

# TRANSFORMATIVE

## THE UPDATE EXERCISE EXPLAINED

*"A coach is someone who tells you what you don't want to hear, who has you see what you don't want to see, so you can be who you have always known you could be."*

– Dallas Cowboys coach, Tom Landry

This sheet is based on work that I've been doing for the past 8 years helping forums, and individuals focus their lives and achieve transformational growth.

There are two aspects to this focus and growth:

The **preparation** increases your self-awareness and, over time, enables you to focus on what matters in life. When you do this, you experience a shift in your life. It allows you to live intentionally rather than haphazardly. It provides a clear focus on where you're going and why.

The **sharing** creates a deep and meaningful conversation and connection. It instantly takes us beyond cocktail party chatter and allows those whom you trust and care about to truly know you. This deep understanding enables them to help you on your path, and for you to help them.

It will only work to the extent that you're willing to take some risk.

### Meaning Rich vs. Content Rich.

Your time is precious. Frankly, if you are going to your forum meeting to discuss the 90%, you are soon going to get bored, feel like you aren't getting enough value out of the time that you have to make to the forum, and start to question your commitment.

A fun take away is that the 5% Update form can also be used with families and also modified to use at work.

If you're interested in getting the most out of the exercise, filling out the sheet takes deep thought and a real time investment.

### There are three columns:

**1) The Event** - in this case perhaps the life change since we last saw each other. What is the single most significant change in your life (a high and a low) in each of these categories? This needs to be edited down to *one or two sentences*, which summarize the event. You'll tell us the rest of the details over dinner. Please don't get lost in the story here. The tendency is to think that we need more details and background story to understand. We don't. We need less. We need it edited so we can understand what you see as the most important feature and not to try to figure it out ourselves.

**Notes:** *Edit, edit, edit. Think of advertising copy or a marketing piece. Is it long and detailed? Probably not. Why? Because that's the fastest way to lose people! Keep it short and completely salient. Figure out the core action and the core significance. Everything else is just details for me to get mired and lost in. This process makes you focus on what really matters to you and why.*

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*It forces you to strip away all the excess and see straight to the core of things.*

**2) The Significance** - this is the most important column. Why does this matter to you with regard to your highest values, deepest fears, vulnerabilities, greatest dreams, etc. It takes time to reflect on this. Keep asking yourself, "Why does that matter to me? What does it mean to me? Why does it matter in the entire scheme of my life? What does this event represent to me?"

Nothing is obvious. We don't know why making 5 million dollars is significant to YOU unless you tell us. Have you felt restricted in life before and does this signify freedom to you? Have you felt that you had something to prove - to yourself, to someone else, and does this accomplish that? Do you feel validated now? Is achievement the way that you buy love or independence?

We all see things through very different lenses.

*The more you see and understand your own lens, your beliefs, hopes, dreams, fears, values etc., the greater mastery you have over your life.*

*The more clearly that you share what matters to you and why, the deeper those close to you can truly know you.*

This is the piece of the exercise that takes the most thought to prepare, and the most courage to share. Make this rich in meaning as opposed to rich in detail.

**Notes:** *When you tell me why it matters to you – your perspective – that tells me so much more than all the minute details of the situation do. It's amazing how few details you really need to get your point across. Think of this like a Japanese Brushstroke painting – a few strokes will give you the whole picture – perfectly.*

**3) Feelings** - strive to capture four words here. If an event is significant, there are both positive and negative emotions associated with it. Look for both.

Look closely at the Feelings and Significance columns to make sure they are distinct and separate.

**Essential:** You have ONLY THREE minutes to read through the sheet and to share it with the group. The purpose of having only three minutes is that it forces you to focus and to EDIT, to get to the heart of things. It's easy to ramble. It requires much less thought and prep on your part, but it makes it much harder for the listener to understand. There's a good reason some of the most famous speeches in history are short.

