The R Factor™

The one thing that makes all the difference.

FOCUS 3

LEADERS | CULTURE | BEHAVIOR

www.Focus3Culture.com

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The R Factor™

Two Realities Shape the Performance of Every Organization

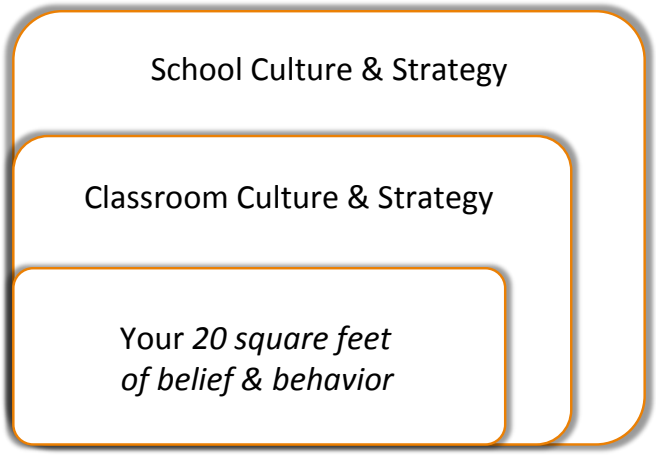
#1

Life skills drive job skills. The ability of people to apply their job specific knowledge & abilities in a productive manner is largely dependent on their life skills. By that we mean how they communicate, make decisions, manage their attitude, deal with stress, etc. The biggest drains on performance in most organizations are personal & relational challenges. Task-specific knowledge & skill is essential. Without it, you cannot be successful. But if you want to be effective on the job, no amount of technical ability can overcome a lack of personal effectiveness. Life skills are the key performance variable.

#2

Personal change drives organizational change. Every person in an organization owns *20 Square Feet™* of the culture & strategy. Inside their *20 Square Feet* people choose how they will think, interact, & behave. Inside their *20 Square Feet* people are responsible for the decisions they make & how they manage themselves. Strategy & culture are declared at the corporate level and executed at the *20 Square Feet* level. Organizational change begins with personal change. The journey from good to great is personal first and organizational second.

The way you behave personally is what determines the culture of your classroom and your school.

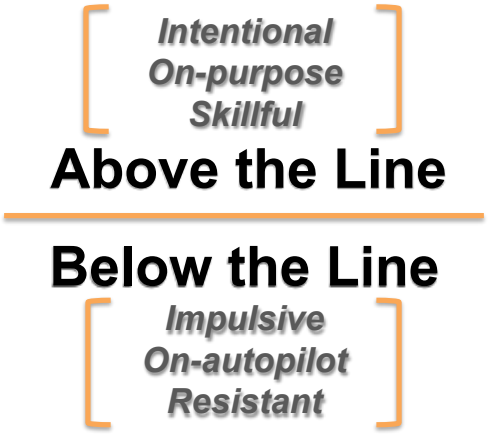


Live *Above the Line*

In any environment there are two ways you can approach the situations you face and the goals you are trying to accomplish: *Above the Line* or *Below the Line.*

Above the Line means acting with intention, purpose, and skill. When people operate *Above the Line* they team better, work harder, learn faster, communicate more clearly, and are more resilient. Living and working *Above the Line* produces exceptional Outcomes.

As great as that sounds, it's easier and more tempting to operate *Below the Line:* to be impulsive, on-autopilot, & resistant. *Below the Line* requires little effort or energy. It is driven by what is comfortable and convenient. It produces average results at best. Eventually it produces failure.



The simple truth is that the best outcomes, personally & professionally, are the result of getting & staying *Above the Line.* The harder truth is that getting & staying *Above the Line* doesn't come naturally. It must be taught & learned.

What doesn't work is *BCD*: *Blame, Complain, Defend*. Too often when things don't go right people blame someone else, complain about the situation, and defend their own behavior. We've all done it. And many people do it a lot. But understand this: BCD never solved a problem, achieved a goal, or improved a relationship. So stop wasting your time and energy on something that will never help you.

Every day is a battle for whether we choose to live *Above* or *Below the Line.* The choice we make determines how we treat the people we love, how we interact with colleagues at work, how we do our job, how we learn & grow, how we deal with adversity & disappointment, and ultimately what we achieve.

When you are *Above the Line* what does it look like?

When you are *Below the Line* what does it look like?

