

5 Step Method for Grounding Assessments

To enhance understanding and provide context we will use the assessment **'Don is incompetent'** to flesh out each of the below steps. Page two is a blank template you can use to ground your negative assessments of yourself and others.

Step 1: For the sake of what future action?

This question helps us uncover why we are making this assessment in the first place. What purpose is served by continuing to hold this assessment, now and in the future? Perhaps by making this assessment, we are concerned that we will have to do Don's work in the future or we will have to find another employee to replace him.

Step 2: In which particular domain of action?

It is common to make sweeping assessments in a way that globalizes the behavior and yet, the assessment might be only showing up in a particular domain, on a particular project, in a particular way of communicating, etc. If we look more closely at Don, we might find him to be competent at some tasks and incompetent in tasks that are analytic in nature, in his organizational ability, etc.

Step 3: According to what standards?

An assessment is always linked to some standards or criteria. What standards of competence are we assessing Don against and where did we get them? Did we inherit them, make them up based on our experiences, or learn them from someone else (our company, our culture, etc.)? Often we realize that we are the creator of our standards. In seeing this clearly, it gives us an opportunity to see whether they are still relevant and applicable to the situation we are observing.

Step 4: What true assertions support the assessment?

This step asks us to list several factual instances where our original assessment can be supported. For example, I could say: "Don gave me the annual report with 15 errors present." It may be true that there were 15 errors, but as the assessor with my particular standards (i.e., competence = 0 errors), I assess Don to be incompetent, while someone else might not. ' It is sometimes difficult to provide assertions that are linked to objective standards. 'Our truth' is not 'the truth' – it is simply another way of observing.

Step 5: What true assertions are there against the assessment?

This final step helps us expand and transform our original negative assessment by finding other true and positive assertions. To say Don is incompetent is to overlook several positive aspects of his work such as his adherence to deadlines, his eagerness to help, his ability to be a good team player. The more we can expand our standards, the more we can see each other in a positive light and the more clearly we can give each other precise feedback.

Adapted by Jill Weinknecht Wardell, UMBC Training & Organization Development

SOURCE: "[Coaching to the Human Soul: Ontological Coaching and Deep Change.](#)" Alan Sieler. Newfield, Australia.

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Negative Assessment: _____

Step 1: For the sake of what future action?

Step 2: In which particular domain of action?

Step 3: According to what standards?

Step 4: What true assertions support the assessment?

Step 5: What true assertions are there against the assessment?

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