



SCALING

How to use the technique for helping people to change their behaviour or change the status quo

Scaling is a powerful way of measuring how close we are to achieving the desired outcomes of any plan or aspirational goal. Typically, a scale will be introduced in the following way:

"Let's imagine a scale. The scale runs from zero to ten, and ten represents the state of affairs when you have reached your ideal situation or desired outcome. Zero stands for when none of the things that you want are happening. Where are you now?"

The other person will give a figure somewhere along the scale. This being a subjective scale, there does not need to be a concern or preference about which figure is chosen. Suppose they place themselves at 3. This is a useful piece of information. It tells us that the person is already some way along the scale. We can ask, "How come you are at 3, rather than 0, 1 or 2? What are you already doing that's helping?". The person then talks about some of the good things currently happening, which might pleasantly surprise them, given they had come expecting to talk about problems. Depending on the relationship you have established with the person, you might approach this in a playful way - "I thought you had real problems here, how come you can manage a three?". The next question is "What would the next small step up the scale look like?". If they can answer this easily, with some detail, we can follow with "What would you need to do to get to 4?".

What's crucial here is that we are discussing a small incremental step. If the person knew how to get to 10 they'd probably have done it already. So we seek descriptions of small differences that can be appreciated as step changes, and then the actions that might lead to those results.

Similarly, if a person rates themselves 8 on their communication skills, it may be useful to ask them for suggestions as to which other colleagues are 8's, as well as 7's and 9's to help differentiate what attributes are being associated with communicating well. In this way, very powerful insights can be achieved about one's own communication skills.

Scales offer an intuitive logic that's already accessible. Most people find it reasonably easy to establish a scale and they can tell you what various points represent for them. And when we find out what the small changes along the way look like, then we have the 'road map' on how to progress.