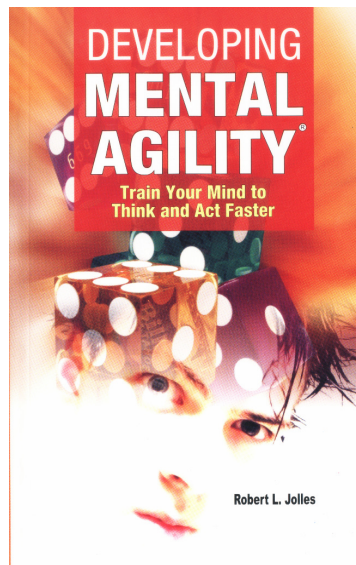


Developing Mental Agility

Train Your Mind to Think and Act Faster



Author: Robert L. Jolles
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■ The Big Idea

Whether you are presenting a product, giving a press conference, interviewing for a job, addressing an audience, you are persuading. You need Mental Agility – the art of thinking fast, controlling a conversation, persuading those around you, and conditioning the mind to think faster under pressure – in order to succeed.

As one of the most sought-after professional business speakers, author Rob Jolles knows first hand the need for mental speed. After 22 years of training thousands of sales people for clients such as Xerox, General Electric, Aetna, Goldman Sachs, and more, he has leveraged his experience to put together a must-read guide for thinking fast on your feet so you can sell your message, influence others, and captivate your audience, wherever you are and with the least amount of preparation.

■ Why You Need This Book

This book is full of useful tips and action points, plus thirty-five Mental Agility exercises to help you practice what you've learned and put Rob's "path to persuasion" into your business plan.

"Developing Mental Agility" is just as much fun to read as listening to Rob talk. His easy "problem-process-practice" guide teaches you a system for walking into any situation cold and establishing a relationship based on trust and confidence; for implementing Rob's repeatable, predictable techniques for persuading your clients or audience; and then how to handle confrontational scenarios that might arise and turn them around.

■ Your Behavioral Cycle

Without a discussion relating to your behavioral cycle, it is difficult to put many of the messages you will learn into perspective.

LEVEL 1: THE UNCONSCIOUS INCOMPETENT

At this first level, you are both ineffective and unaware that you are ineffective. This could also be referred as the "blissfully ignorant stage."

The good news is that if you are at this stage right now, you do not even know it!

LEVEL 2: THE CONSCIOUS INCOMPETENT

At this level, you are still ineffective; however, you are now aware of your deficiencies.

Some experience and a willingness to learn are major contributions in getting people to move from this stage to the next.

LEVEL 3: THE CONSCIOUS COMPETENT

At this level individuals are both effective and aware of exactly what it is that makes them effective.

There is certainly nothing wrong with attempting to be effective and aware of what makes one that way.

LEVEL 4: THE UNCONSCIOUS COMPETENT

At this fourth and final level, individuals are effective, but they are no longer aware of the process or steps they are going through that are making them effective.

The mechanical part of what they have learned has given way to a more natural, relaxed competence.

MENTAL AGILITY EXERCISE
Change the Picture: Text Individual Exercise

Objective:

The objective of this exercise is to encourage the mind to move flexibly from one way of thinking to another.

Procedures:

- The first thing you'll need is an object to work with. The object needs to be selected carefully. It's recommended to use a picture from a magazine or newspaper advertisement.
- Cut the selected piece you are working with into small pieces so the object loses its original identity. These pieces should be small enough to be unrecognizable as the original picture.
- Assemble the pieces into a collage.
- Create a theme and a title for it.

How to Measure Success:

At the completion of the exercise, ask yourself, "How did it feel to convert one image to another?" "How difficult was it to let go of the original design?"

Time:

35-45 minutes

Materials:

Old magazines or newspapers, a large piece of paper, scissors, and glue

■ Walking in Someone Else's Shoes

The Problem

Through the years, anyone who has chosen to study persuasion can quote a litany of books, tapes, and workshops on the art of influencing change. What's missing is a key element that amazingly has been lost in the shuffle. It's called "The Other Person."

