

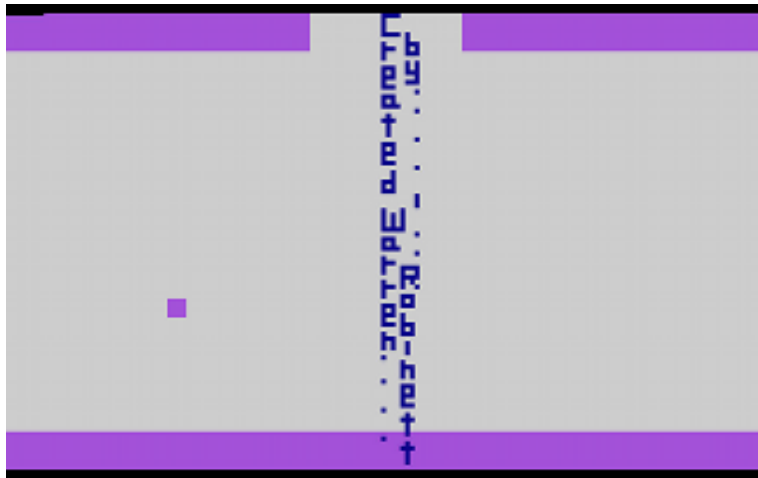
# 6 KEYS TO WINNING AT WORK

*How to outsmart, outwork, and outlast your peers.*

**BY TODD CHANDLER**

# SEEING WHAT OTHER MISS

In August 1980, a 15-year-old boy from Salt Lake City wrote Atari describing a special dot he found in the maze of the Black Castle. Adam Clayton drew pictures of screens from the video game *Adventure* showing where he discovered “The Dot” and how he used it to unlock a secret message hidden by the game’s designer - “Created by Warren Robinett.”



Other gamers discovered the hidden message, but Clayton was the first to tell Atari, who didn't know it existed. This was the first secret feature to be referred to as an Easter Egg. Clayton had seen what others overlooked.<sup>1</sup>

Easter Eggs exist all around us - secret messages that reveal how to be more effective. Training your brain to see actions, behaviors, and words at a deeper level, provides you with insights that can improve your decision making and lead to richer results.

Seeing what others miss, helps you add more value, and the more value you bring to your role, the more secure you'll be in keeping your job, and the more likely you'll be to earn desired projects, opportunities, and promotions. Like the dot in adventure, here are the six hidden keys to unlocking your value!

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<sup>1</sup> Porges, S. (2017, December 20). The True Story Behind The Original Video Game 'Easter Egg' That Inspired 'Ready Player One'. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/sethporges/2017/12/20/the-true-story-behind-the-original-video-game-easter-egg-that-inspired-ready-player-one/#33b99f7f2976>

# 6 KEYS TO AVOID GETTING FIRED

1. **AWARENESS.** The ability to monitor both your external environment and your internal dialogue (thoughts and emotions).



4. **EMOTIONAL CONTROL.** When you are in strong observation mode, you view things more objectively without getting caught in the immediate emotion of the situation - more like watching a video of what's happening. With higher level skills, you can watch yourself and rewrite the script in real time.



2. **ATTENTION TO DETAIL.** Seeing little things others miss, gives you more data points to consider. When you see more, you can better prioritize and concentrate on activities and tactics with higher leverage.



5. **PREDICTION.** You will start to see patterns that repeat themselves. These patterns map out clear cause and effect relationships which give you previews of how things will most likely play out.

3. **INSIGHT.** You gain a greater understanding of what's happening below the surface. Being able to identify, classify, and address hidden needs of others makes you more influential.



6. **IMPROVEMENT.** Seeing how others do things effectively, gives you examples to test and try for yourself. When you can capture, digest, and emulate their skills, you will start to grow as a person. You can also do this with anti-examples, when others demonstrate ineffective skills.



# HOW TO DEVELOP THESE 6 KEYS

## 1. PAY ATTENTION

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**T**op performers are outstanding observers. They see more, filter out the noise, and retain the most important details. With so many things screaming for our attention, it's easy to get overwhelmed. Start by deciding what to focus on. Notice the choice of the word "decide" as opposed to "determine." There's a personal judgment involved. It's not always obvious, and it's often more subjective than objective.

