

The Scramble | Solving Problems with the 4D^s

The 4D^s approach (Dumb, Dangerous, Difficult, Different) for operational learning provides a framework for identifying and mitigating workplace hazards.

Applying the 4D^s approach helps leaders to recognize operational weak signals, and value the importance of learning from everyday work. All while fostering a positive work environment that encourages openness, learning and proactive problem-solving.

This guide is a companion to The Scramble | Solving Problems with the 4D^s video, helping you facilitate meaningful, constructive conversations with your teams to improve workplace operations and safety.

Note these key concepts in the video:

Key 01: Listen (don't talk!)

Practice active listening. The goal is to create an inclusive and positive psychosocial work environment where workers can share their experiences in a safe space where all voices are heard.

Key 02: Learn (don't judge!)

Seek to understand what occurs during everyday work. The 4D^s are designed to surface "weak signals" or issues that may not be immediately visible but impact daily operations.

Key 03: Lead (don't just manage!)

Use your position and influence to improve the organizational capacity to achieve reliable and resilient performance through learning and/or improving work design.

Create a supportive work environment and encourage open communication about work by following up with participants and keeping them updated as much as possible.

01 Prepare

- Think about where and when you might want to have a 4D conversation to learn more about 'work as done' from those who do it every day.
- Reflect on the Key Concepts and remember the importance of trust in having effective leadership engagements.
- Be prepared to act on what you learn by improving work design (where possible) and sharing what was learned with your organization.

02

Have a conversation within your organization

Start by discussing: "Where are the opportunities to use a 4D^s approach for operational learning?"

- **Dumb:** What situations, tasks, processes, or controls don't make sense or frustrate you in doing your work?
- **Dangerous:** What risky or challenging tasks, processes, or situations happen in your work?
- **Difficult:** What are the unusual, difficult, or demanding situations, tasks, processes, or controls in your work?
- **Different:** What changing or surprising situations, activities or tasks happen in your work?

03

Review & Follow-Up

Share the story of your experience.

Discuss with your peers:

- How could the 4D^s approach help us identify weak signals and improve our workplace?
- How does your role in the workplace impact how you would use 4D^s?
- Consider incorporating conversations based on the 4D^s framework elsewhere in your daily operations.



For more information, including the infographic [Learning From Everyday Work](#) to provide more clarity to the 4D^s approach, visit the [Human and Organizational Performance Program page](#).