

**ESI Trainers Forum 2026**

**Key Aspects for Success in Technical Training**

Presented by **Ian Harper (STEM:NZ)**  
Systematic Training Education and Motivation

*Engage Minds • Build Competence • Ensure Wellbeing*

**Ian J. Harper (STEM:NZ)**  
Phone 0274574744 email [stem@xtra.co.nz](mailto:stem@xtra.co.nz) Website [www.stemnz.co.nz](http://www.stemnz.co.nz)  
*"If it's to do with Motivation, it's what we do"*

1

## Introduction – Ian Harper

- Born in Reading, Berkshire, England
- Trained as a Psychiatric Nurse
- Came to Whanganui 36 years ago
- Worked as a psychiatric nurse for 18 months
- Trainer for Manawatu/Whanganui AHB for 3 years
- Human resources for a year
- Started my training/consultancy business 30 years ago (STEM:NZ Systematic Training, Education and Motivation)
- Worked with many different organisations in many industries
- Currently doing STEM:NZ work as well as contract work for various training providers

2

## Contents

- Create conversations which may be revisited in the sessions that follow over these 2 days.
- We will look at a slightly 'alternative' (modern), forward thinking perspective, to traditional ideas.
- Including Action Empathy, Power skills, Trainee wellbeing and Co-design.
- You can reflect on your current practice and decide if they need to keep doing some things you currently do, stop doing some things that you do and start doing some alternative things.

3

## Perspective Questions



- How it was . . .
- How it is . . .
- How it will be . . .
- How many of you were involved in training others before computers were widely available?
- What have you seen and adapted to in your practice?
- What are some of the 'behaviours' and 'attitudes' from years ago are no longer valid or acceptable?



4

## Training Programmes or Learning Activities or Both?

- Learning and training are not the same thing
- Both starts with understanding people
- A person-centred approach focussing on listening and being present, rather than just solving problems
- Includes awareness of the cognitive, emotional, and (workplace) needs
- A strategy, aligning learner goals, with operational realities
- Clear measures to track progress



5

## ACTION EMPATHY



Being aware of the trainees situation and taking appropriate action to improve it

It means understanding how learning feels, not just how it functions

Seeing the learning experience through their eyes

Responding in ways that builds trust, confidence, and capability.

6

## A Question for you



Each table to identify 3 key aspects of what you need to be aware of, in relation to understanding your trainees

**Avoid the cliches**

**EMPATHY**

**Later we will look at solutions**

7

## Examples of Empathy

### Awareness of:

- Emotional states
- Nervousness
- Fear of failure, or impostor feelings
- Diverse backgrounds and starting points
- Levels of experience, education, culture, and learning history.
- Avoiding assumptions
- Cognitive load
- Confusion due to overload
- Vulnerability in trainees
- Reluctance to admit what they don't know something.
- Motivational dips
- Effects of power dynamics

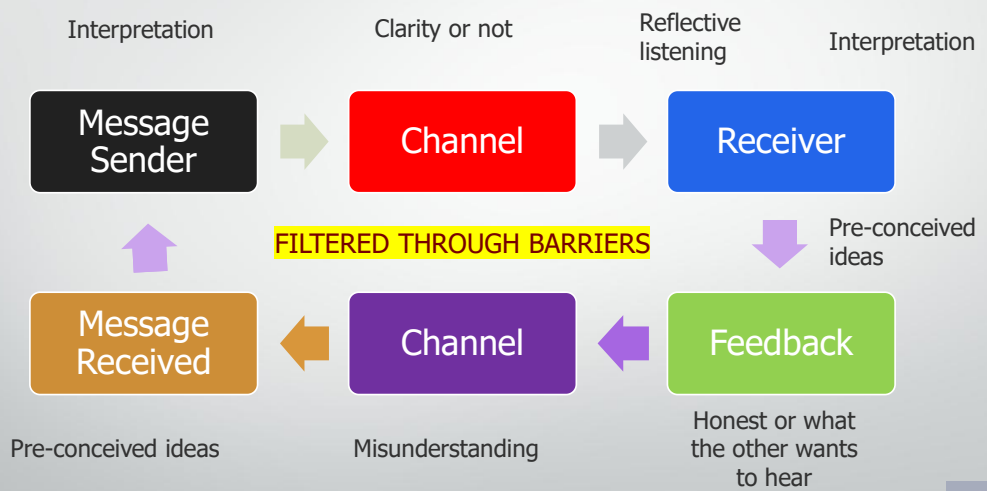
8

**If a problem has no clear answer, your job is to be sure that the advice you give does not end up increasing the problem**



9

## Communication and Understanding



**What can interfere with this process?**



10

## Listening Exercise – No Talking

Either write down the answer or write down a question you can ask to clarify your understanding.



