

# **PROFICIENCY #1 - TRANSCRIPT**

## **Engages in Provocative Conversation**

Coaching sessions are generally short. By hearing what the client is saying and not saying, by questioning what you hear, by asking the right questions, pressing for clarity, and by sharing what you know and how you feel, provocative conversations can occur within minutes, not months. Welcome to the world of the Certified Coach.

The distinction is provocative conversion vs. nice chat.

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### **Transcript of Training Call**

(Recording included in accompanying CD or MP3)

CoachVille Coaching Proficiency #1 - Engages the Client in Compelling/Provocative Conversations  
Thomas Leonard, Session Leader

**TJL:** Hello and welcome to the call; who's joined us? (participants check in) this is Thomas Leonard. We've got about 25 people from the grad school of coaching on the line today. Our focus today is on the first coaching proficiency, which is engaging in provocative conversation. Susan Austin and I will be engaging in some conversation; we'll also demonstrate some of the ideas here.

The purpose of our call - we use the word 'provocative' rather than 'evocative' in discussing this. I would summarize the process as the 3 D's - the duh, the deep, and the doubting. The first one I ask them, the "duh" question is why there are problems in their life at all?



I'm really quite interested in my clients having no problems at all. That really gets their attention; remember, most people hire coaches to resolve their problems more quickly. The 2nd D is "deep". Often clients give us the surface story, and I want to go deep fast, without having to probe or push too hard to get t the truth as soon as I can. I do care and empathize with the clients' symptoms and situations, but if you can tell that they're ready to engage, I go for the truth. I want to find it and I want to help them find it as well.

**Susan:** Can you give us an example of the 'deep'?

**TJL:** Why is this happening now? We'll go through some more in the demo. The 3rd D is "doubting". I want to push and make sure it really is true. I just don't accept things as they sound; I push until it sounds true to me. Often clients will come to you with the problem, and if you accept it too soon, you might miss the real core of the issue. I want to believe them and I want to believe my own intuitive response. So, those are the 3 D's. An example of that would be 'I hear what you're saying, but it's not resonating with me' or 'Are you sure you believe what you're saying?' or "are you sure that's it, and if so, how come?" Again, this is not a step that most coaches do. Often clients aren't able to articulate what's really going on.

Okay, so those are introductory comments. I'd like to open it up for Q & A, and we'll work on some demos. First, any questions or clarification?

**Gail:** The "duh" question - how do people take that?

**“Often clients will come to you with a  
PROBLEM  
and if you accept it too soon, you might  
miss the real core of the ISSUE”**

**TJL:** Well, for the first time with the client, I would say that one of the things I always ask my clients - you don't want to be accusatory, but ask it innocently and without guile. It may give you and the client something really interesting to work on, rather than just the first thing that was brought up. Often, you end up working on something they didn't come to you for, but end up providing much more value than thought.



- Gail:** That's really a powerful opening question.
- TJL:** It certainly gets their attention. It just levels up the nature of the conversation very quickly.
- Susan:** And it certainly sets up that it's not just chatting about your week.
- TJL:** Maybe one out of 3 sessions can be a pleasant chat, but they usually want to get to work pretty fast. If they know this is going to come up, it generates excitement around the call. For the certified coach, this is a level of play that fits the definition.
- Bob:** If a client does come up with some idea of why they have these problems, do you explore that or go on to something else?
- TJL:** I usually ask them. That way, it's a way for you to bring it up again; in most cases, they're so intrigued that they can't wait to get into it. Rather than bringing problems to you, they'll use you for creativity, win-win, etc.
- XXX:** I can just hear some of my clients say, 'are you saying you don't have any problems for yourself, coach?'
- TJL:** And that's where we get to walk the talk! (laugh) it does let you share your own history and own story with them, and that sets you up as a collaborative soul.
- Valerie:** It's so much a state of mind; what you're really questioning is how to handle the sessions? It's also a way - I don't see things in my life as problems.
- TJL:** It's a little tricky; there are problems or there are opportunities. Some clients live in a world of no problems; a certain reality check is important. The more sophisticated clients have the framework to live in a positive light.
- Valerie:** Part of what you're doing also is shifting away from complaining or freaking out about something that's going on and becoming more resourceful.
- TJL:** I'm really, really big on commiseration; I think it's one of the neatest coaching skills. If life is truly a problem, I'm all there with them. There's a time and place for the provocative conversation, and there are times when it's not right.
- Gail:** When I first read the proficiencies, I thought #15 needed to be #1.,



**TJL:** I never put them in a particular order; I just wrote them. I'm thrilled that 15 is in spot #15. People ask me how I put them in this order, and I didn't plan it specifically this way.