[*Manage the R™*]

Life comes at us fast. Things happen every day. Situations, people, responsibilities, challenges, change . . . we are constantly dealing with the *stuff* of life. This presents a universal challenge for every organization, team, & individual:

How do we navigate the events of life and work
in a way that produces exceptional results?

Consistent *Above the Line* behavior begins with implementing a simple & powerful framework into your life. A system for being intentional about the way you think, make decisions, and act.

$$E + R = O$$

Event + Response = Outcome

Outcomes are not determined by the events we experience. Outcomes are determined by how we choose to respond. We do not control events. But we always have control over how we choose to respond. It's called The R Factor.

You choose what actions you will take (or not take) in pursuit of your goals. You choose whether to give up or persevere through the inevitable obstacles you will experience. You choose how to interact with people at work and family at home. Every day you make decisions about how to respond. And how you respond makes all the difference. It is *the* factor that determines the quality of your life.

The biggest variable in any organization is not the events or circumstances that people encounter … but *how will they respond?*

Organizations are constantly changing.
Technologies emerge, competitors arise, and markets transform.
Programs and initiatives come and go. *The R Factor remains constant.*
The foundation of performance will always be found
in how people Manage the R.

[The R Factor Disciplines]

The Six R Factor Disciplines provide you with a system for *Managing the R* Above the Line. The daily application of these disciplines, not the circumstances you face, determines the quality of outcomes you produce.

R:1 Press Pause.

Before you Respond, slow down & give yourself time to think. Focus on understanding the situation and what you are trying to accomplish. Get off autopilot. Be exceptionally clear about the Event you are experiencing and the Outcome you are pursuing.

R:2 Get Your Mind Right.

Pay attention to your inner Response. Get into a productive mindset by taking ownership of what you focus on & the story you tell yourself. Your attitude directly affects how you live your life. It's just not possible to live a positive life with a negative attitude.

R:3 Step Up.

Respond *Above the Line.* Engage in the best possible Response given the Outcome you want and the situation you are in. When circumstances call for it, elevate your Response. Your Response is most important when the Event is most difficult.

R:4 Adjust & Adapt.

Get good at change. Life requires you to make changes whether you are ready or not. Success goes to those who are adaptable. It's an inescapable reality: things change. Here's another reality: life will get increasingly difficult for you if you don't.

R:5 Make a Difference.

Create great experiences for others. Your attitude & behavior are deeply personal but rarely private. What you do has a profound impact on the people around you. Your R is an E for others.

R:6 Build Skill.

Be intentional about the habits you develop. Your behavior patterns have you on a path. Develop the habits & skills that will take you where you want to go.

R:1

Press Pause

Before you Respond, slow down & give yourself time to think.

Pressing pause does three things for you:

- ✓ It prevents you from reacting *Below the Line* and doing something unproductive or harmful. Most of the mistakes we make are because we act too quickly and without thinking.
- ✓ It gives you time to focus on what you need to do to achieve the outcome you want.
- ✓ It helps you reflect on what happened in order to learn and get better.

Pressing Pause means taking time to think before responding. It is the necessary first step to being more intentional about what you are doing in any given situation. The purpose of the Pause is to take the time to apply a system for thinking & acting *Above the Line*.

Apply the System

What is the reality of the situation?

What do I want to accomplish?

E + R = O

What is the most Above the Line action I can take right now?

Be exceptionally clear about the Outcome you are pursuing

In any moment, work to gain *exceptional clarity* about the Outcome you really want. When you aren't clear, it's easy to spend your focus & energy in the wrong direction. When you're not exceptionally clear, any Response will do.

Clarity is power.

Spend the time to become exceptionally clear. Identify exactly what you want to accomplish, address any confusion, and eliminate as much uncertainty as possible. When you're this clear about an outcome, it focuses your mind & your action on exactly how to accomplish it.

Use the O^3 framework to clarify and align the outcomes you are pursuing:

O^1: *What outcomes is my school seeking to achieve?*

O^2: *What outcomes am I seeking to achieve in my classroom?*

O^3: *What is required of me in my role?*

See the situation with clarity & courage.

How you see a situation to a great extent determines how you will Respond to it. If you see a situation in a distorted way, it is likely that you will Respond to it in a less-than-effective way. Pressing Pause gives you time – a split second, a few minutes, an entire day – to increase your situational awareness. Pressing pause helps you get off autopilot and see the Event with clarity & courage.

The challenge is that we don't always see the Event clearly. In fact, what gets our attention often distracts us from what really matters. We have blind spots. Help yourself by slowing down & gaining clarity about what is going on & why.

