

Improvement Kata Handbook

By Mike Rother

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Roles and Structure for Daily Practice

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ABOUT THIS PROTOTYPE VERSION OF THE IMPROVEMENT KATA HANDBOOK

While we develop and test the contents of the Improvement Kata Handbook, it's beta version will be available online. **Use the Handbook to help you apply, teach and internalize the scientific patterns of the Improvement Kata and the Coaching Kata, through structured practice routines.**

This beta version is provided for sharing things we're learning... to accelerate our collective learning about deliberate practice of structured routines as a means of developing the skills and habits of scientific thinking in any organization.

The beta version is updated periodically.
Check the version number on the cover.



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These materials are intended to support persons who are teaching, practicing or interested in the Improvement Kata & Coaching Kata.

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PREFACE

How Do You Manage for Improvement, Adaptiveness and Innovation?



- ☐ How can we best prepare an organization for the future when we don't know what the future will bring?
- ☐ How can we get more comfortable with new challenges and successfully navigate the grey zone between here and there?
- ☐ How do you develop the skill of everyone in the organization to establish strategically-aligned goals and work toward them scientifically?
- ☐ How do you sustain this?

This Handbook provides an approach for answering these questions. You can use the approach presented here to develop a 21st Century management system, which makes your organization more capable of meeting challenges.

DELIBERATELY DEVELOPING A TEAM'S OR AN ORGANIZATION'S SKILL AND CULTURE

**This Handbook is about a scientific pattern
+ practice routines to operationalize that pattern**

Consider the following:

- ▶ **The people in every organization acquire unconscious habits of thinking and acting. Those habits constitute the basis of the organization's culture.**
- ▶ **All managers are teachers, whether consciously or not. With their everyday words and actions managers teach their people a mindset and approach, which determines the organization's capability.**

For these reasons it makes sense to ask:

- > What pattern of thought and action do we want to be teaching?***
- > What routines do we practice and reinforce every day in our organization to make that pattern a reality?***

Practicing the routines in this Handbook develops systematic and scientific habits for improving, adapting and innovating.

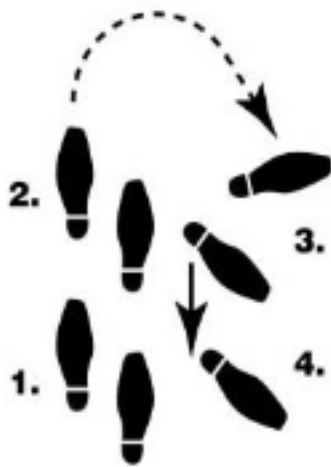
“Pattern”
(a dance)



“Practice Routine”
(dance steps)

This Handbook is about developing new skills and habits -- just as athletes and musicians do -- that make you and your team more effective at achieving goals and meeting challenges. Think of this as a handbook of dance steps for beginners to practice.

There is one overall **pattern (the dance, or skill, you’re trying to learn and teach)**, called the “Improvement Kata.” It’s a systematic, scientific way of thinking and acting that can be applied to any goal. The objective is to have everyone in your organization be able to dance this pattern smoothly and confidently, in your organization’s own style.



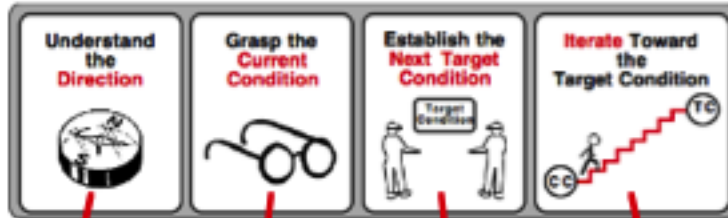
However, just knowing the pattern of the dance is not enough for learning how to dance. This Handbook describes structured **practice routines (the dance steps)** for beginners to start with so they can learn the Improvement Kata pattern.

This Handbook also describes a practice routine for teaching the Improvement Kata pattern. It’s called the **“Coaching Kata.”**

THE IMPROVEMENT KATA PATTERN AND ITS PRACTICE ROUTINES

PART I, II, III of this Handbook

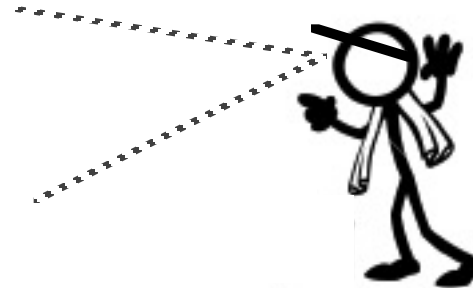
The IMPROVEMENT KATA PATTERN (the scientific approach)



These are individual **PRACTICE ROUTINES** inside each step of the Improvement Kata, to develop the skill of the scientific pattern of thinking and acting
(= HANDBOOK PART II)

This is the overall pattern of thinking and acting we want to learn. It's a scientific, universal meta skill that can be applied in all walks of life.

