

# Mental Models: The Key to Making Reality-Based Decisions

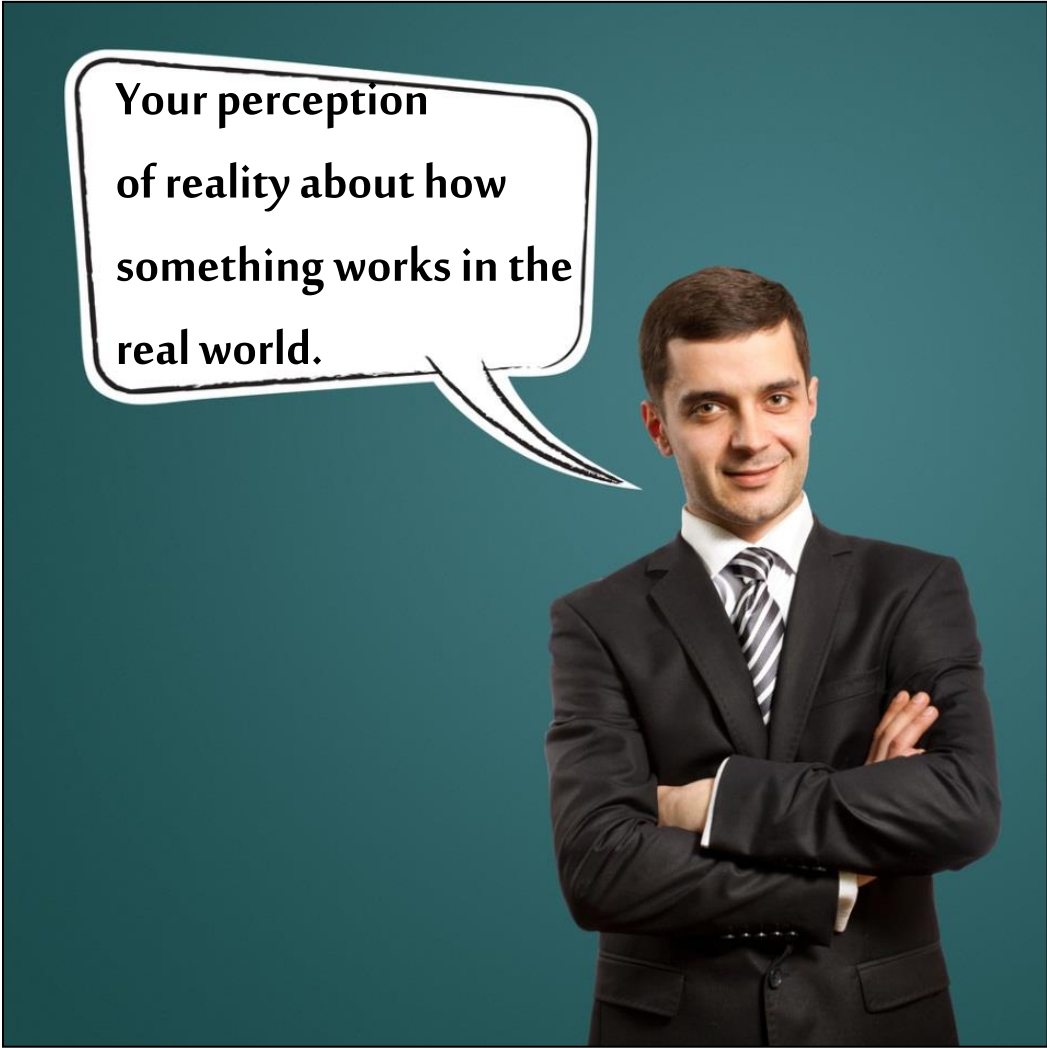
**ND Community Action Partnership  
September 14, 2022**

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TrainND

# Course Objectives

- Define mental models and describe how they influence the workplace.
- Identify your own mental models.
- Recognize the assumptions in your mental models.
- Reveal hidden assumptions.
- Avoid typical mental mistakes.
- Implement strategies to adjust inaccurate mental models.

# Definition of a Mental Model

A man in a dark suit, white shirt, and striped tie stands with his arms crossed against a teal background. A white speech bubble with a black outline is positioned to his left, containing text.

Your perception  
of reality about how  
something works in the  
real world.