Here are four questions that will help you see the situation with greater clarity.

1. *What am I not seeing that I need to see?*
2. *What am I seeing but discounting?*
3. *What am I pretending not to see?*
4. *How do other people see the situation?*

Remove the filters that screen out realities you don't want to see.

Respond Above the Line

Once you understand the situation and are exceptionally clear about the goal you are pursuing, ask yourself: *"What action do I need to take to achieve the Outcome I want? What is the most Above the Line action I can take right now?"*

There is an *Above the Line* response to every situation you face. It is your responsibility to think through the options available to you, identify the most effective course of action, and then Respond *Above the Line*.

You are going to choose, and whatever choice you make will produce an outcome. Thinking through the options available to you means considering the likely outcome of each option *before* you take action. This is what it means to be intentional.

- ✓ *What are your options?*
- ✓ *What is the likely outcome of each option?*
- ✓ *What is the best option for achieving the outcome you want?*

Three common Below the Line traps

Trap #1: We fixate on the Event and lose sight of the Outcome we want to achieve.

Solution: Understand the Event, but don't get distracted by it. Don't give it too much of your attention. Be exceptionally clear about the Outcome you want, and then focus your attention, time, & energy on taking action Above the Line. When you catch yourself fixating on the E, press pause & gain exceptional clarity. Ask yourself: *"What do I want to accomplish? What Outcome do I really want?"*

Clarity is power.

Trap #2: We gravitate to what we know. We defer to autopilot. We often prefer actions that are comfortable & familiar, rather than actions that are necessary for achieving our goals.

Solution: Be rigorous about asking yourself: *"What does this situation require of me? What ATL action do I need to take to produce the Outcome I want?"* Determine what needs to be done & do it. Beware of R's that are comfortable but ineffective. Stop doing what doesn't work. Your level of comfort is not the reference point for what you need to do. Sometimes the *Above the Line* action you need to take is difficult & uncomfortable. Do it anyway.

Purpose does what is necessary even if it's uncomfortable.
Autopilot does what is comfortable even if it's ineffective.

Trap #3: We give up too soon. We quit before we achieve the Outcome.

Solution: Understand that achieving your goals is a process that requires a great deal of perseverance. All achievement is a series of choices. The bigger the goal, the longer and more challenging the choices. It will be a struggle & there will be times when it's confusing, dark, & painful. But never quit in darkness. Do not listen to the quitting voice!

Want success? Do what is necessary,
when it's necessary, for as long as necessary.

O^1: What outcomes is my school seeking to achieve?
O^2: What outcomes is my classroom/team/area responsible for?
O^3: What is required of me in my role?

Event		
Response	*Above the Line*	*Below the Line*
Outcome	*Above the Line*	*Below the Line*

R:2

Get Your Mind Right

Pay attention to your inner response & mindset.

The mind controls everything

Your mindset has a direct impact on how you live your life and do your job. It is the primary factor that determines what you do & how well you do it. It affects the way you interact with people. It affects the way you respond to change and adversity. Your mindset even affects how you approach improving your mindset.

What is "mindset?" Here are several definitions.

"An attitude, disposition, or mood."

"The ideas and attitudes with which a person approaches a situation, especially when these are seen as being difficult to alter."

"A habitual or characteristic mental attitude that determines how you will interpret and respond to situations."

"A person's usual attitude or mental state."

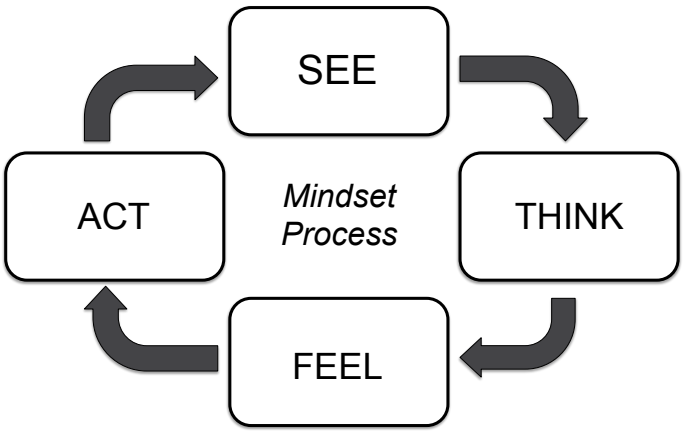
Your mindset is the internal mental state that affects first how you see and then how you respond to events. In other words, every response is internal first and external second.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of successful people is their ability to generate & sustain a productive mindset. Successful people think differently than average people. Their thinking isn't cluttered with negativity, doubt, or resistance. Because of that, they are able to focus all of their mental energy on responding Above the Line.