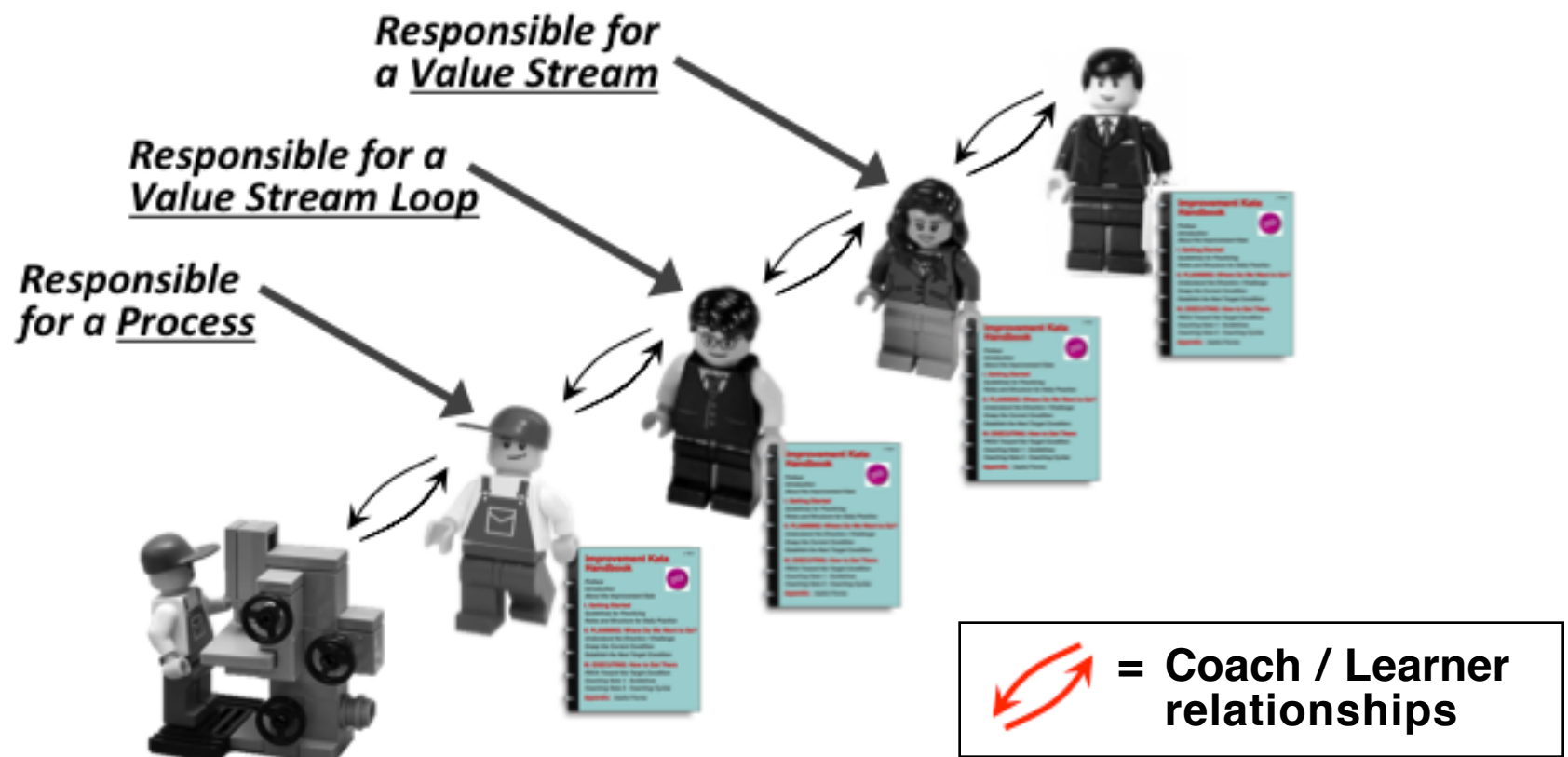
(Covered in HANDBOOK PART I)



This is the **COACHING KATA**, a practice routine for learning how to teach specifically the Improvement Kata pattern
(= HANDBOOK PART III)

THE HANDBOOK'S INSTRUCTIONS APPLY AT EVERY LEVEL IN AN ORGANIZATION

Every Coach and Learner uses the same Handbook because everyone in the organization can use the same method of working. It's a *meta skill*. Each level practices the same routines, even though the content of what's being worked on differs from area to area and level to level.



