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BreakThrough Conflict— Overview

Module 1

The Hidden Dimension

Module 2

Responding to Criticism

Module 3

Raising Delicate Issues

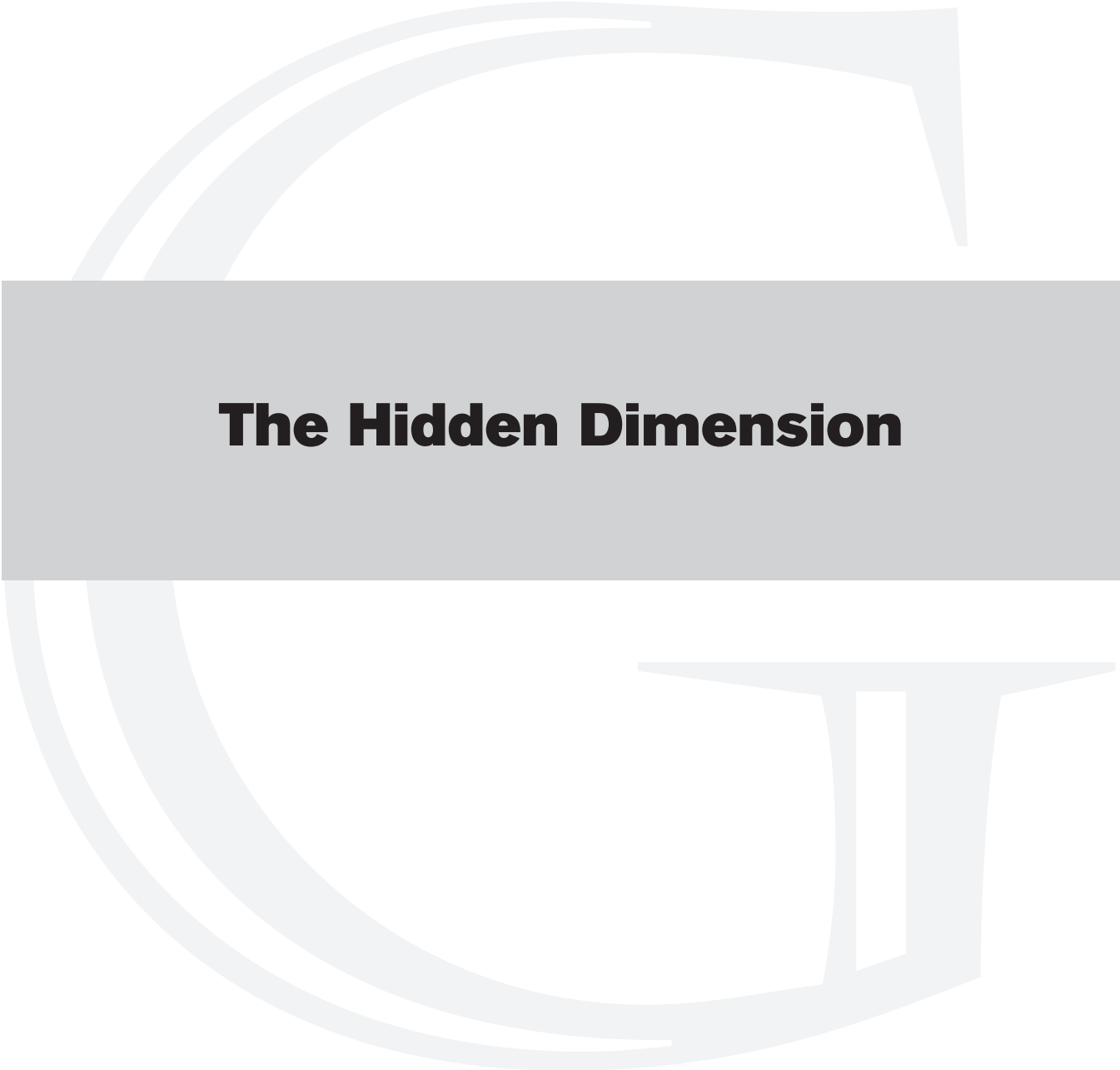
Module 4

Perceptions and Reality

Module 5

Gratitude and Recognition

**CONFLICT IS NOT THE PROBLEM.
The problem is
how we communicate through conflict.**



The Hidden Dimension



The Hidden Dimension of Human Communication

1. Intent does not equal impact.

INTENT ≠ IMPACT

- Distortion is increased as anxiety and stress increase.