*“You will  
always define  
events in a  
manner which  
will validate  
your  
agreement  
with reality.”*

—Steve Maraboli

# Benefits and Drawbacks

*+*

Serve as information filter

Make you more efficient at processing information

Predict behaviors, decisions and actions

Eliminate internal confusion

Simplify complicated strategies

*-*

Not always based on facts

Blind you to ideas that challenge deeply held beliefs

Divert your attention from important cues

Not always accurate when you generalize

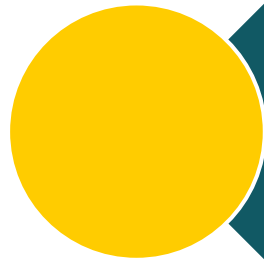
May limit you to familiar ways of thinking

# What Do You Predict Will Happen?

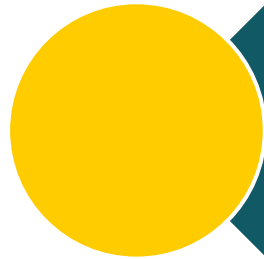


- Established mental model: Hand will burn
- Hand will not burn (induction cooktop)

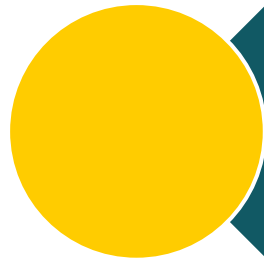
# Origins of Mental Models



Influence of  
others



Personal  
experience



Rewards and  
incentives

# Comparing Mental Models

Reading  
requires a  
physical book

Fine dining  
happens  
sitting down

High quality  
requires a  
local agent

Reading can take  
place in audio,  
digital, and hard  
copy formats

Gourmet food  
can be created  
in a truck

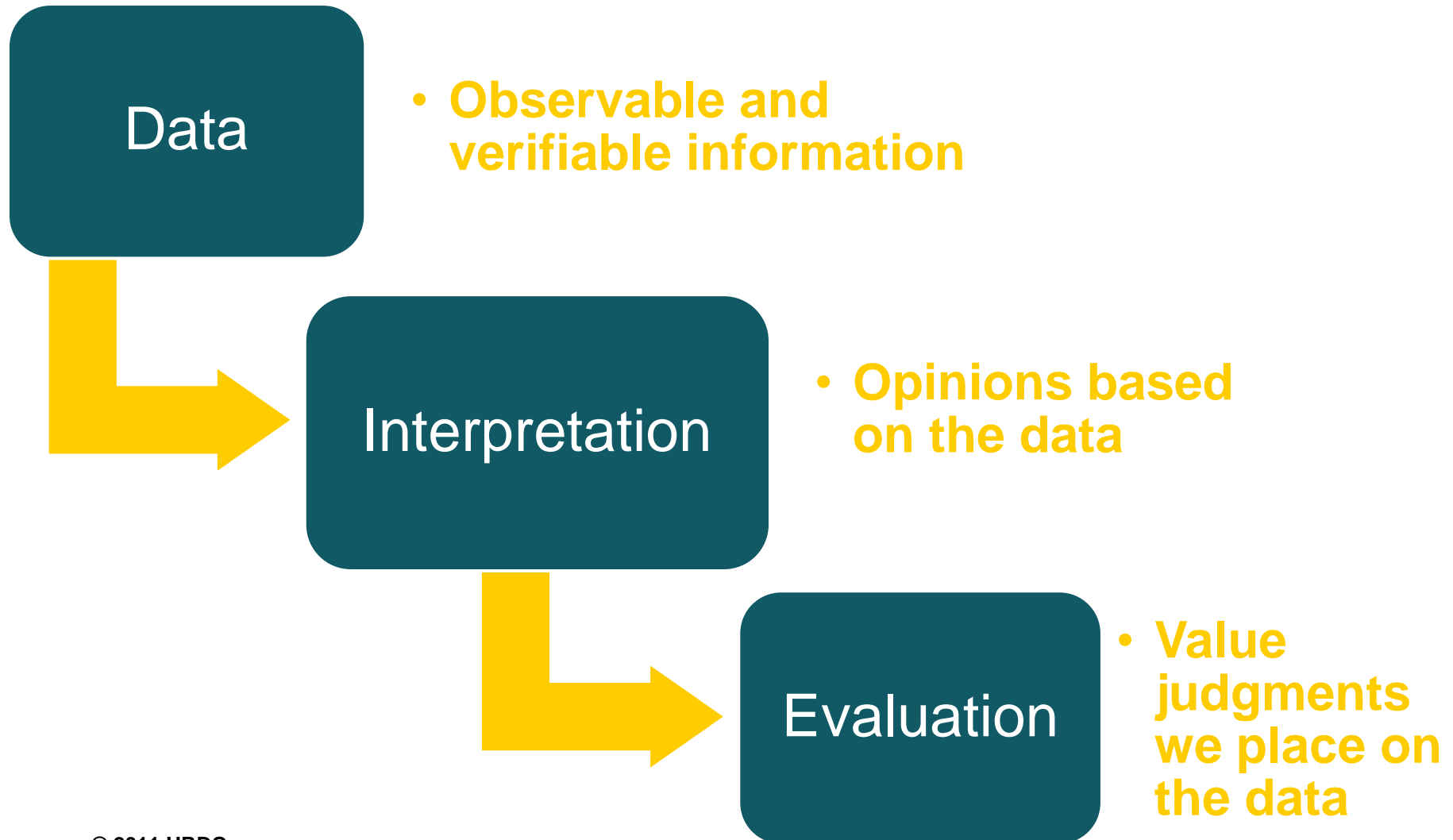
High quality is  
achievable  
online

# Companies That Adjusted Their Mental Models





# Separate Facts from Opinions



# Clarify Assumptions

- What are my assumptions?
- What are your assumptions?
- What do we really know and what are we assuming?



# Reveal Hidden Assumptions



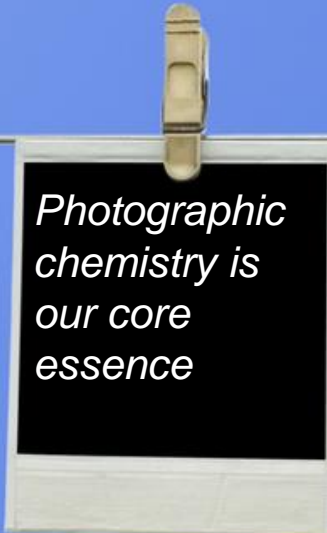
- What do you believe that others do not?
- What things in your daily life do you take as a matter of fact?
- How do you explain the actions and decisions of others?
- How do you predict what others are going to do?

# Case Study: Polaroid

Mistaken assumptions



*Customers  
will always  
want hard  
copies of  
their images*



*Photographic  
chemistry is  
our core  
essence*



*Digital  
photography  
isn't viable  
because it  
doesn't  
involve film*

# Assumption Traps



- Noticing what supports your mental model and ignoring what doesn't
- Remaining attached to what made you successful
- Not trying what you believe is bad or impossible
- Focusing on current situation, not anticipating

# Be Willing to Change

- What would happen if you didn't change your mental model?
