What’s REALLY Going On?
An Observational Skills Workshop
Julie Wyman & Mark Grove
Imagine...

You’ve recently joined a team as coach, consultant, or Scrum Master. You decide the best way to start is to “simply” observe the team working.

• What do you notice?

• What do you look for?
More than simply what you see on the surface.
Getting below the surface

some examples
Body Language

- Crossed arms?
- Leaning closer? Leaning away?
- Pointing?
Tone of Voice

• Whose voice is louder? Whose is softer?
• When does it get louder?
• When does it get softer?
Pronouns

• “He” or “she” vs. peoples’ names?

• “Me” and “you” vs. “we”?
Physical Space

• How are people positioned?

• Are people facing each other?

• What in the space is being used? Not used?
Collaboration

• Is there a director? Doers?
• Solo work vs. group work?
• Who tends to offer ideas? Who tends to respond?
• Is disagreement shared?
Decision Making

• Do people think out loud?

• How are decisions made? Consensus? Consultation? Direction?
Information Sharing

• Verbal?
• Visual?
• Written?
Sharing your observations

some tips
When sharing observations...

• **Do** factually state what you observed in neutral language

• **Avoid** interpretation and assigning meaning to actions
Time to practice!

Modified from a Coaching Beyond the Team activity
General instructions

• Two rounds:
  • Practicing in small groups
  • Half of each table will “build” while the other half observes
  • After the first round, roles will switch
Round 1: Instructions

• **Set up:** Decide at your table who will build first & who will observe

• **Observers:** Each pick one area to observe & use Post-Its to take notes (1 observation per Post-It)

• **Builders:** Build a 5-foot tall structure out of index cards in 5 minutes
Round 1: Small group debrief

• Share
  • **Observers:** Share notes from your observation
  • **Builders:** Share what it felt like being observed

• Discuss
  • How did it feel to observe just one area?
  • Was it hard to write down only facts?
  • Did you notice any jumps to interpretation?
Round 2: Instructions

• **Set up:** Builders & observers switch roles

• **Observers:** Each pick one area to observe & use Post-Its to take notes (1 observation per Post-It)

• **Builders:** Determine in 5 minutes the 3 most important characteristics of a high-performing team
Round 2: Small group debrief

• Share
  • Observers: Share notes from your observation

• Discuss
  • Did you do anything differently as observers this round having previously been observed yourselves?
  • How did it feel to observe just one area?
  • Did you notice any jumps to interpretation?
Wrapping it up
Pair and share...

• How might improving your observation skills enable you to provide better coaching support to your team(s)?

• Why is it important to ensure your observations avoid interpretation?

• What will you try to work on to improve your observation skills?
How to connect with us

Julie Wyman
julie.wyman@excella.com
https://www.linkedin.com/in/julie-wyman/

Mark Grove
mark.grove@excella.com
https://www.linkedin.com/in/mkgrov/
Continue the Conversation

Meet us at our booth to connect, discuss, and explore any questions that you have!

Find us at our booth:
Wednesday, 12:30-1:30pm

Connect With Us!

@excellaco
@excellaconsulting
Excella Consulting