore:

- What they want to preserve
- What they want to eliminate
- What they want to create
- What they want to accept
- It encourages balance between action and acceptance, and between continuity and change.



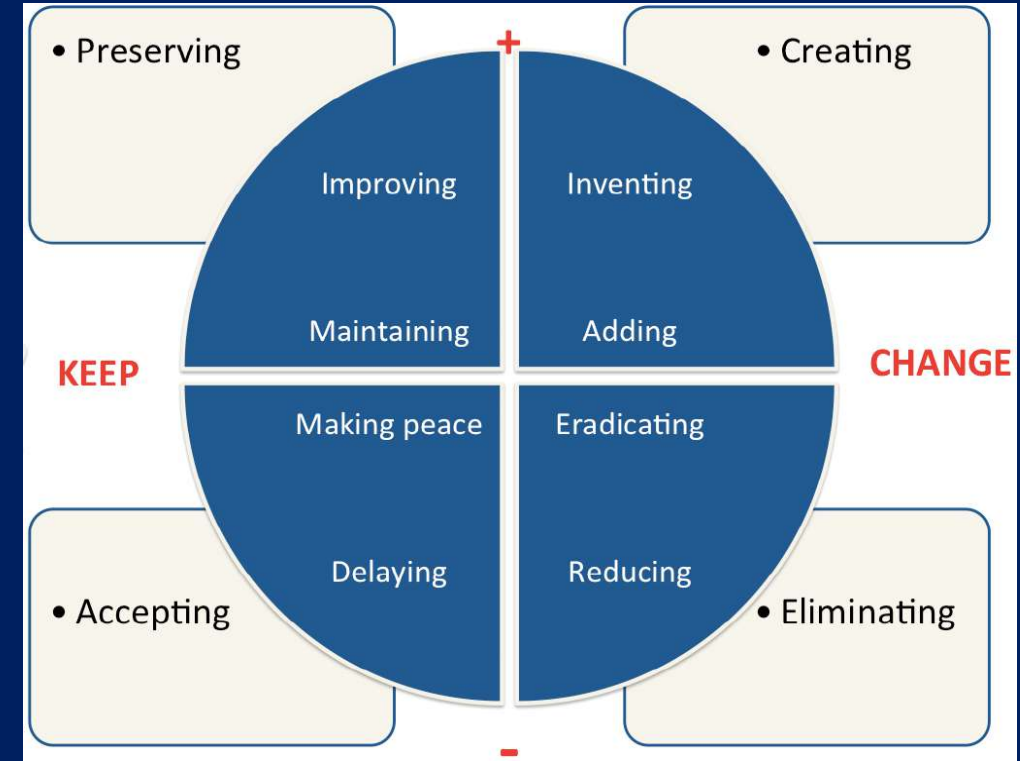


WHEEL OF CHANGE

Laskow Lahey L , Kegan R. (2009) Immunity to Change: How to Overcome It and Unlock the Potential in Yourself and Your Organization Harvard Business Press

PLANNING YOUR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- The Wheel of Change and its various segments can help you **identify the areas which you need to create, those you need to preserve, those you need to eliminate, and those that you must accept.**
- From this assessment, you can create a personal development plan by listing the areas (perhaps in the form of a four-column table) which fall into each of the wheel's segments.



"What got you here, won't get you there."

- The above words from Marshall Goldsmith himself refer to the ongoing need to **continuously adapt to changes in the personal, professional, organisational or social environment**. When facing new realities, preserving and developing characteristics you have identified as useful, whilst dropping those which will not be beneficial, even if they have been helpful in the past.
- Work on **developing new behaviours and skills** which will aid you in continuing forward with your progression.
- **Recognise and value positive traits** - both within yourself and within your team - which will be beneficial in tasks to come, so that you can build upon them.
- **Identify and drop negative traits, skills or behaviours** which can be a hindrance to you, or can cause you to be overstretched.
- And finally, **accept** the areas which you cannot change and make peace with them.



SUMMARY OF THE WHEEL

- Identify what you would like to invent or add to your repertoire of skills and traits
- Eliminate or reduce traits which are not practical or required to reach your specific goals
- Maintain and improve already-present traits which may continue to be of use
- Accept that some things you cannot change at the current time and make peace with them



To understand how people learn and their learning styles.



The VAK learning styles model is a popular way to understand different preferences for how people learn.