- How important is changing your mental model to the success of the organization?



# Open Your Mind



- Tune in
- Look for opportunities
- Challenge yourself

# Silos vs. Systems Thinking





# Appreciative Inquiry

“The glass  
isn't half  
empty; it's  
half full.”

~~PROBLEM~~  
OPPORTUNITY

# Answers

1.  $IX + I = X$

2. Top row

3. Bake

4. 

# Creative Swiping



- Do different things in the same way



- Do the same thing in different ways



- Do different things in different ways

# Creating New Mental Models



# Questions



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# Additional Sessions with Carla:

- **True Colors**

This interactive, entertaining and easy way to remember personality trait preferences will provide your employees with new tools to understand and appreciate themselves, others and your clients more fully. Knowing each other's True-Colors can help build teamwork and communication skills within your company.

- **Teambuilding**

Organizations hire individuals, but almost all employees work in one or more teams. This session is designed to increase team productivity. Overall outcomes are to create an atmosphere where cooperation takes the center stage, individuals learn about each other's problem-solving strengths, promote ownership of outcomes, and increase communication of team members.

- **Effective Communication Skills**

Communication can be considered one of the building blocks of our society. It is what allows people to connect daily through the sharing of knowledge, thoughts, feelings and wants. Utilizing effective communication is a must-have skill for any business professional. Knowing how to listen well and communicate clearly helps individuals express themselves efficiently and effectively in the workplace. This Effective Communication Skills session aims to help develop individual communication strengths and grab techniques to add into existing communication skillsets.

- This workshop will cover:
  - The importance of effective communication at work
  - Communication skills for the workplace that everyone should master
  - Activities that improve communication in the workplace

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Published by HRDQ

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