- What do you think would make the biggest impact?
- What is it you want to make better?
- What do you enjoy more?

Start by focusing on easy to observe detailed facts - behaviors, actions, words, tone, timing, setting, attendees. Other possible targets:

- Level of engagement/participation, who
  - Speaks first
  - Speaks the most/least
  - Listens and participates
  - Disengages and checks out
- Information shared - what type of information, quality, relevance, importance
- Use of time
- Influencing techniques
- Questions asked, the effectiveness of each of those questions
- Tone and body language
- Reactions (including yours)

Don't try to focus on all of these. Pick one, maybe two. If you're overwhelmed and don't know where to start, start with questions asked. They are easy to watch for and fun to capture. In many situations, you'll be amazed at the lack of questions asked, meaning low levels of seeking information and learning.

## 2. POINT AND CALL

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Once you've decided what to focus on, work to eliminate distractions. Studies continue to show we keep increasing how many times a day we look at our phones. Leave your phone at your desk when you go to meetings. When you're writing or doing some analysis, put your phone away so you can't see or hear it.

With distractions out of the way, raise your attention with shisa kanko. When you take a bus or train ride in Japan, you'll see the driver pointing and saying repeated phrases out loud at every stop.

Shisa kanko - pointing and calling - is a safety protocol developed by the Kobe Railroad Administration Bureau in the early 1900s. The combination of the physical movement along with speaking the specific observation raises consciousness and has been shown to reduce workplace errors by up to 85%.



Photo by: [Alan Levine from Strawberry, United States - Flickr](#)

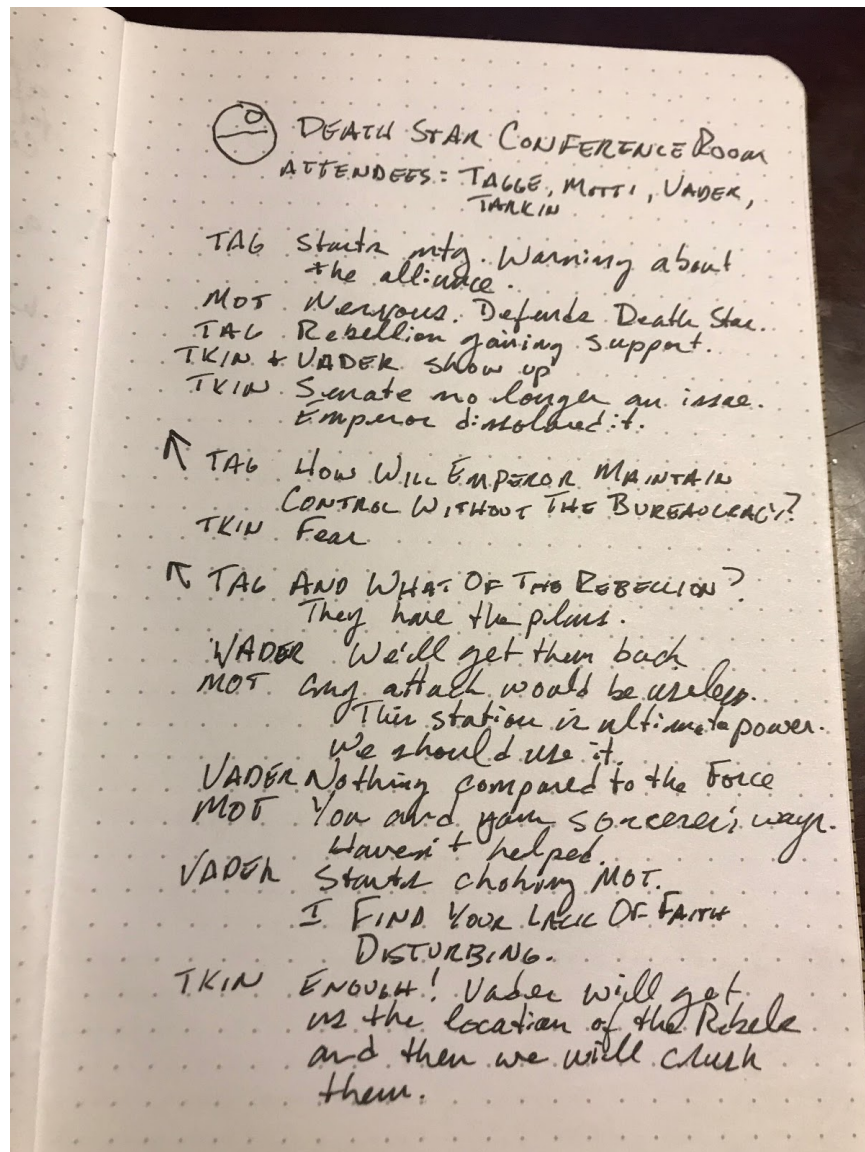
This cultural practice keeps the job from becoming routine and involves more senses to keep awareness high. Transplanting this effective technique out of Japan to other cultures has failed because workers felt silly performing these steps. Japan culture overcame this natural embarrassment with training and with a strong, clear mission - safety is more important than feeling uneasy.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Richarz, A. (2018, March 12). Why Japan's Rail Workers Can't Stop Pointing at Things. Retrieved from <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/pointing-and-calling-japan-trains>

