# ??????? How Competent Are You???????

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| **Date** | 2012-04-06 00:55:55 |
| **Categories** | General |

*"If you don't understand , just ask a question" , says the instructor."* In a case like this, not understanding can also restrict the ability to ask the appropriate questions.  When we are aware we don't know what we don't know, we are **unconsciously incompetent**.  You want to learn, but do not yet have the skills to assert yourself.    There is the situation where we know what we don't know.  You may be certain of the facts about a recent meeting you have been part of, but you know you don't know what other integrated team members are thinking. We are then **consciously incompetent**.  You may be asked to preside over a meeting or make a presentation that you are well equipped to handle.  We can say you are **consciously competent**.  Once you have mastered a task such as working with technical equipment or as simple as driving a car, you become unaware that you have the ability.  It becomes second nature to you.  You are then characterized as being **unconsciously competent**.  At this point we don't know what we know. Being aware of the different stages of competencies as a teacher, mentor, leader, etc. will give you the added empathy for those who may require a little more instruction or some more time to acclimate to a new environment or new position within a company.  As each stage of learning takes place, it is often very rewarding to the learner and important for the learner to feel acknowledged for a job well done.  After all, we all had to start somewhere.  Those who had leadership from leaders with true presence were also motivated to go that extra mile once they established themselves as competent. For more information refer to: The Empathetic Communicator by W.S. Howell My own experience lately:       [](http://uniquepathways.websitehabitat.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2012/04/Iz_Cello6005.jpg)    I have enjoyed going to concerts and vicariously enjoying cello music.  The time had come when I decided to be a participant and thus master the playing of the cello for my own enjoyment.  Less than two months ago, I realized my lack of skill-**consciously incompetent**.  After 8 lessons, somehow I had a very different experience when I picked up the bow and just started  to play a few notes.  It was a thrilling experience.  I had crossed the line.  I went from not knowing anything, to knowing what I knew and didn't know, and then finally for just a while though, I was beginning to be **unconsciously competent**. It takes a lot of practice to stay in the unconsciously competent stage where all I do will be relatively done with less thought and more action.  I recommend everyone tries to do something different, whether it is learning to play an instrument, learning to dance, playing golf, etc.  You, as a leader will realize the stages you will go through and be more empathetic to those who have been challenged to do a new task under your leadership.