WHAT THIS HANDBOOK SHOWS YOU

How to apply, practice and teach the Improvement Kata pattern so that it becomes a habit of thinking and acting

- ▶ **How to use and operationalize a scientific pattern that is common to most modern management concepts.**
- ▶ **How to use the Improvement Kata practice routines on real processes to improve, adapt and innovate, by walking you through them step-by-step.**
- ▶ **How to operate a daily Coach <--> Learner teaching routine that integrates practice of the Improvement Kata into daily work and, over time, into people's mindset and a team or organization's culture.**
- ▶ **How to get more comfortable with the uncertain path that's inherent in striving for challenging goals.**
- ▶ **How to align team efforts and make any team successful in achieving goals and meeting challenges.**
- ▶ **How to sustain improvement, adaptiveness and innovation by integrating it into daily management.**



WHO THIS HANDBOOK IS FOR



The Improvement Kata Handbook is for anyone who wants to learn and master achieving effective, sustainable continuous improvement, adaptiveness and innovation in an integrated, systematic, scientific way.

One user is the **Learner**, i.e., anyone who wants to apply, practice and become proficient in the pattern of the Improvement Kata.

The other user is the **Coach**, i.e., anyone who manages people. Once you've internalized the Improvement Kata pattern yourself, this book helps you teach the pattern to others. The goal is to embed the Improvement Kata into the daily work of managers, who are the day-to-day teachers in any organization.

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II. PRACTICE ROUTINES FOR THE IK

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Appendix: Useful Forms



The 4 Chapters on how to practice the **IMPROVEMENT KATA** speak to anyone who wants to be a Learner of the Improvement Kata pattern.

The 2 Chapters about the **COACHING KATA** speak to the Coach who's teaching the Improvement Kata pattern to a Learner.

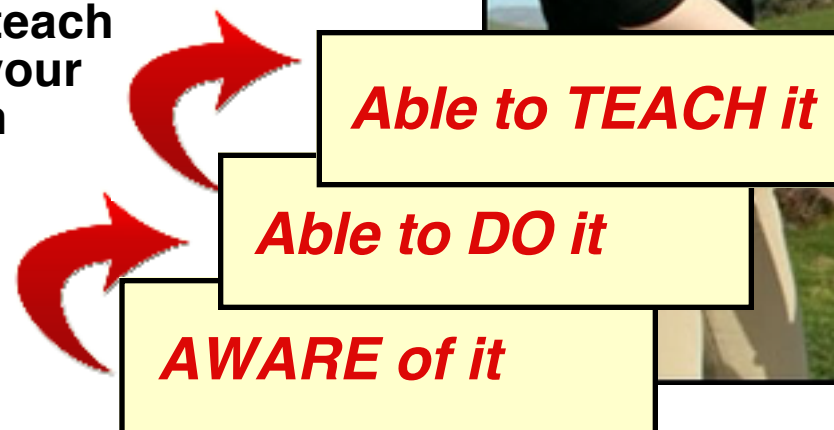
TWO PURPOSES FOR THIS HANDBOOK

1) *An Application Guide:*

To be a reference for how to apply the pattern of the Improvement Kata.

2) *A Practice Guide:*

To as quickly and effectively as possible make you proficient enough to coach the Improvement Kata pattern, enabling you to teach and deploy it in your organization with minimal reliance on outside expertise.



Mike Rother

My goal with the Improvement Kata Handbook is to evolve and codify the Improvement Kata and Coaching Kata practice routines to the point that they can be used by anyone; to show that improvement, adaptation and innovation are a skill that can be practiced and taught in any organization.

Contributors

I'm grateful to my colleagues Bill Costantino, Gerd Aulinger and Beth Carrington, who are fellow experimenters in working to practice and evolve the routines in this Handbook. Many thanks also to the following persons who have contributed to the Handbook.

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