

The Power of Reflection

Reflection is vital if we want to achieve “kaizen,” a Japanese term used to denote a state of constant improvement.

Reflection is a way to step back, get perspective, calibrate, and learn from our actions. Constantly reflecting also ensures we are maximizing our impact.



Did the actions lead to the intended results?

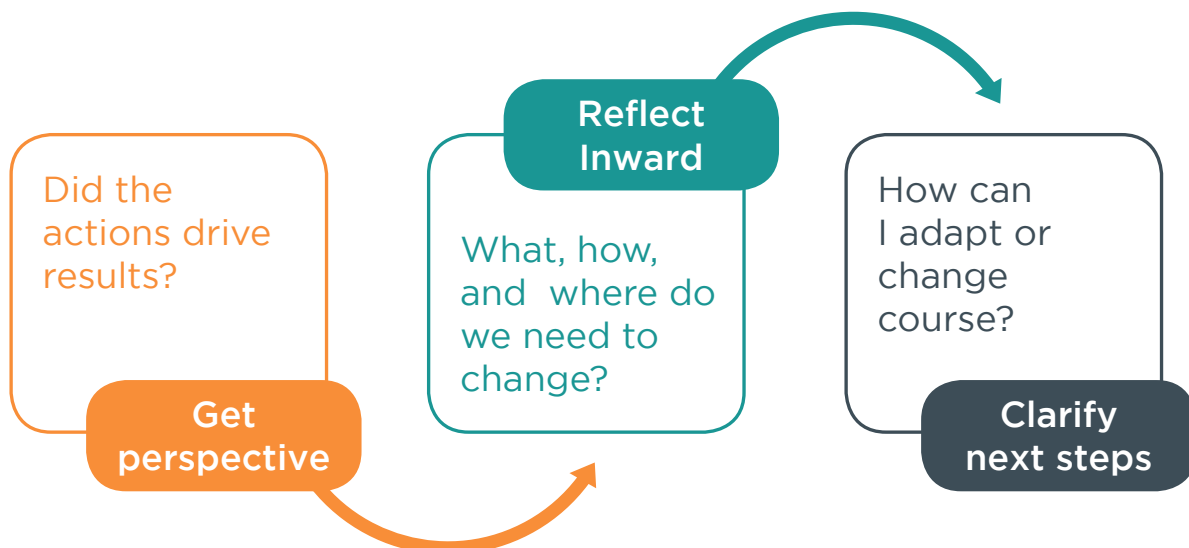
People often repeat the same actions, even when hoping for a different result. To break this cycle, ask yourself...

- 1 - Were my intentions clear?
- 2 - Did I drive the results I intended?
- 3 - What do I need to change (in me) to get those results in the future ?

Power of Pause

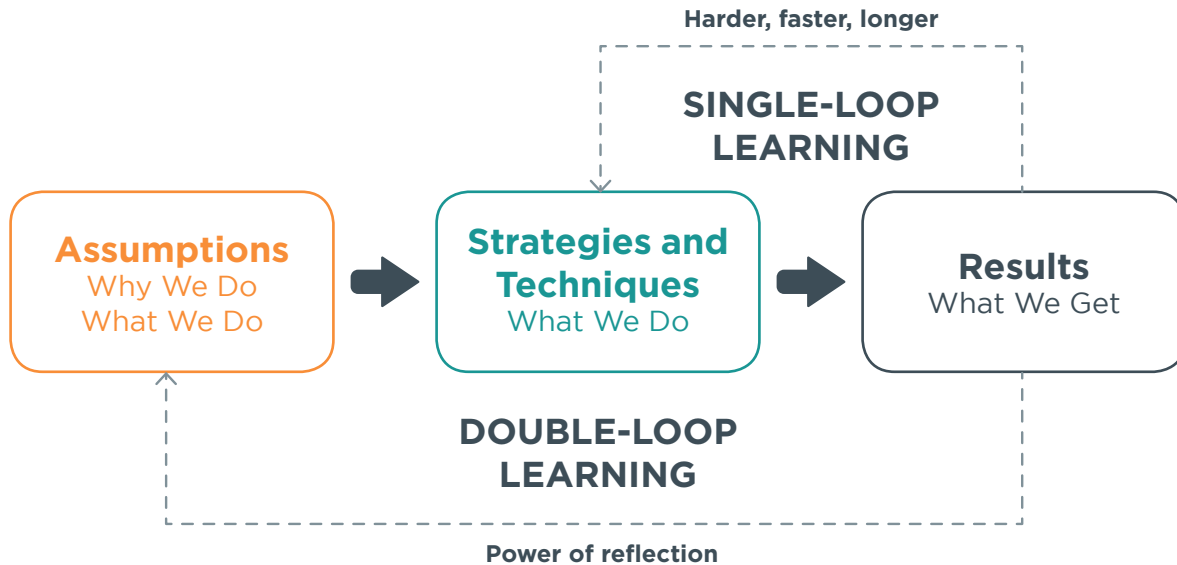
Ask questions and take steps to ensure reflection becomes a habit.