The quality of your inner response determines the quality of your outer response.

The Mindset Process

Developing a positive mindset is a skill that must be practiced & learned. It is a mental discipline. It is intentional. Most people have awareness of their action, but very little awareness of the mindset process that produces their action. You can build a more effective and higher performing mindset by taking active control of the process.



- ***SEE:*** This is the first step in the Mindset Process. In response to the events you experience, you choose what to focus on & pay attention to. The other steps of the process are directed & shaped by how you choose to see a situation. When you choose a focus, you trigger the rest of the cycle.

- ***THINK:*** How you see a situation directs how you think about it & what you say to yourself. You have an inner voice that constantly communicates messages about what you are paying attention to. You talk to yourself about how you see an event. You can talk to yourself with an *Above the Line* voice or you can talk to yourself with a *Below the Line* voice. Your choice.

- ***FEEL:*** This is your emotional state. It is the mental & physical energy that you feel, and it is created by the combination of how you see the situation & your self-talk. You literally talk yourself into an emotional state. If you change the way you see & think about a situation, you will change the way you feel about it. *How you feel is a product of what you focus on & how you talk to yourself.*

- ***ACT:*** Your feelings energize your action. If your feelings are negative or disruptive, you will not perform at your best. If your feelings are positive & productive, you will be in an emotional state to perform at a high level.

The mind is a battleground where your greatest struggle takes place.
The thoughts that win the battle for your mind will control your life.

Manage the Process

An *Above the Line* mindset is the result of a disciplined & deliberate way of managing the Mindset Process. It is intentional & skillful. Don't let your mindset run on autopilot. Manage the process or it will manage you.

- ✓ ***Recognize*** situations when your mindset matters and be aware of drifting *Below the Line.* Recognize the mindset process happening within you.
  - What are you focusing on *(paying attention to)*?
  - What are you thinking *(saying to yourself)?*
  - What are you feeling *(emotional state)?*
  - How are you acting *(Above or Below the Line)?*

- ✓ ***Refocus.*** If you feel your mindset drifting *Below the Line* into disruptive/negative thinking, interrupt the pattern by doing or saying something that breaks the disruptive/negative thoughts & feelings. It can be as simple as saying, "Stop!" or clapping your hands and saying, "Refocus." Convert the negative response to a positive response.

  Refocus & redirect your attention & energy *Above the Line.* Focus on what matters and filter out what doesn't. Be intentional about what you focus on and what you say to yourself. Lock-in on the action you need to take to achieve the outcome. When faced with a challenging situation, you can choose to fixate on BCD. Or you can focus your energy on doing exactly what needs to be done to produce the results that you want. What you focus on matters!!

- ✓ ***Reframe*** the story that you tell yourself. Build an *Above the Line* mindset with productive self-talk. Do not feed a disruptive emotion with a negative story! Change the story you are telling yourself. Replace negative self-talk with positive self-talk. Reframing is hard work. It takes disciplined, intentional effort over time. Remember: your mind is constantly sending messages to your body, and your body listens and responds. Listen to the *Above the Line* voice, not the *Below the Line* voice.

"The greatest discovery of my generation is that people can alter their lives by altering their attitude of mind."

~ WILLIAM JAMES

	See *What are you focusing on?* *What has your attention?*	**Think** *What are you saying to yourself? What thoughts are on your mind?*	**Feel** *How do you feel?* *What is your energy level?*	**Act** *What do you do?* *How do you do it?*
ATL Mindset *Intentional* *On-purpose* *Skillful*				
BTL Mindset *Impulsive* *On-autopilot* *Resistant*				

R:3
Step Up
Respond *Above the Line.*

How will you respond?

Life will challenge you. Repeatedly. Circumstances will push you to go beyond your comfort zone. To do better. To go further. To perform at the next level. To step up. If you want any kind of meaningful achievement & success, you will have to fight for it. And that's a good thing. The struggle is part of life. It is hard & often painful. But it's also necessary, because it's in the struggle that greatness is formed.

Step Up Now

The R Factor happens in the moment. The only time available to you to Step Up and Respond above the line is now. You can't step up in the past: it is over. And you can't step up in the future: it hasn't arrived yet. That leaves … now.