EXAMPLE → “Is the report ready yet?”

INTENT—“Where are you in the project?”

IMPACT—“What’s taking you so long?”

EXAMPLE → “We’re back to square one.”

INTENT—“We’re starting with a clean slate.”

IMPACT—“Nothing’s been accomplished.”

2. Every message has two levels:

CONTENT

RELATIONSHIP

- **CONTENT LEVEL:** information, details, facts
- **RELATIONSHIP LEVEL:** communicated through tone of voice, volume, rate

Issues become secondary to the struggle at the relationship level.

Content gets held hostage by the relationship message it is packaged in.

EXAMPLE

“When you see me so overloaded, the least you could do is offer to help.”

CONTENT—“I’m overwhelmed by work and need your help.”

RELATIONSHIP—“You’re selfish and unaware. All you care about is yourself.”

3. Selective Perception

- How we expect a person to be is what we selectively notice them doing.
- How we expect them *not* to be we subconsciously ignore.
- Since no one is consistently anything all of the time, we go through life with people, picking and choosing samples of their behavior that confirm our theory of what they're like.
- Then we tell ourselves, "I knew it."
- We see each other through distorted, encrusted filters of expectation.

4. “As If” Principle

- We act “as if” a person is going to be a certain way, and they begin to play out those behaviors.

EXAMPLE

Rosenthal Studies

- In conflict, we create a suction in the communication system where we draw out from each other our very worst behaviors, the ones we least want to see.

5. Silence and Avoidance: A main response to conflict

- People retreat from discomfort.
- A spiral of silence envelops crucial issues.
- “Unspeakables” develop when we avoid small issues.
- Trust is not a prerequisite for communication; it is a byproduct of communication.

The Hidden Dimension—Summary

1. Intent does not equal impact

2. Every message has two levels

- **CONTENT LEVEL:** information, details, facts
- **RELATIONSHIP LEVEL:** communicated through tone of voice, volume, rate

3. Selective Perception

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Stages of Behavior Change

PHONY

Feels like you're pulling out a set of skills that are just not you.

UNCOMFORTABLE

Awkward. Still not easy to do, but it doesn't feel like you are pretending.

COMFORTABLE

No longer awkward. Still have to think about it, but it is much easier.

Natural

A part of who you are; no concentration or effort required. You just do it.



Responding to Criticism



A Model for Responding to Criticism

I. Get more information

STEP 1

Active Listening—Nonverbal curiosity and paraphrasing

Nonverbal Attention—A Posture of Curiosity

- Assists the listener to understand what's being said.
- Signals to the speaker that we're hearing them so they feel less defensive.

Paraphrasing—Listening to the Message, Reflecting It Back

- The goal of paraphrasing is to discover and communicate the speaker's intent.
- Problems with paraphrasing:
 - “So what I hear you saying is...”
 - Undershooting the emotional intensity

A Model for Responding to Criticism

I. Get more information (*continued*)

STEP 2

Ask for Details—Requesting clarifying information

- “Can you help me out and tell me what I’ve done...?”

Caution: Is the relationship message, “I really want to understand,” or is it, “Prove it”?

STEP 3

Guess—When a speaker can’t think of a specific, you come up with one.

- Help the critic by guessing about what the problem might be.
- **Relationship message:** “I care about this problem; I care about you.”

A Model for Responding to Criticism

II. Agreement—Seek out agreement, wherever it exists

STEP 4

Agree with Facts

- Be explicit in your agreement about events which did happen, things that were said or done.

EXAMPLE → “You’re right I said that...It’s true I did that.”

STEP 5

Agree with Critic’s Perception

- Acknowledge that the critic’s perception is reasonable, given what was happening.

EXAMPLE → “I can understand how you could come to that conclusion in light of...”

- Duration effect—Linger on agreement.

NOT: “I can understand how you feel that way, but...”

People remember what you spend most time on.

Watch out for the word “but”—it tells the listener to disregard everything which comes before this word.

A Model for Responding to Criticism—Summary

I. Get more information

**STEP
1**

Active Listening—Nonverbal curiosity and paraphrasing

Nonverbal Attention—A Posture of Curiosity

Paraphrasing—Listening to the Message, Reflecting It Back; discovering speaker's intent

**STEP
2**

Ask for Details—Requesting clarifying information

**STEP
3**

Guess—When a speaker can't think of a specific, you come up with one.

