

# The Frame Game

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### **Purpose**

The Frame Game is very useful in a business context, although there are situations in private life where it can be applied. It is an especially efficient strategy for someone seeking assistance with time management. It requires a comfortable setting, plus a pen and some paper.

### **Description**

The Frame Game can help people become aware of time wasted, as opposed to time well spent. The game uses a simple drawing to demonstrate how much of their time is spent ‘on-task’ and how much is spent ‘off-task’. The game also demonstrates that the person drawing the frame has the power to change what appears inside and outside of the frame.

For example, if your client operates a service business, it is sometimes difficult for them to put a ‘frame’ around the services they offer. They may want to satisfy their customers at any price and be tempted to do more than what they are paid for. They may also have accepted to provide the service at a discounted fee. They make less money and give more, resulting in burnout.

I was once using the Frame Game strategy with a team of professionals in the property business. One member of the team was spending 100 per cent of her time outside the frame and another 30 per cent of her time inside the frame. It

meant many weekends and late nights at work and by spending so much time outside the frame, she was failing to deliver successful outcomes for the business.

This kind of behaviour results in a decrease in the quality of service provided, an increase in customer complaints and a decrease in income for the business. The objective of the exercise is to make the client realize what he/she is missing out on in terms of income and how much of his/her time and energy is wasted. It demonstrates that a clear, well-defined frame can ensure successful business outcomes.

## **Process**

Give your client a piece of paper with a frame drawn in the centre of the page. The frame borders an ideal situation where the person is doing exactly what he/she is supposed to do: nothing more, nothing less. Now, ask your client to realistically draw their current situation. He/she may draw inside and outside the frame. Anything drawn inside the frame indicates what is supposed to be done, which is all good. Anything drawn outside the frame indicates what is done, but not supposed to be done, which needs consideration.

The frame places a boundary around the services the customer is paying for. Anything that appears outside the frame demonstrates how much more is being delivered and how much more your client will need to do every time to satisfy his/her customer. By wasting time doing things that he/she is not paid to do, he/she will most likely miss or forget to do the things he/she is supposed to do and provide a lower level of service, which may result in customer complaints.

At this point, you can ask your client to draw another picture (which should only take a few minutes) to demonstrate their understanding of how to ensure that services delivered are only ever those that fit neatly into the frame. Overlaps to the outside do occur, but they should be an exception.

As a coach, you will always focus your attention on what is happening on the outside of your client's frame, because fixing the outside will automatically fix the inside. If your client is spending less time doing unnecessary things, he/she

will have more time to do what is expected, and more time and energy to focus correctly.

At the beginning of each session, you can ask your client to re-draw the frame to evidence the progress being made in keeping services delivered inside the frame, and those outside, to a minimum.

### **Pitfalls**

There are no pitfalls to this strategy.