Some people disrupt the now by dwelling on and getting distracted by things that happened in the past. If this is your situation, stepping up means letting go of the past and making the decision to move on. Right now requires your full attention. Dwelling on the past is a distraction you cannot afford. Step #1 to a happier life is to give up your hope for a better past.

Other people disrupt their present because of anxiety about the future. If this is your situation, then stepping up means reframing how you see & talk to yourself about the future. Procrastinating won't help you; it only delays what needs to be done and prolongs your anxiety. Worrying won't help you; it will only drain you of energy & distract you from what needs to be done right now.

Press pause, gain clarity, and ask: *"What does this moment require of me?"* Win the moment. And then win the next moment. And the next …

Step Up Today

Successful and unsuccessful people do things repeatedly. They take action every day. The difference is that successful people take action *Above the Line.* They step up daily and act with intention, purpose, and skill.

As you apply *The R Factor* to your life & work, keep in mind that for every goal you are pursuing there is a pathway you must follow. Stepping Up is not about an occasional "heroic response." It is about focused & sustained action *Above the Line*. Not just once or twice, but repeatedly over time. By applying The R Factor consistently over time you can achieve almost anything.

Sometimes it's a grind. Sometimes there are tedious & uncomfortable things that are required for success. And that means doing what needs to be done even though you don't feel like it. It will be uncomfortable, maybe even for long stretches, and it will be tempting to settle for a lesser way that is more convenient and less painful. Don't compromise. Don't give in. Step up and embrace the grind.

Step Up to Predictable E's

Many of the events and situations that you experience are predictable. They have happened repeatedly in the past, and they will continue to happen. Unfortunately, it's easy to get stuck *Below the Line* in the way you react to the pattern of E's that you experience. But if you continue to respond the same way, then you will continue to get the same outcomes.

Recognize the pattern of events that you experience and be clear about what actions work best in response to those events. What predictable Events in your life tend to trigger a *Below the Line* response? Be intentional and think ahead. Change the pattern of your Response. The next time you experience one of those Events, be prepared to step up and respond *Above the Line*.

For every predictable E that you experience, the reality is this:
If your response doesn't change, the outcome won't change.

Step Up to Adversity

Your R is most important when the E is most difficult. The more challenging the Event and the more important the Outcome, the more *Above the Line* you need to be. You will face challenging situations that require you to elevate your game. These are the times when you must call upon your deepest capabilities & courage to respond with purpose & skill. This is when your R Factor matters most. Simply stated, Big E's and Big O's require Big R's.

Under pressure we do not rise to the occasion. We revert to learned behavior. When difficulty hits (and it surely will), it is too late to train & build skill. We must prepare & develop our R Factor capacity before we experience challenging situations. Under pressure the R Factor habits that will be available to you are the ones you have purposefully built into your life. Build your R Factor capacity now because you will need it in the future. Circumstances don't make or break you. They reveal you.

Sometimes the problem isn't the problem. Sometimes the way you are responding is the problem. Step up to the challenges you face. Get better when things get difficult. Don't use a difficult event as an excuse for a Below the Line response.

Here are four action steps that will help you step up to challenges:

1. *Acknowledge the reality that there will be obstacles & difficulties. Accept the fact that everyone experiences adversity, and you are not exempt.*
2. *Anticipate challenging situations that you might experience, and mentally rehearse how you would respond. This is your personal version of the "flight simulator" that commercial airline pilots use to practice their response to in-flight emergencies.*
3. *When difficulty hits, press pause and get your mind right. Focus on what needs to be done, not on what you don't like about the situation. Waste no time or energy on BCD. Bring a solution-focused mindset to the challenges you face.*
4. *Don't ask yourself Below the Line questions like: "Why me?" Do ask yourself Above the Line questions like: "What can I do to solve this? What does this situation require of me?"*

Don't limit yourself.
Don't settle for ordinary or average or just good enough.
Redefine what is possible.
Step Up.

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30 Day
Above the Line Challenge

Choose a specific discipline or activity and do it intentionally for 30 days.
Every morning write down:

My intention today is _____.

The purpose for it is _____.

Event		
Response	*Above the Line*	*Below the Line*
Outcome	*Above the Line*	*Below the Line*

R:4

Adjust & Adapt

Success goes to those who respond to change.

Change is constant & necessary

Change is a necessary part of life and work. It is a constant reality that is not going away. In fact, change is speeding up, not slowing down. It is happening more often, not less often. Your ability to adjust and adapt in response to change -- and to do so quickly in a positive & proactive way -- is an essential skill in today's world. Success belongs to the people (and organizations) who are able to manage change and adapt to new circumstances.