- How many animals of each species did Moses take on the ark?

None, it was Noah

**Possible question:** "Did you mean Noah or Moses?"

- Which country has a 4th of July, USA or Britain?

Both

**Possible question:** "Did you mean the date or the celebration?"

- How many letters in the alphabet?

11

**Possible question:** "Which alphabet?"

- What was the Prime Ministers name in 2015?

Christopher Luxon

**Possible question:** "Did you mean who was the prime minister?"

*Asking clarifying questions helps with understanding the other persons meaning*

11



## Stop Being Surprised by the Obvious!

Everyone knows what it's like to be 'overwhelmed' so don't be surprised when trainees express this

12

**"You can't park 9 cars if you only have 4 spaces"**

**What does that mean?**

- ① **Filter**
- ② **Prioritise**
- ③ **Queue**



When input exceeds working-memory capacity, the brain prioritises, filters, and queues information so only a few items are held at once.

13

**This is similar to a computers RAM – when its full, it slows, stalls or crashes.**



**WORKING MEMORY**

*RAM for your brain*



*Limited Space*

Remember



**LONG-TERM STORAGE**

*HARD DRIVE for your mind*



*Vast Capacity*

**What can you do, to help trainees avoid being overloaded?**

**Bear in mind that you get overloaded too!**

14

## The Potential Impact of 'Over-Telling'

What happens when trainers give too much 'instruction'?

### TRAINER



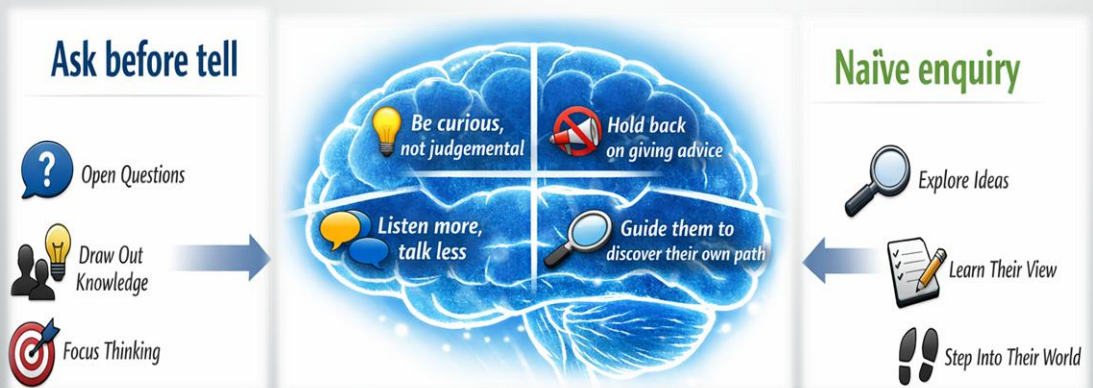
### TRAINEE



15

## Empower not Overpower

What is Naïve enquiry?



16

## What are 'POWER' Skills

- 'Soft' Skills
- Interpersonal Skills
- EQ Skills
- People Skills
- Transferable Skills