Without truly understanding the stages the person you are trying to change goes through, and the decision points the person typically encounters, all the study in the world is for nothing.

The Process

Understanding the way people make decisions will help with the tactic you choose to help persuade.

Here are the stages critical to persuasion:

- **The Satisfied Stage.** Individuals are convinced not only that they do not have needs, but that they have no problems either. This is referred to as the "honeymoon stage" because a person can only last in this stage for so long. We make do with what we have, but when

we become aware that what we have is no longer perfect, we make a critical move within the cycle.

- **The Acknowledgement Stage.** In this stage, the person readily admits that, yes, he or she does have particular problems that could be addressed with your solutions. Unfortunately, the person will just as readily state that, no, he or she does not want to do anything about these problems at this time.
- **The Decision Stage.** This represents more of a flash point for the individual. Once met, the “Fix/Don’t Fix” decision point is crossed in a flash, and the decision has been made. Now, the most critical lesson in the art of persuasion begins to play itself out.
- **The Criteria Stage.** The single most critical lesson you must learn within the process lies right here. It centers on the eerie connection between the individual’s concerns and the individual’s decision-making criteria.

MENTAL AGILITY EXERCISE
Problem or Need?
Individual Exercise

Objective: The objective of this exercise is to help clarify things and thus improve your Mental Agility in understanding the critical difference between a problem and a need.

Procedures: Work your way through the attached exercise (exercise follows).

How to Measure Success: At the completion of the exercise, you should be able to determine an individual’s psychological position.

Time: 15 minutes

Materials: Use the attached exercise sheet.

Need or Problem?

- | | | |
|-----|-----|--|
| ___ | ___ | 1. I need a better way to take messages. |
| ___ | ___ | 2. I don’t like the way the machine works. |
| ___ | ___ | 3. It bothers me that we can’t get a quicker response. |
| ___ | ___ | 4. We want something that is easier to use. |
| ___ | ___ | 5. We’re looking for a large kitchen area. |
| ___ | ___ | 6. We seem to constantly be fixing that. |
| ___ | ___ | 7. I hate having to constantly be fixing that. |
| ___ | ___ | 8. I’ve always wanted to be able to do that. |
| ___ | ___ | 9. It would be great to have a more user-friendly solution. |
| ___ | ___ | 10. We want to make sure that whatever we buy, it provides us with specific safety features. |

■ Getting It Started

The Problem

Starting any conversation can be a little rough and, in fact, might require the most Mental Agility of all. If you are going to be shot down or rebuffed, it's most likely going to happen right here.

The Process

Let's face it. If you can't get past the opening, the rest of the conversation is rather useless, you simply won't get there. Here's the simplest approach to start a conversation:

- **Step 1: "Who Are You?"** This first step is rather basic. Telling a person who you are is not what I would call rocket science.
- **Step 2: Initial Benefit Statement.** Enticing someone with a well-worded W.I.F.M. (What's In It for Me?) sometimes requires a rather creative balancing act: not too much information and not too little – ideally just enough to pique someone's curiosity, and earn the right to have a longer conversation.
- **Step 3: Process.** Telling someone up front that you intend to listen and ask questions sets a completely different tone from what most people are accustomed to.
- **Step 4: Time.** The intent of this step is to provide the person with whom you are communicating, an exact sense of how long the meeting will take.

■ The Path to Persuasion, One-on-One

The Problem

By establishing trust, you have been given the right to converse on a deeper level. It's now time to create change. Looming before you is an inherent fear of change. Following at its heels is a lack of urgency. Without overcoming these two big obstacles, persuasion is not possible.