II. Agreement—Seek out agreement, wherever it exists

**STEP
4**

Agree with Facts—Be explicit in your agreement

**STEP
5**

Agree with Critic's Perception—Acknowledge the critic's perception is reasonable.

Maintaining Emotional Discipline Through Self-Talk

In conflict notice what you say to yourself and replace self-defeating talk with phrases like:

EXAMPLE →

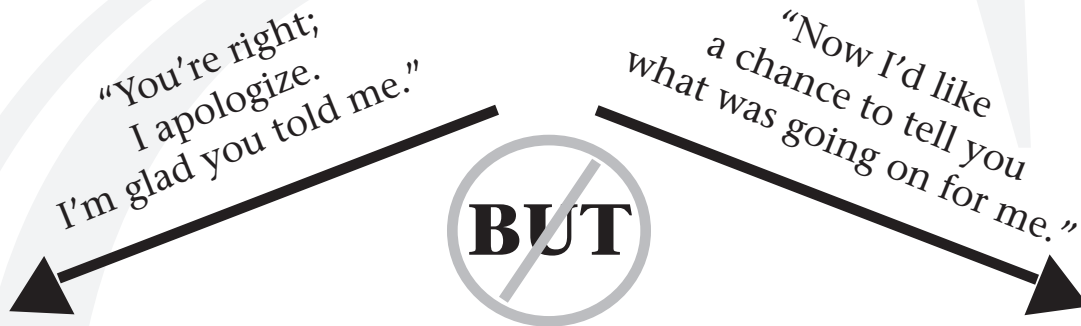
“People are doing the best they can. They would say and do the right thing, if only they knew what that was.”

or more simply

EXAMPLE →

“Breathe!”

Two Options for Responding to Criticism:



Remember:
This is a model, not a formula.
Make it work for you.

Avoid Point/Counterpoint

Best way out: *Active Listening*: "What you really want me to understand is..."

Pacing

Go slow. Speed kills.

Written Practice

Critical statement of yourself:

1. Paraphrase the speaker's ideas and emotions:

2. Ask for specifics:

3. Guess about specifics:

4. Agree with the facts:

5. Agree with the critic's perception:



Raising Delicate Issues



Raising Delicate Issues

- Trust is a by-product of communication, not a prerequisite.
- One person can change a system. As one part moves, other parts move to accommodate the change.
- In order to thrive on conflict, we must be able to raise delicate issues in a way that, rather than resisting us, people engage with us in a conversation, and work with us toward a solution.
- This model for raising issues allows you to give negative feedback without getting people defensive and upset.

A Model for Raising Delicate Issues

STEP 1

Opener—Psychological agreement to have the conversation

EXAMPLE → “Can I talk to you about something that I’ve been concerned about?”

- Talk in private; if possible, sitting down.

I-Feeling Language—When people feel pushed, it creates a counter resistance

- Avoid “you” language: “You’re always putting me down.” Instead, try “I-feeling” language.

EXAMPLE → “I’m feeling awkward and embarrassed...”

- It’s not a feeling if you can put the word “that” after the word “feel.”