Airplanes fly off course 94% of the time and yet consistently land at the right destination. How? Throughout the flight, pilots compare their intentions (desired destination) and results (current location), self-correcting for errors. This calibration and adaptation is intentional and essential.



Too Often We Operate without Reflection

Doing the same thing and expecting a different result leads no where. Still, all too often we repeat this cycle.



Single-Loop Learning

In single-loop learning, we often fail to...

- a. Clarify our actions
- b. Assess their impact and/or
- c. Persist in doing actions, harder, faster, and longer, even if they aren't having an impact.



Double-Loop Learning

In double-loop learning, we...

- a. Pause long enough to notice instead of repeating the same actions harder, faster, and longer
- b. Get perspective and ask questions
- c. Look inward
- d. Consider new possibilities
- e. Clarify next steps



Double-Loop Solutions

To appreciate the power of single versus double-loop learning, consider how it has been and might be used to solve just a few familiar contemporary challenges that nearly all of us experience at work and in life.




Challenge	Single-Loop Solution		Double-Loop Solution	
	Solution	Assumption	Solution	Assumption
High cost of renting offices in major cities	Move headquarters to a more affordable location (e.g., in the suburbs or a smaller city).	The challenge is the cost of real estate in major cities, and the solution is finding cheaper real estate elsewhere.	Rethink the need to have workers on site 9-5 each day; introduce remote and hybrid work options to radically reduce your real estate footprint.	The challenge isn't the cost of real estate but the assumed necessity of working onsite 9-5 and the solution is to radically rethink the workday and nature of work.
Rushhour traffic congestion	Build more roads and highways to help move traffic in and out of urban areas during the workday.	Traffic congestion is caused by a limited number of road/highway lanes.	Build smart cars and highways equipped with sensors to enable vehicles to safety travel just inches rather than feet apart.	The challenge isn't traffic volume but rather that human drivers are prone to make errors and must take up a lot of space on the road to operate a vehicle safely.
High attrition rates among entry-level employees	Offer 5% raise to all entry-level employees and offer free-lunch once a week.	Employees leave organizations because they want to make more money, and the solution to attrition is to give employees a raise.	Solution: Rethink job roles and duties and assign work by ability rather than rank (e.g, entry level).	Employees leave because they are bored and don't see opportunities for growth within the organization; the solution is to invest more time and energy in recruiting talent to ensure these individuals end up in the right roles at the right level.

After Action: Make Reflection a Habit

When you complete a task or larger project:

- Step back from you computer, phone, and all other forms of stimulus.
- Better yet, take a walk, go for a run, or do something else to put physical and mental distance between you and your work.

Then, take time to ask and respond to the following questions. Better yet, make it a habit to complete this log each time you finish a project.

Project description	 What worked well?	 What could have worked better?	 What did you learn?	 What will you do differently next time?

* Remember, ongoing reflection takes discipline. It is also easiest when it becomes fully integrated into the workplace culture. The best way to start is by modeling it at the top and making it a habit on all teams.

Discover how being more reflective can drive innovation on your team.
Set up a time to talk to **Dr. Camille Preston and the AIM Leadership team.**

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