The Process

- **Identifying Probes.** When you are using this first probe, you must get the person to identify or agree that there is a problem. These words will swap nicely with the word "problem" and will allow you to arrive at the same conclusion with the person you are persuading:
 - Concern
 - Difficulty
 - Dissatisfaction
 - Challenge
 - Barrier
 - Limitation
 - Obstacle
 - Trouble

- **Developing Probes.** The way you develop a problem is to continue asking questions about the problem. Often people do not want to talk that much about their concerns. You just have to be a little more curious with the people you are trying to persuade. Here are some words that are more uniquely qualified and may be of use from time to time:
 - React
 - Link
 - Respond
 - Relate
 - Affect
 - Feel
- **Impact Probes.** The beauty of using Impact Probes is that they can provide you with a finishing point. Here are some keywords to focus on when using impact probes:
 - Consequences
 - Impact
 - Ramifications
 - Repercussions
 - Results
 - Effects
 - Outcome
 - Backlash

■ Combating the Unforeseen, One-on-One

The Problem

Perhaps the biggest mistake we make is assuming that everyone we communicate with will adhere to our processes and behave as we wish them to. Sometimes, no matter how proactive you are, you are still at the mercy of the unforeseen.

The Process

Objections are a part of persuasion. Here's a four-step process for handling objections.

- **Step 1: Clarify.** This is the most important step, and to prove this point, here are six good reasons why you should clarify objections.
 - *Reason 1: To Get the Real Objectives.* If you do ask a couple of more questions, people will tell you what you need to know to answer their objection.
 - *Reason 2: To Avoid Answering the Wrong Objections.* Clarifying the objection will ensure that the only problems discussed are the ones specifically brought up by the person you are trying to persuade.
 - *Reason 3: To Avoid Sounding Confrontational.* An air of stubbornness and insensitivity is created when the response to an objection is immediate.
 - *Reason 4: To Buy Yourself Time to Think.* A few extra moments to prepare your response can go a long way toward finding the correct words to use with the people you are trying to persuade.

- *Reason 5: To Shorten Your Talking Time.* If you are going to spend a long time with the objection, make sure the majority of that time is spent listening to the person you are persuading to tell you more about his or her objection.
- *Reason 6: To Apply the 10 Percent Rule.* At least 10 percent of the time the person you are looking to persuade will respond with something like, "Uh well, you see, I think you actually answered that question earlier."
- **Step 2: Acknowledge.** Assuming the objection has been clarified, (and if six reasons did not help convince you, nothing will), it is time to demonstrate your listening skills. It also may be time to demonstrate your empathy skills.
- **Step 3: Determine the Type of Objection.** Assuming that you now not only know what the real objection is, but you also have confirmed your understanding of the issue. It's just about time to answer. Now, you need to figure out what type of objection you are hearing. Two types of objections can come from the person you are looking to persuade. The first is called a misunderstanding. The second, and more difficult objection, is called a drawback.
- **Step 4: Confirm.** Sometimes objections can take on a life of their own, hanging around almost like a bad penny. The best way to handle this problem is to confirm that the objection has been answered.

■ Some Final Thoughts about What Happens Next

You are now the owner of multiple processes designed to help you influence human behavior. These processes will feel clumsy and stiff as you begin to use them. As with a well-coordinated golf swing, you will be more effective and work more easily if you can master these techniques.

You will succeed if you are willing to put up with some of the discomfort that goes along with implementing any new process. You will succeed if you are willing to put up with the pain and frustration that go along with mastering the techniques you have learned. There is always the temptation to go back to the safe and easy way of doing things. Stay strong!

Finally, you will succeed if you are willing to put up with the mechanical feeling that is present while you struggle through your conscious competence. There is only one way to achieve unconscious competence, and that is to pass through conscious competence first.

Learning multiple processes to improve your ability to persuade is not just a series of good ideas. It represents an approach to persuasion that will make you more successful in your chosen career and in your life. It also will allow you to approach the people with whom you interact in a professional manner.

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