*"If you want me to speak for two minutes, it will take me three weeks of preparation. If you want me to speak for thirty minutes, it will take me a week to prepare. If you want me to speak for an hour, I am ready now."*

– Winston Churchill

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Please spend as much time as you possibly can looking at the form and filling it out to make it worthwhile, for yourself if for no one else.

Here are a couple of samples to get you thinking:

## Family

### ***Weak:***

We had a family vacation to the beach last week. It was so great to spend time with everyone there. We had so much fun. My mom just kept getting on my nerves though, harping on me about every detail and asking when I can move closer to her. I really love her but she gets on my nerves. Finally I lost my temper and told her to leave me alone in a really loud voice. It put me in a bad mood but other than that everything was great.

### ***Strong:***

I lost my temper with my mom and raised my voice. The significance is that I feel guilty as it is about not spending as much time with her as she'd like. I feel like I don't know how to manage my business, family, and personal time. I feel so disappointed in myself for reacting to her that way, and overwhelmed in managing my priorities.

*Notes – the difference is that the strong version left out a lot of detail. It's great to hear about the family vacation – but we can get that socially – it's not the salient piece here. The strong update focuses on the issues, not the story. The heart of the matter and what is deeply going on within me.*

## Business

### ***Weak:***

I'm about to go on vacation – finally – my first all year. At the end of the day my new PA walks in and gives me notice. I spent three months getting her up to speed, having the other girl who was leaving training her and everything. I don't even know half of what she does. Trying to find someone is such a pain, and especially when I'll be gone for a week! I'll be spending my vacation looking at the resumes coming in. I'm so pissed!

### ***Strong:***

My new PA quit at the worst possible time. The significance is that it's making me question whether I'm really difficult to work with. I'm feeling unsure of myself and anxious.

Here the weaker version is all about the external of what's going on. The strong version shows self-reflection and the internal aspect. It takes much more honesty and courage to admit this.

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## **Mirroring:**

Reflect back what was said. Use the presenter's own words. No interpretation, no conversation.

## **Group Effort**

**Notes:** *You may have heard of this in other places. It's from the Native Americans. Steven Covey has written about using this technique to foster increased communication in the work place. It's an excellent technique for conflict resolution and also works in any situation to make people feel heard and seen.*

For those not familiar with it, Mirroring is repeating back what the presenter has said, using their own words, without interpretation, comments, or judgments, whether positive or negative. Remember that the same event can have completely different significance to different people. Be aware of this and be sure to not assume its significance to someone else.

This serves to keep the listeners completely focused, and it gives the presenter the gift of knowing they've been truly heard. It also helps to identify deep possible presentation topics.

Now let's say that you hear the person use the same adjective, "fearful," describing three of the events that are on their update. Or, let's say that you hear them say that they were 'disappointed in themselves' at the way that they handled three different situations. This is also something that you may point out in the mirroring section – again using their words, prefacing it with "I heard you say..."

The benefit of this is that sometimes we can see patterns from the outside that is not obvious to the presenter.

If we are listening with all of our senses, we may also mirror back something like, "I heard your voice crack when you described losing that deal/your mother's illness. It sounded like there was a lot of emotion behind that for you. I saw you grimace/ I saw a huge smile of joy/ I saw you tear up." This also can help the presenter realize where strong emotions lie and identify powerful parking lot topics.

The entire forum does this collectively, so as soon as one thing is covered (the Event, Significance, and Feelings) then it need not be repeated by another forum member. The idea is to collectively cover everything. It's fine to take notes while listening to help this process.

**Notes:** *when you have heard something in the update that seems especially significant or powerful to you – either because of the strong words used, a strong emotion that you noticed, or a recurrent theme – always present it as a question: "I heard you say that you were distraught because of your two key people leaving and how personally you take it whenever an employee leaves. I wonder if there is a presentation topic there?" This is not a starting point to a conversation – it is simply a yes or no. If it's a yes, the Parking Lot attendant records it. If it's a no, we just keep moving.*

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