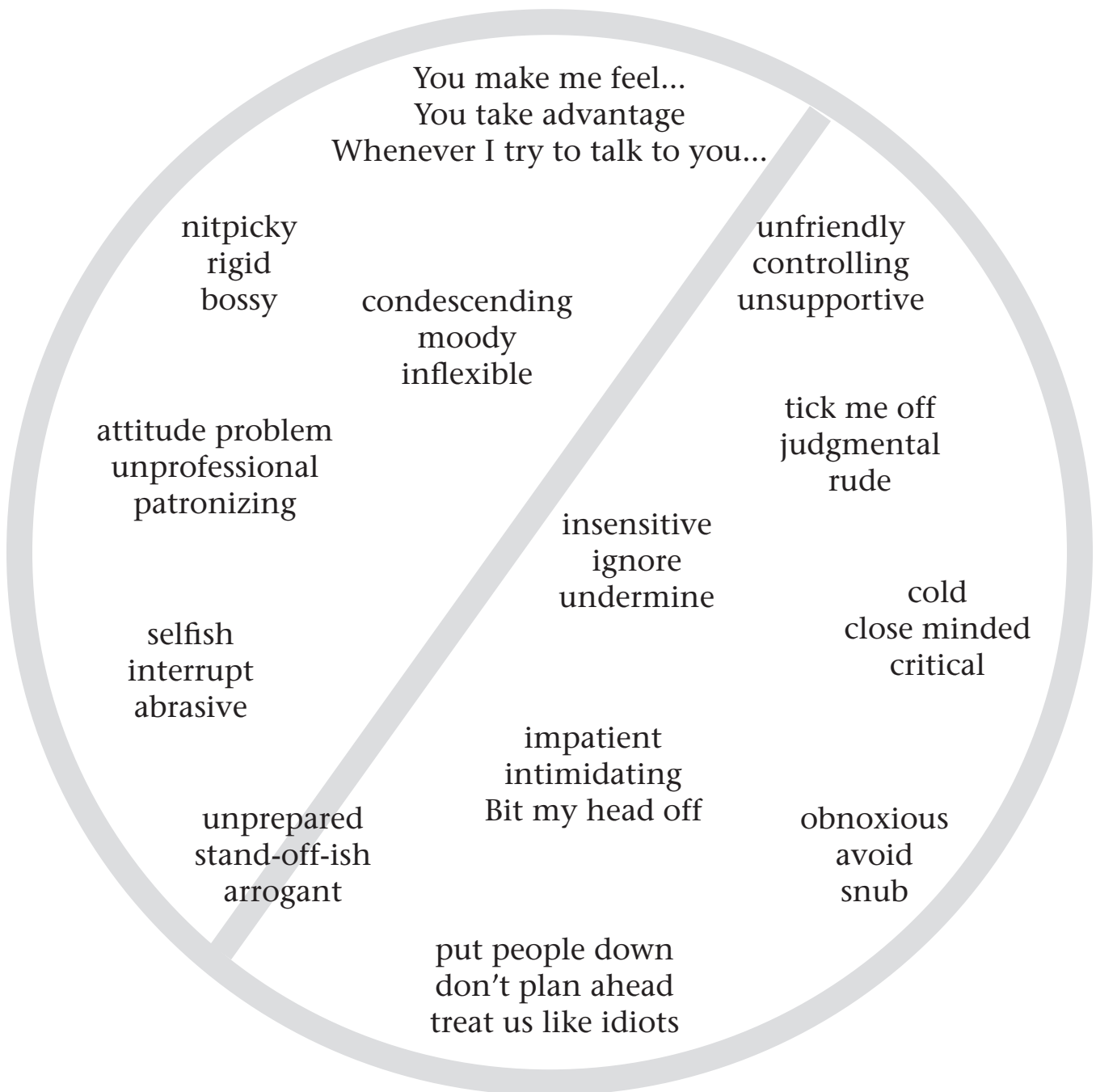
Edit Accusative Language—Look for loaded language and red flag terms

EXAMPLE → Instead of “you’re condescending and patronizing,” try “I’m feeling isolated and afraid to talk.”

Discover and Communicate Primary Feelings

afraid	glad	pleased
alarmed	grateful	possessive
alone	guilty	preoccupied
anxious	happy	prejudiced
apathetic	hopeful	pressured
appreciated	hopeless	protective
awkward	impatient	proud
bewildered	inadequate	quiet
brave	incompetent	rejected
calm	indecisive	remorseful
closed	inferior	restrained
comfortable	inhibited	sad
committed	insecure	secure
compassionate	insincere	shallow
competent	involved	shy
concerned	isolated	sorry for myself
confident	jealous	stubborn
confused	joyful	stupid
curious	lonely	supported
cut off from others	lovable	supportive
defeated	loved	sympathetic
dejected	loving	terrified
dependent	masked	threatened
depressed	melancholy	tolerant
disappointed	misunderstood	torn
eager	needy	triumphant
embarrassed	old	unsure
enthusiastic	optimistic	unresponsive
excited	peaceful	uptight
exhilarated	pessimistic	useless
fearful	phony	weepy
	playful	wishy-washy

Accusative Phrases: Need to Edit and Pinpoint



A Model for Raising Delicate Issues

STEP 2

Pinpoint Details—Tell the person exactly what they said and when they said it, or exactly what they did and when they did it

EXAMPLE

”Here’s a concrete example of what I mean. Yesterday at the meeting you described me as resistant and inflexible...”

Pinpointing is:

- less intimidating
- less threatening
- more educational
- more informative

Pinpointing teaches people about their behavior and its impact on us without attacking their character and creating defensiveness.

A Model for Raising Delicate Issues

STEP 3

Acknowledge Your Part—Search for and communicate how you've contributed to the problem

EXAMPLE

“I know I own part of this problem too because at the meeting yesterday I stayed focused on my position even though the rest of the group was advocating for a different course of action.”