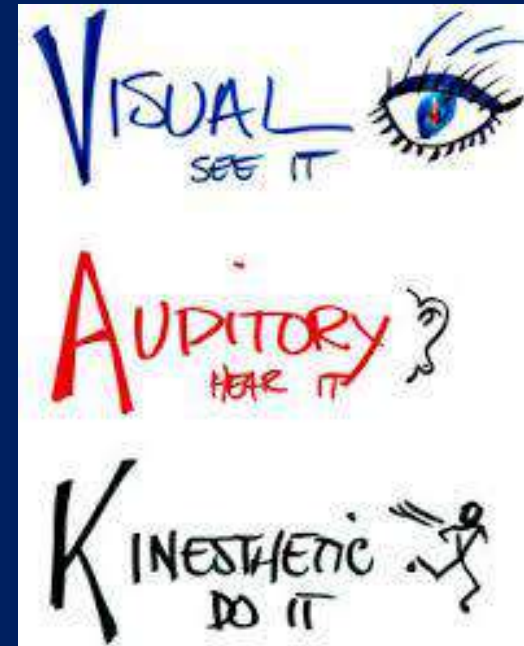
VAK stands for:

- Visual (V): Learning best by seeing, using visual aids like diagrams, charts, pictures, videos, and written instructions. They often prefer to sit at the front of a class and use color-coding and mind maps when taking notes.
- Auditory (A): Learning best by hearing, through spoken words, lectures, discussions, and verbal explanations. They may benefit from reading text aloud, recording lectures, and participating in group discussions.
- Kinesthetic (K) / Tactile: Learning best through movement, physical activity, and hands-on experience ("learning by doing"). They thrive with experiments, role-playing, simulations, and may find it hard to sit still for long periods.



Individual Exercise – Self Assessment

- https://www.businessballs.com/freepdfmaterials/vak_learning_styles_questionnaire.pdf



- The **VAK model is highly relevant in coaching** because it provides a practical, multi-sensory framework for delivering instructions, feedback, and training, even though its scientific basis as a fixed "style" is debated.
- While academic research often criticizes the idea that matching instruction to a learner's *single preferred style* will automatically lead to better results, the VAK model's strength in coaching comes from encouraging a **multi-modal approach**.



Relevance in Coaching: Application vs. Theory

- **1. Practical Communication Tool (High Relevance)**
 - In coaching—especially in skills development, sports, or corporate training—VAK is an excellent tool for ensuring clear and comprehensive communication.
 - **Visual:** The coach **shows** the client what to do using demonstrations, diagrams, or video analysis.
 - *Example:* "Watch how my hips rotate on this swing."
 - **Auditory:** The coach **tells** the client what to do using clear verbal cues, explanations, or discussions.
 - *Example:* "Listen for the 'click' sound when the part locks into place."
 - **Kinesthetic/Tactile:** The coach gets the client to **do** it (hands-on practice), uses physical touch to guide movement, or encourages a focus on *feelings* and internal sensations.
 - *Example:* "Try that drill again, focusing on the feeling of your feet driving power from the ground."
- By using all three modalities (**show, tell, do**), the coach maximizes the chance that the message is understood and retained by the client, regardless of any *preference*.



2. Identifying Obstacles (Moderate Relevance)

- The VAK framework can help a coach quickly diagnose why a client isn't grasping a concept:
- If a client struggles with verbal instructions (Auditory) but performs perfectly after watching a video (Visual), the coach knows to rely more on visual demonstrations for that specific skill.
- If a client is "fidgety" and struggles with abstract concepts, the coach can immediately shift to a Kinesthetic approach by giving them a hands-on task.



3. Focus on Multi-Modal Learning (Best Practice)

Effective coaching rarely relies on a single method.

**The VAK model is most relevant when used not to label a client ("You are a Kinesthetic learner"),
but as a checklist for instruction delivery:**

Modality	Coaching Strategy	Benefit
Visual	Use whiteboards, drawings, videos, and body language.	Helps the client <i>see</i> the target outcome.
Auditory	Use clear, concise verbal cues and ask open-ended questions.	Helps the client <i>process</i> and articulate the concept.
Kinesthetic	Get the client to practice, role-play, or physically correct a position.	Helps the client <i>internalize</i> the skill through muscle memory.

- Key Points on How People Learn and the VAK Model:
- VARK Expansion: The VAK model is often expanded to VARK, which adds an 'R' for Reading/Writing learners, who prefer written material, taking extensive notes, and using lists and glossaries.
- Dominant Style: The theory suggests that most people have a dominant or preferred learning style, but they typically use a combination of all styles to some degree.



References

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