The challenge is that change asks you to let go of old ways of doing things and to embrace a new way that is often uncertain, unfamiliar, or uncomfortable. And that can be stressful. But understand that change isn't supposed to create comfort; it is supposed to create growth. One of the main reasons people don't change is they avoid the productive discomfort that is a natural part of the change process.

But it is essential to recognize that the opportunity lies in embracing change and the growth that comes with it. Resenting or resisting change will only put you at a disadvantage. A rapidly changing world deals ruthlessly with people and organizations that fail to adapt. Change is inevitable. Growth is optional. The smart thing to do is exercise the option.

It's an inescapable reality: things change.
Here's another reality: life will get increasingly difficult for you if you don't.

How do you deal with change?

Despite the change that is happening all around us, it's easy to get caught in the gravitational pull of old habits. We seek comfort & security in what is familiar, but that can be dangerous in a highly competitive and rapidly-moving world. Change is happening. The question is: how are you going to respond? Consider your options for dealing with change:

1. *Ignore the new realities.* Pretending that change isn't happening or hoping it will go away is a recipe for disaster. Sooner or later you will experience the full impact of the new realities, and if you have not made adjustments you will get crushed.
2. *Get angry.* This is a common reaction, and it is never successful. Getting angry will not do anything to alter the change you are experiencing, but it will make you much less effective at dealing with change.

3. *Try to run away from it.* As the saying goes, you can run but you can't hide. Change is everywhere. We have met people who quit their job to take a new role that they thought required less change, only to discover their new work environment is also going through significant transformation. There is no place you can run that is immune to change.
4. *Respond and make the changes you need to make.* This is what the marketplace demands of us. This is what we should do. Unfortunately, even though it is the logical path forward, this is not how most people deal with change.

Get your mind right about change

Resistance to change is often emotional rather than rational. And the emotional resistance people experience is typically self-inflicted. We tend to react to the emotional impact of change more than we Respond to the change itself. The attitude you bring to the situation determines your level of stress. Getting angry or being stubborn won't make change go away, but it will make it more difficult.

Think about it. When you don't get your mind right about change, you focus and fixate on what you don't like about it, you tell yourself (and others) a negative story, and you feel negative. Emotion and impulse take over, you cling to old routines and habits (autopilot), and you resist the changes you need to make.

Use the *Get Your Mind Right* skills from R:2 to reframe how you view change and how you talk to yourself about it.

- ✓ Don't view change as a threat. Yes, it is different, inconvenient, & uncomfortable (and scary), but that does not mean it is a threat. See change for what it is: a reality, a necessity, and an opportunity. If you see change as an adversary, that is a mistake … and a major source of self-induced stress.
- ✓ Replace a disruptive story about change with a productive story. If you talk to yourself in negative ways about the change you are facing, then you will feel negative. But you have the power to change the story you tell yourself. Exercise that power.

How you frame the change is key.
It is everything.

	Below the Line frame that resists change	***Above the Line frame that responds to change***
1	See change as a threat. Fixate on what you don't like about the change.	See change as an opportunity. Understand the change, align with it, use it for your benefit.
2	Waste time & energy complaining about & resisting the change.	Invest time & energy adjusting & making necessary changes.
3	Passive resistance. Slow down & drag your feet.	Active engagement. Accelerate & get busy making changes you need to make.
4	Cling to the past	Let go of the past & embrace the future.
5	Rely on old skills	Build new skills
6	Try to control the uncontrollable	Focus on what you can control
7	Expect certainty and stability	Expect ambiguity and instability
8	Stay in your comfort zone.	Embrace productive discomfort.

Adjust & adapt when the O demands it.

The O is simply feedback about the effectiveness of your R. When your Response isn't working, don't blame the situation. Choose a better R. In order to achieve your goals in life and at work, it is inevitable that you will need to adjust and adapt your Response. No R works perfectly. You will always need to flex.

We get very comfortable with a limited set of actions. We restrict and limit ourselves to a small population of R's. The tendency is to use/engage in a comfortable R that is moderately effective rather than an uncomfortable R that is highly effective. That is the power of habit. But keep this in mind: Your level of comfort and familiarity with an R does not always determine how effective it is. If what you are doing isn't producing results, then change it.