Acknowledging your part of the problem is powerful because it:

- releases the other person from feeling blamed.
- allows you to see the world from the other person's perspective.
- encourages the other person to accept their part in the problem, since you've accepted yours.

A Model for Raising Delicate Issues

STEP 4

Agree on a Solution—Avoid a one-sided solution where you think it up and they carry it out

- Begin with your part in the solution.

EXAMPLE

“Here’s what I can do to help make this work...”

- Ask: “Is there anything else you’d like me to do?”
- Then describe what you would like them to do.

EXAMPLE

“What I ask of you...”

Develop a solution that you both create and both implement.

A Model for Raising Delicate Issues Summary

**STEP
1**

Opener—Psychological agreement to have the conversation

I-Feeling Language—When people feel pushed, it creates a counter resistance

Edit Accusative Language—Look for loaded language and red flag terms

**STEP
2**

Pinpoint Details—Tell the person exactly what they said and when they said it, or exactly what they did and when they did it

**STEP
3**

Acknowledge Your Part—Search for and communicate how you've contributed to the problem

**STEP
4**

Agree on a Solution—Develop a solution that you both create and both implement.

Written Practice

1. Opener, "I-Feeling" Description, Edit Accusatives:

2. Pinpoint Details:

3. Acknowledge your part in the problem:

4. Agree on a solution:

- "Here's what I can do..."

- Ask: "Is there anything else you'd like me to do?"
- "It would help me if you would..."

This is a model, not a formula.

**Consider who you are
and who you're speaking to.**

Adapt the model for your own conflict style.

- If you tend to be **compliant** in conflict, emphasize STEPs 2 and 4.
- If you tend to be **controlling** in conflict, emphasize STEPs 1, 3 and 4.

COMPLIANT

STEP 2

Pinpoint Details—"Let me tell you exactly what happened that was a problem."

STEP 4

Ask for a behavior change—"Here's what I ask of you."

CONTROLLING

STEP 1

"I-Feeling"

STEP 3

"I know I'm part of the problem because..."

STEP 4

"Here's what I can do. Is there anything else you'd like from me?"

The model works because it is a combination of two very dissimilar sets of skills.

- Direct, clear, unequivocal. The person knows exactly what the problem is and exactly what solution you suggest.
- Accountable, respectful. The person does not feel blamed or accused.



Gratitude and Recognition



Gratitude and Recognition

- An environment that is rich in recognition and reinforcement makes dealing with conflict easier.
- Concentrate on praise, recognition, and reinforcement. It can change the biochemistry of an organization.
- A reservoir of reinforcement makes it easier to raise issues.
- Find someone doing what you like, tell them you like it, then they'll probably repeat it.

Gratitude and Recognition

Not all encouragement is equal. Here's how to get more from the encouragement you give:

1. Look for opportunities for sincere praise.

2. Catch people doing things right.

Notice things people do that you appreciate, admire, or make your life better.

3. Keep encouragement pure.

Don't mix praise with correction.

4. Focus on specific information.

They believe you; it feels more genuine.
They know what behavior to repeat.

Gratitude and Recognition

5. Be a compliment messenger.

When you hear good news about someone, tell them. Feed the rumor mill with good stories.

6. Praise in multiple directions.



Downward: Managers praise people who report to them; teachers encourage their students.



Upward: Recognize, reinforce, encourage your supervisor. Say what this person does that helps you to do your job better.



Lateral: Horizontal recognition—department to department, section to section, shift to shift. Encouragement is one of the best ways to strengthen horizontal communication.

The power of gratitude and recognition is vast.

Gratitude and Recognition Summary

**1. Look for opportunities
for sincere praise.**

2. Catch people doing things right.

3. Keep encouragement pure.

4. Focus on specific information.

5. Be a compliment messenger.

6. Praise in multiple directions.

Thank - Specific - Benefit - Thank

1. Thank:

2. Specific:

3. Benefit:

4. Thank:

Glaser & Associates Inc. Program Evaluation

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- 1. Strongly disagree**
- 2. Disagree**
- 3. To some extent**
- 4. Agree**
- 5. Strongly agree**

- ___ 1) The content presented is relevant to my work.
- ___ 2) The presenters displayed a thorough knowledge of the subjects covered.
- ___ 3) The time I invested in this seminar was well spent.
- ___ 4) I feel prepared to implement the new tools I have learned.
- ___ 5) I would recommend Glaser & Associates Inc. to a colleague or friend.

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