Raise your consciousness and focus by adapting a point and call mindset. You can point and call sitting in meetings, reading emails, talking on the phone, and even in editing your own work. Pointing like Japanese train conductor during a meeting might be a little disruptive, but "pointing" in your notes is an effective way to raise your conscious observations.

Draw an arrow in your notes to point and write what you saw next to it. Here is an example using "questions asked" as the focus target if you were sitting in the famous "I find your lack of faith disturbing" conference room scene in Star Wars.



Another point and call technique is **reflective/empathic listening**. Rephrasing what someone said, and adding the emotion driving their statement focuses you on the moment and elevates your awareness.

Here as well, a white-gloved point with your full arm might have unintended consequences, but an open-palm gesture towards the person is a perfect way to engage your physical senses.

#### **Examples of empathic listening:**

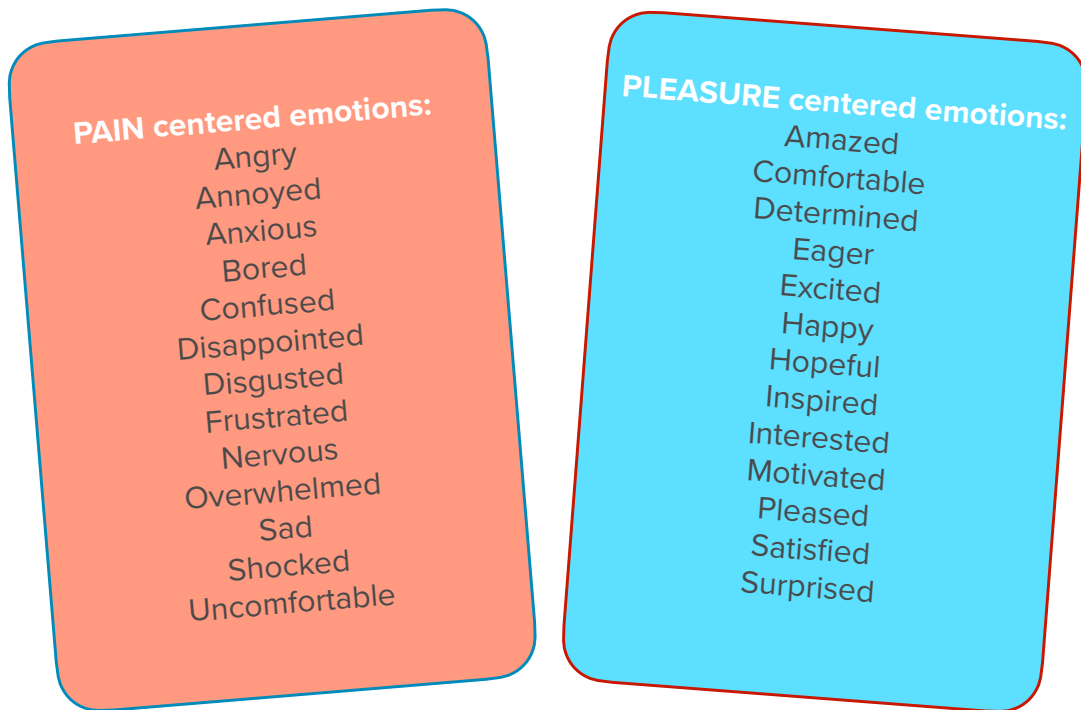
- You're concerned (emotion) because if we implement this idea there's no effective way to undo it if it doesn't work.
- You're worried (emotion) that we'll invest a lot of time up front with very little pay-off in the end.
- Brad often cuts you off when you start to share your perspective, and that's frustrating (emotion).
- You're surprised (emotion) to learn that we do have a behind the scenes process in place to ensure errors like this don't happen.