“One thing I've learned the hard way is that it's more interesting to **ENJOY MY CLIENT** rather than trying to determine the **PATH** a client should take.”

**Gail:** And if you're showing it as a circle, it doesn't really matter, doesn't it? I also had another thought I wanted to share. When we get the client interested in becoming a problem-free zone, a nice little formula that helps you get there is PF + R + V, or personal foundation, plus reserves, plus values.

**TJL:** Great; we're saying that with coaching, you're really setting your life up to have fewer problems. Thanks, Gail. Any other questions or comments?

**Heidi:** Regarding the "doubting" question - I do that a lot; I usually do that, though, to be sure that the lack of truthfulness is coming from the client, not from me. Now, I have a problem with my client. What she's about to do, I don't resonate at all with that - I'm not sure whether it's my problem, or if she's just really off track.

**TJL:** Do you think that it's just not good for her, or you wouldn't do it yourself?

**Heidi:** A bit of both, I think.

**TJL:** Another principle that I think would work is to enjoy the client immensely. One thing I've learned the hard way is that it's more interesting to enjoy my client, rather than trying to determine the path the client should take. It is their life, and I just want to support them in the path that they've chosen. No, if they're hurting themselves or others, I would make my concerns in writing and drop them as a client. When I'm in doubt, I tell them I can't see how this will help them, but ask them what I can do to help. Let them give you some direction on how you can support them. It takes the burden off of you to be correct.

- XXX:** And you've left that door open to the coaching relationship.
- TJL:** Yes, thanks for that. Does that make sense, Heidi?
- Heidi:** Yes, it does. I do enjoy what she's doing. I thought she would get to the point where it becomes clear to her.
- TJL:** There are so many mysterious ways in which positive results occur, and our clients are figuring that stuff out every day. Adults are learning how to be successful in their own way, and as long as they can afford the risks they're taking, then hey - why not?
- Judy:** I think we have to remember that the client knows what's best for them, and we just need to get out of the way.

**“ There are certain clients I just don't have enough  
RAM or CPU  
in this lifetime to support. ”**

- TJL:** Thanks, Judy. Anybody want to do a role play with me? You can be your worst client or you can be yourself, or share something in your personal life.
- Judy:** I am a client of yours; I'm 35 and I feel like no one's going to love me and I don't do anything right. I've done the Clean Sweep, and I won't give up sugar.
- TJL:** Are you setting me up for this or what? Just so you know, I would never coach a client on their weight. There are just certain things I wouldn't get near. If no one loves me, I'm too heavy and I can't change, I just wouldn't get involved with this client. Does anybody have a question on what I just said? There are certain clients I just don't have enough RAM or CPU in this lifetime to support. There are just some conversations that shouldn't be had.
- XXX:** Thomas, could some day you do a class on that?
- TJL:** Who to coach and not to coach?
- XXX:** Yes.



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## 15 COACHING PROFICIENCIES

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# T R A N S C R I P T

proficiency

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**TJL:** I'll make a note of that.

**Bob:** There are coaches I've seen in the referral service that do take on clients with weight problems, and I'm assuming they're nutritionists, or something.

**TJL:** Yes. And there was more than just the weight thing - the "no one loves me" issue is really big.

**XXX:** When Judy presented this scenario, I got a tightness in my chest.

**TJL:** Right. We're going to move on - can I get someone else to give us a more traditional coaching client?

**Rob:** I'll play. I've been so disorganized lately, and I don't even know which way to go. I think I need a coach to get me moving again.

**TJL:** What's going on?

**Rob:** I have an entirely new assistant, having lost the old one, and things are really unorganized right now.

**TJL:** Tell me what you're behind in.

**Rob:** I've got a backlog of calls to make, and paperwork to do.

**TJL:** Give me a sense of how significant the problem is - how many hours? If you had 2 weeks to catch up, you'd catch up, but.... You're stuck?

**Rob:** Yes, I'm behind on the home front as well as the work front.

**TJL:** Has this happened before?

**Rob:** I think I've been on track for the last 3 months, and then I hit a bump in the road. I'm not sure what it's about.