**Hard skills make work possible.**

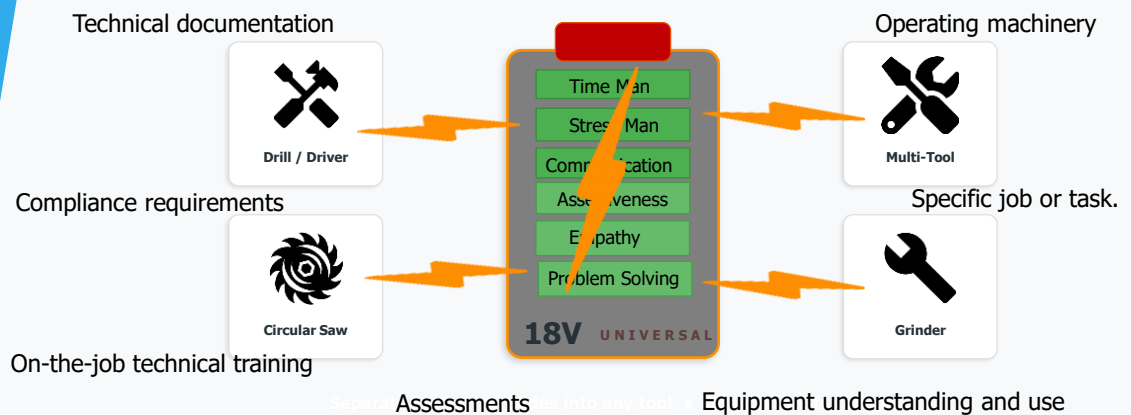
**Power skills make work effective.**

**Both together make work sustainable.**

No matter how good we are at technical skills, we will not be as effective if we lack some of the power skills

17


## Power-Skills are like batteries they need to be charged up to work



**Hard skills and power skills evolve over time, so continuous maintenance and upskilling is essential**

18


### When the battery is flat




- ⚠ Instructions are given, but not taken
- ⚠ Compliance happens, capability doesn't
- ⚠ Mistakes repeat—even after sign-off


### Ways to 'fill' the battery




**ACTION EMPATHY**  
*Challenge & Support*




**Feedback & Coaching**  
*Guidance & Encouragement*






**Self Awareness**  
*Knowing Your Impact*



**Practice & Reflection**  
*Realistic Rehearsal*

19

## Another Question For You



Recall your answers to the key aspects of what you need to be aware of, in relation to understanding how work is for your trainees.

Now identify specific actions that you can do to address them.

EMPATHY

ACTION

Avoid the cliches

20

## Action Empathy Is

1. Using multiple ways to engage and adapting explanations to different levels
2. Not overwhelming trainees and allowing time for processing and reflection
3. Breaking content into manageable chunks
4. Responding constructively to errors
5. Thanking trainees
6. Framing mistakes as learning opportunities
7. Encouraging progress, not just outcomes
8. Reflective listening for checking understanding
9. Taking trainee feedback seriously
10. Adjusting pace or approach
11. Supporting learning struggles and coaching toward improvement
12. Being mindful of tone and body language

21

## Co-Design

Giving learners a sense of purpose, pride, patience, persistence, perspective and passion

- What matters is *what learners pick up*, not what trainers put out.
- It requires empathy.
- Essential for trainee retention, safety, and overall well-being.
- Enhances the trainees ability to succeed academically, professionally, and personally.



22

## Key Points Summary

Training practices continually evolve

We all learn differently - not better, not worse, just differently

Trainers need to adapt and become trainees again

What matters is *what learners pick up*, not what trainers put out

Technical expertise alone does not ensure learning success

"Action Empathy"

Learning is more effective when training is co-designed with trainees

"Power skills" are 'enablers' of technical learning

Use "Ask before tell" and "Naïve enquiry" techniques

23

***"It is wise to keep in mind that neither success nor failure is ever final"***



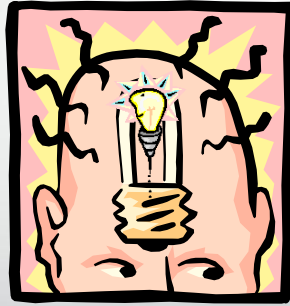
***It is making progress that motivates us the most***

24

The End . . . or “just the beginning?”

**You have put this  
information into your memory**

**Now  
put  
it**



**into  
your  
Work**

**Ian J. Harper (STEM:NZ)**

Phone 0274574744

email [stem@xtra.co.nz](mailto:stem@xtra.co.nz)

Website [www.stemnz.co.nz](http://www.stemnz.co.nz)

*"If it's to do with Motivation, it's what we do"*