Start with the simple sentence construction.

*Sounds like,  
you're \_\_\_\_\_ because  
(restate what they said).*

This mindset and practice keeps you focused on what others are trying to communicate to you, but it also helps others feel listened to. When they say "That's right," then you've done it effectively.

## POTENTIAL EMOTIONS TO REFLECT



## 3. CAPTURE

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**G**et a notebook and write more than you think is necessary. The more detailed you write, the richer the data.

Alex Honnold was the first person to successfully free solo climb El Capitan, a 3,000 foot granite wall in Yosemite National Park. No ropes, no safety equipment, he used only his climbing shoes and a bag of chalk. But he used another tool prior to his free solo climb that was instrumental in his success. Alex climbs all over the world, and in addition to all his climbing gear, he always brings his climbing journal, a Mead Five Star Notebook. In it he records every climb he's ever made.





Alex Honnold free-solo climbing Heaven (5.12d) in Yosemite Park, 2014

His note taking guides his improvements on every climb. He knows every hand hold and foot placement and can review them over and over. It's his way of eliminating risk.<sup>3</sup> Taking notes during a meeting shows you are engaged, and in today's world where many participants are on their phones or computers, you'll stand out. **Write with a very specific audience in mind - your future self.** Be descriptive enough to make sure you can make sense of your notes later when you review them.

Social scientists have refined the art of taking field notes for research purposes. The objective is to capture relevant information in real time in order to provide context and details that will create more substantial meaning and understanding.

*Notes created by the researcher during the act of qualitative fieldwork to remember and record the behaviors, activities, events, and other features of an observation. Field notes are intended to be read by the researcher as evidence to produce meaning and an understanding of the culture, social situation, or phenomenon being studied.*<sup>4</sup>

If this level of note taking starts to feel unnecessary or like overkill, don't measure success based on lack of insights, but rather on the level of personal engagement.

You will have to pan for insights like gold miners pan for gold sifting through thousands of pans for one fleck of gold dust. If you have thoughts and ideas during the meeting, capture them in real time, and you can do more reflection afterwards.

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<sup>3</sup> Michelson, Megan. "The 6 Things Alex Honnold Can't Live Without." Outside Online. June 15, 2017. Accessed May 03, 2019. <https://www.outsideonline.com/2192186/alex-honnolds-favorite-things>.

<sup>4</sup> Schwandt, Thomas A. The SAGE Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2015.

# 4. REVIEW AND REFLECT

Block out time for regular review - daily and weekly. Read through your notes and summarize. Reflect on the actions and behaviors and ask questions to process what you observed.

Push yourself to write your reflections out. Writing crystallizes your thinking. You have to invest time in uncovering the meaning underneath the observations you make. That's where the value lives.

## FOUR LEVELS OF INTERPRETATION

### Level 1 - self assessing

- What did I do well to impact the outcome?
- What could I have done to be more effective?