You have an R Factor trajectory

Every day you are creating or reinforcing habits in your life. The question is: habits that help or habits that hold you back? Be quick to break the habits that will break you. Be diligent about building the habits that will help you achieve success.

Your habits are perfectly designed to get the results they are getting. Consider the current path of your R Factor habits and patterns. Where are they taking you? Decide if that is where you want to go and if you need to make adjustments. You will end up where your R Factor takes you. You don't determine your future. You determine your habits and your habits determine your future.

1. *What habits are helping you?*
2. *What habits are holding you back?*
3. *What adjustments do you need to make?*

Adjust & adapt when the E demands it.

Don't let the rate of change in the E exceed the rate of change in your R. When circumstances around you are changing, that is a clear message that you need to adjust & adapt. When change happens you can respond *Above the Line* or you can react *Below the Line.* It's your choice.

Below the Line doesn't work with change. Impulse, autopilot, and resistance will not help you adjust & adapt. When change happens, apply the R Factor & respond *Above the Line.* Press pause, get your mind right, step up, adjust & adapt.

Don't hold on to what's holding you back.
Get rid of anything that does not make you better.

Is there anything you should stop/start doing that will make you better in key areas of your life?

	Stop Doing	***Start Doing***
Work		
Home		
Health & Fitness		

R:5

Make a difference

Create great experiences for others.

The first four disciplines address how you manage yourself. R:5 focuses on what you do for others. The reality is that how you behave toward others makes a difference. The question is: what difference are you making?

The most important E you deal with every day is other people

How you choose to *Manage the R* determines the quality of your personal & professional relationships. How you respond to others for the most part determines how others respond to them. Teams are formed, culture is built and work gets done by how you respond to & interact with each other. You don't get the relationships you want, you get the relationships you build.

Technical knowledge is a ticket that gets you into a game that relationships win.

Your R is an E for others

Your R Factor has a profound impact on the people around you. The way you *Manage the R* creates events to which other people must respond. The experience you give to others is one of the most important contributions you make to your students, your colleagues, and your school. It may be the single most important element of teamwork. Your R is deeply personal, but it's rarely private.

Every day when you interact with people you deliver an experience to them in three ways: your action, attitude, & words.

- ***People see your action.*** They experience what you do & how you do it.
- ***People feel your attitude.*** They experience your mindset & emotional state.
- ***People hear your words.*** They experience what you say & how you say it.

The experience you give to others is very different when your action, attitude and words are *Above the Line* rather than *Below the Line.*

You will be no better as a team than you are to each other. How are you contributing? What kind of E's are you giving to colleagues and to students?

How to make a difference

Here is how to make a difference in your school and with your students & colleagues.

1. **Total Ownership**
   Take complete responsibility for how you interact with others. Take responsibility for the impact of your action, attitude, and words. Do not accept behavior in yourself or others that hurts the culture or the performance of the team. If you permit it, you promote it.

2. **Careful Observation**
   Pay attention and observe the impact of your behavior. What kind of experience are you delivering to others? We tend to judge ourselves by our intentions, whereas others judge us by how they experience us. Experience always trumps intentions.

3. **Productive Energy**
   Be an energy giver. Encourage people. Say thank you. Refuse to contribute to negativity. Don't be an energy vampire.

4. **Real Solutions**
   Be proactive, not inactive or reactive. Focus on solving problems, not complaining about them. Ruthlessly eliminate BCD. Help when and how you can.

Look carefully at your work environment. What can you do to Make a Difference?
Look carefully at your home environment. What can you do to Make a Difference?

R:6

Build skill

Be intentional about the skills you develop.

You do things every day, and therefore you are constantly creating or reinforcing habits. Repeated action always builds habits, but it does not always build skill. And that's the challenge: it's easy to get stuck *Below the Line* with habits that are comfortable but not skillful. Are you building the skills that will take you where you want to go?

Talent isn't enough. Lots of people have talent & experience, yet not all of them get exceptional results. Why? Because talent will only take you so far. Exceptional results require building skills beyond your talent. If you do not continually build skill as you progress in your career, your talent & experience can become limiting factors that hold you back from growing & improving. There is unlimited potential for people who are willing to intentionally build skill on top of their existing talent & experience.

Tapping Into the Way the Brain Learns

Learning is the creation of mental circuitry that programs your brain to perform in a certain way. When you "learn" your brain fires signals along a series of neurons and builds a pathway in your brain for that particular action. Essentially, these neural pathways are "skill circuits." Your brain's ability to form & reinforce new connections gives it an enormous capacity to learn new skills.