**TJL:** What's the source of that?

**Rob:** I'm not really sure.

**TJL:** So you've got tons of stuff going on, and you're not really ready for it?

- Rob:** I hadn't thought about it, but that's probably true.
- TJL:** So you want to work on the structures in your life?
- Rob:** Yes.
- TJL:** That's going to take more than 90 days. I don't know whether this is the right time for you to take to get caught up and as well as find a permanent solution.
- Rob:** I just want to feel like I'm getting caught up and want to work on finding a permanent solution.
- TJL:** Can I ask - do you like being behind a little bit?
- Rob:** I am to the place where I'd like to have a less expensive way of getting energy.
- TJL:** So you're looking to get energy from a cleaner, less toxic source?
- Rob:** I do, but I just don't know where to begin.

“Often, coaches feel grips in their chest because they're behind, and feel the need to **CATCH UP** through **YOU**”

- TJL:** Where would you use me to help you with this?
- Rob:** To identify the systems that I could put in place.
- TJL:** Okay, so we could spend the next 3 or 4 calls working through what you want to organize, and then go from there. We'll stop right there. How was that helpful?
- Rob:** I wasn't sure exactly what you were doing, but I figured out you were pulling me out of the problem and into the solution and that made it feel much lighter fairly quickly. Also, when you talked to me about what I really wanted....
- TJL:** Great, that's what we did, but how was that helpful?





**Rob:** I became aware of other options, and already got me thinking and moving towards something else. I think the huge thing for me was that I didn't feel a judgment in your questions.

**TJL:** Just so you know, that place is the big place to get to. Often, coaches feel grips in their chest because they're behind, and feel the need to catch up through you. It's a good way to test how clean the coach is. Let's go around the room here - what did you hear?

**Bob:** I think I heard all 3 D's in there.

**TJL:** Good; thank you for that, Bob. Who else heard something?

**XXX:** I heard you very clearly set up the framework for the upcoming coaching calls.

**TJL:** Good - I'm glad you heard that. For a client that's in overwhelm, a coaching call is just another source. I wanted to make sure the client understood that we're going to be talking about systems on the calls, rather than just having him call and report in on what he's done or not done.

**Susan:** I think it's great - you seemed to get right to the root of it, and could then spend the rest of the call starting to work on it.

“Often, its the  
**SMALL THINGS**  
that need to get fixed first, and they  
may not seem like a priority.”

**TJL:** Where would you have dug in?

**Susan:** I would've gotten lost in the problem he was having. I would have gotten deep into the problem, rather than just trusting that, and moving on from there.

**TJL:** What would you now do differently?





- XXX:** For me, I would just - what you did was you got him to show the reality. There's a difference between knowing everything you need to know, and thinking to ask all these questions that will give you what you need to know.
- Heidi:** I probably would've gone more into the levels, and I appreciated you jumping up about 5 levels and getting to the heart of the matter.
- TJL:** The one thing that softens the drill bit here is that I quickly turned it as fast as I could to the "who". I pretty quickly brought in the idea that he gets his energy from adrenaline. That made it personal to the person, rather than keeping it from separate from them. I wanted to say 'it's about you,' without actually saying that.
- Gail:** I think when he said that it all felt overwhelming and he didn't know what to do next, I would've probably started talking about priorities.
- TJL:** And that's what you would still do or that was before?
- Gail:** I would probably still do this, along with some of what you're doing.
- TJL:** And that works on the matter of personal taste on the part of the coach. I find it I ask the clients to prioritize with me on the phone, it puts pressure on them. Often, it's the small things that need to get fixed first, and they may not seem like a priority.
- Gail:** If the call isn't until next week, are they going to wait until next week to do anything about it, then?
- TJL:** They've been waiting for weeks already. If they're going to tell you that they're 2 weeks behind, they're probably 6 weeks behind. That's a way to weave in things that matter, rather than trying to prioritize.
- Valerie:** I was struck by the process of, while you were getting them clear, you were also educating them at the same time.
- TJL:** Engaging them in provocative conversations sounds generic, but if we can do that, we can go deeply fairly quickly. I'd like to hear from you what you got out of this session.
- XXX:** I like the notion that the coach isn't the fairy godmother, but you are support, and it's going to take time.

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**TJL:** Great; who else?

**Gail:** I just loved the idea that this went right to the heart of the matter so quickly. I loved that!

**TJL:** Thank you all very much! I appreciate your contributions. Bye now!