### Level 2 - assessing skills in others

- Who demonstrated strong skills or tactics? What made them so effective?
- What ineffective skills were demonstrated? What made them ineffective?
- What could have been done to be more effective in that situation?
- Who had the most influence and control? Why?

### Level 3 - assessing underlying motives:

This can get into dangerous territory. It requires you to make assumptions. Stay as objective as possible and keep an open mind to re-assess as more information becomes available.

You need information to determine motives. The direct path to get at what's driving someone's choices is usually to ask "why" questions. Why would you think that? Why do you prefer that solution? The challenge with "why," is it can make others defensive. "How" questions can provide less confrontational insights with the same underlying information.

Instead of:	Try:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Why is that the best option?</li><li>• Why do you propose that?</li><li>• Why should we do that?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How did you determine that option?</li><li>• How did you arrive at that solution?</li><li>• How are we supposed to do that?</li></ul>

Psychological needs drive most behaviors, actions, and proposed solutions. William Glasser's Choice Therapy provides a powerful model to assess underlying needs.

Glasser identifies **four psychological needs** that drive behavior once the primal physiological needs of survival and reproduction are met:

- Love/belonging - connection
- Power - certainty, significance, contribution
- Freedom - choice
- Fun - variety, playfulness, learning<sup>5</sup>

You can't tell the need based on the action alone. For example, a colleague interrupts someone else. It could be to meet any or a combination of these needs.



Actions can be fulfilling multiple needs at the same time.

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<sup>5</sup> Glasser, William. Control Theory: A New Explanation of How We Control Our Lives. New York: Perennial Library.

How the person being interrupted responds can also provide clues to their underlying needs.

A simple observation about a behavior will not provide enough context for you to determine the driving psychological need. Keep in mind you don't have to be right. The point isn't to accurately assess the need, it's to make your best guess, adjust your behavior, and provide a path more in alignment with your personal objective - to persuade. Then evaluate the effectiveness of that course of action.

Glasser provides **assessment questions** that you can ask to make your assessment of underlying needs.


- What do they WANT?
- What DIRECTION are they going?
- Are their actions taking them in the right direction at the right speed? EVALUATE
- Propose a PLAN.

Effective observers can spot those needs and offer ideas to meet the needs in subtle ways in order to persuade key players. The practice is more important than the accuracy, especially at the start. Strong reflection and minor adjustments over time will refine your accuracy.

#### Level 4 - predicting outcomes

- How will this likely play out and why?
- What impact will that have on each of the individuals involved?
- What impact will that have on the organization?

In predicting the future you will always be wrong. Like assessing needs, the practice is more important than the accuracy. It's developing a muscle that will grow stronger with exercise.



The final step in all skill development is to review results, make tweaks and practice again. In her TED Talk, Dolly Chugh<sup>6</sup> shares that "At any given moment, 11 million pieces of information are coming into your mind. Eleven million. And only 40 of them are being processed consciously."<sup>7</sup>

It's so easy to feel overwhelmed. Using these specific tactics, you can refine your skills and ensure you are processing the most important and effective 40 pieces of information at any given time.

Assess and seek out feedback on the progress you are making with developing the **6 hidden keys of adding constant value:**

- Awareness
- Attention to detail
- Insight
- Emotional control
- Prediction
- Improvement

Assuming you have the basics covered - you're competent, honest, trustworthy, and can communicate effectively - these six hidden keys will give you a strong advantage to outsmart, outwork, and outlast your peers.

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<sup>6</sup> Chugh, Dolly. "How to Let Go of Being a "good" Person -- and Become a Better Person." TED. Accessed May 03, 2019. [https://www.ted.com/talks/dolly\\_chugh\\_how\\_to\\_let\\_go\\_of\\_being\\_a\\_good\\_person\\_and\\_become\\_a\\_better\\_person?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/dolly_chugh_how_to_let_go_of_being_a_good_person_and_become_a_better_person?language=en).

<sup>7</sup> Manfred Zimmerman (1986), "Neurophysiology of Sensory Systems", *Fundamentals of Sensory Physiology*, ed. Robert F. Schmidt: pp. 68–116