The more you engage in a behavior, the more you fire signals along the circuit and strengthen that neural pathway. The good news is that you can build & strengthen *Above the Line* behavior. The bad news is that you can also build & reinforce *Below the Line* behavior.

In order to develop a skill you need to build & strengthen the mental circuit for that skill. This requires the willingness to engage in new actions that feel awkward and uncomfortable. More importantly, it requires the discipline to resist returning to your old habits. The old mental circuits exist and are easy to follow, whereas the new mental circuits do not exist and need to be created and strengthened. This requires lots of repetition & practice.

Habits are built through repeated action over time,
and they can only be changed through repeated action over time.

Four Levels of Skill

Level 4: Exceptional. ***World class skill and execution. Great results.***

Level 3: Automatic. ***Consistent and repeatable competence. Good results.***

Level 2: Basic. ***Ability to do the work or use the skill at a basic level.***

Level 1: Beginning. ***First attempts at a new task or skill.***

Learning any skill requires progressing from level to level. It is the natural process of learning. There is nothing wrong with your skills being in a particular stage; however, problems arise when you get stuck and stop progressing.

Moving from the *Automatic* level to the *Exceptional* level is the most difficult. It may seem counter-intuitive, but research reveals that talent and experience are not the key factors for achieving *Exceptional* skill. Innate ability and intelligence can accelerate how fast a person becomes proficient or skilled, but is of surprisingly little help in building the skills associated with exceptional.

Level 3 can easily become a person's comfort zone. People often get comfortable with Level 3 proficiency, especially if they have a history of producing good results with those capabilities. And when combined with the fact that building Level 4 skill is difficult and uncomfortable, many people opt for the status quo & get stuck on autopilot. This is a significant impediment to high performance in people, teams, and organizations.

Stuck Mindset

- Thinks it knows enough or is good enough.
- Avoids discomfort.
- Resists feedback and constructive criticism.
- Uncomfortable admitting mistakes.
- Gets tired of hearing about the skill long before it has mastered the skill.
- Doesn't like to practice. Finds repetition tedious & boring. Easily distracted from learning process.

Work the Gap

The main difference between Level 3 and Level 4 is where they invest time & how they view change. Level 3 people invest time on the skills they are already good at, & they resist change. Level 4 people maintain their existing skills while at the same time investing in building new capabilities. And they embrace change. Level 3 people are stuck. Level 4 people are constantly pushing themselves to get better. They are the people who continually engage in the struggle and hard work of the learning process.

The way to consistently learn & improve is to push yourself beyond your current abilities. Achieving breakthroughs requires *working the gap*: embracing the uncomfortable but productive gap between where your skill is now & where it needs to be.

Intentional Practice[1]

You can spend a lot of time working hard to become average. Exceptional skill is built through focused attention, time, & energy. It is built by practicing the skills you need, even if you're not good enough yet, rather than continually focusing on what you already do well. To build exceptional skill you need *Intentional Practice.*

1. ***Mindset***: This is the first step because it determines your commitment to the process of learning. Here are the attributes of a Level 4 mindset:
    a. Motivate yourself. Refuse to get stuck at Level 3.
    b. Accept mistakes as a natural part of learning.
    c. Commit to the grind. Perseverance is essential.
    d. Embrace productive discomfort. Discomfort marks the place where an old habit meets a new habit, where the old way meets the new way. Push through the pain!

2. ***Model & Mechanics***: Be clear about what exceptional looks like. Zoom out to see the big picture of the skill and zoom in to see the pieces & how they fit together.

3. ***Repetition & Reflection***: Identify a piece, study it, then practice it. That's a "rep." Reflect on how well you executed against the standard. Go again.
    a. Reaches + reps! Stretch yourself. Go to the edge of your abilities. If it doesn't challenge you, it won't change you.
    b. Do as many reps as it takes.
    c. When error happens, stop & reflect on it, see it & sense it, fix it, then go again. Strengthen the right connections in your brain. Fire & wire.

4. ***Feedback & Accountability***: Hold yourself to a high standard first. Then find a person you trust to give you feedback about what they observe in your performance. Be coachable!

[1] Many of the ideas in this section come from the work of Daniel Coyle. We highly recommend his two books: *The Talent Code* & *The Little Red Book of Talent.*

Life @ School	
What two skills do you want to build/improve?	***Why? What outcome do you want to produce?***

Life @ Home	
What two skills do you want to build/improve?	***Why? What outcome do you want to produce?***