

Will/Can Matrix

Understanding the Will/Can

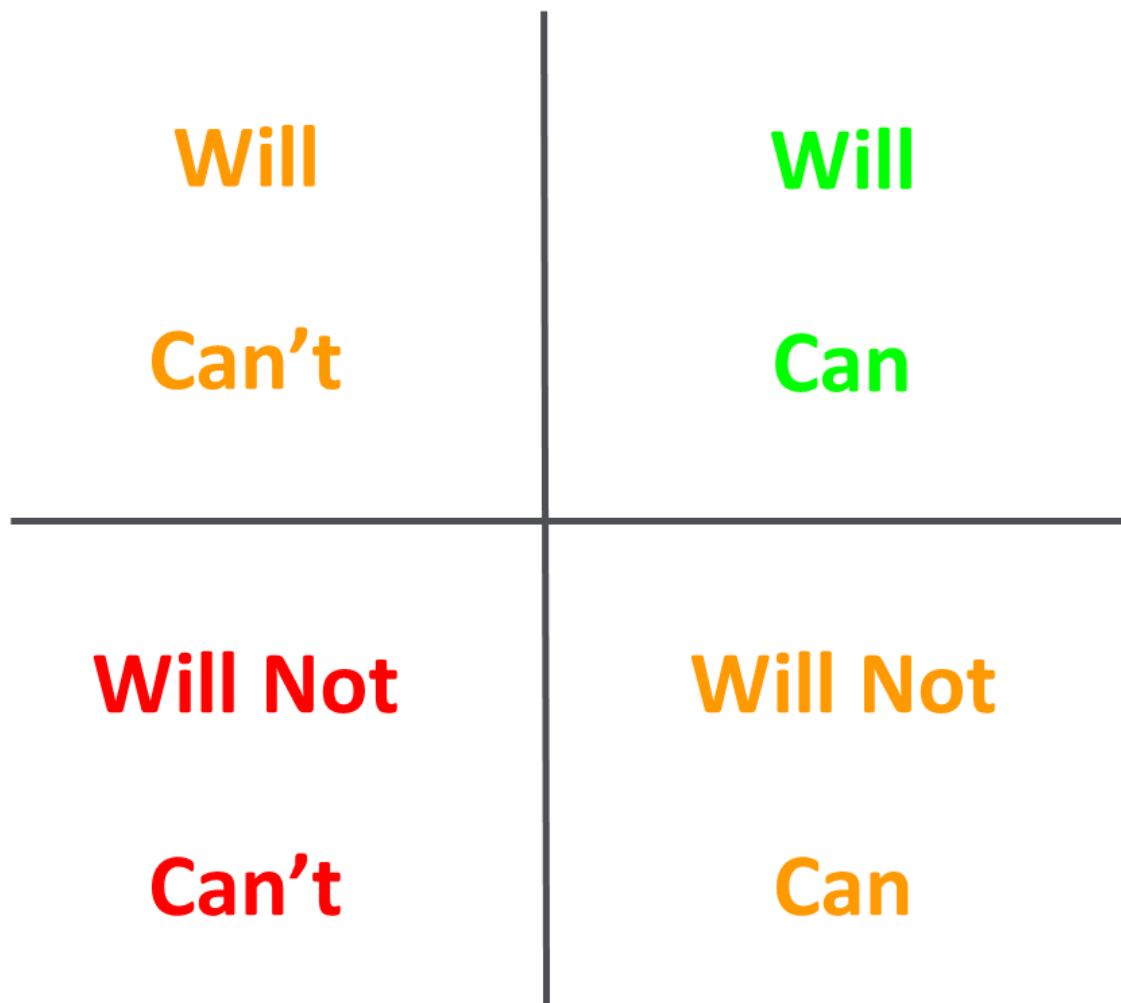
This simple model quickly enables you to understand not only where everyone in your team sits from an overall capability perspective, but also from an attitudinal perspective. This can be really useful in understanding overall team performance, a 'bird's eye' view of one team member in comparison with another.

The 'Will' or 'Will Not' relate to the level of motivation.

The 'Can' or 'Can't' relate to the perceived level of competence and capability.

E.g. why is one team member not performing as you would expect compared to another similarly skilled team member? The Skills Tracker suggest they are fully competent, and yet the task is not being performed at the expected level of competency on a consistent basis. The root cause in this case would probably lie with the 'will' as opposed to the 'skill' or whether they 'can' or 'can't do the task/job.

The Will / Can



Since most coaching techniques rely on the team member's skills and their will to accomplish a goal, it is important to understand how these two aspects work together. This knowledge will help you to tailor your approach with your team to get the best results possible from each individual.

So how do we identify if an employee is exhibiting or feeling a high degree of will? This should be somewhat obvious from how they approach their work. If tasks that are not skill related are of poor quality or their attitude has taken a change recently, you can infer that the individual's motivation has slipped. Utilising the SCORE model will help you to determine the root causes for any changes in behaviour.

The quadrants are easy to understand:

Will (Attitude)

When the team member will do their work to the best of their ability

Will Not (Attitude)

When the team member chooses not to work to the levels of performance required

Can (Competency & Skill)

When the team member is perceived to have the right skills and competencies required to carry out their role

Can't (Competency & Skill)

When the team member is perceived to lack the required level of skills and competencies required to carry out their role

Using the word 'perceived' in relation to capability (can/can't) is deliberate because sometimes we THINK someone is perfectly capable when actually they are not as confident or as skilled as we think. This lack of confidence will often display itself as reluctance which would mean you put them in the will not/can when actually, supported sufficiently they are a will/cannot and require some training to build up their confidence which will result in them moving across to the will/can quadrant.

The other important thing is that everyone doesn't sit in the middle of the boxes. It's a dynamic tool where you can position people in relation to each other i.e.:

- If they are top right, they are highly skilled and highly motivated.
- If they are in the bottom right of the Will/Can, they are highly skilled but actually teetering on dropping into the Will not/Can
- And if there is someone languishing at the bottom right in the Will not/Can, you can guarantee they are hoping to influence that person above them to join their 'negative attitude' club!

Exploring using the Will/Can

Let's take a closer look at each of the quadrants to see how they could be used to support team development and performance on a daily basis.

The Will not/Cans

These are the people in your team that can do the job but for some reason won't!

What label do we often use for these people?

- difficult
- stubborn
- lazy
- negative
- etc.

If you think back to the SCORE tools introduced in the Management Development Workshops, this is actually just a symptom, isn't it?

So, what could be the root cause? Usually team members who fall into this category are unmotivated, unhappy, frustrated, resentful or something similar.

There could be any number of reasons for this, however what we generally do, rather than seeking to understand the cause, is to feel frustrated by the symptom we are seeing. These individuals are seen as obstructive, labeled in some ways as the 'naughty children' who could but won't! It is often helpful to look back historically and see when the decline in motivation began because they certainly wouldn't have begun their role feeling that way. It is usually possible to pinpoint an event or a change in situation as the root cause or the start of the downward spiral.

Once the root cause is identified, you can take action and support the team members in a more focused way, which in turn raises the motivation of your team member ultimately moving them from will/can, potentially via will/cannot dependent upon the circumstances, and eventually into the will/can.

The Will/Cans

These are generally your best performers. Ironically, they are also often the most neglected!

Team managers often find themselves spending a great deal of time with the Will nots and Can'ts. Whilst this is acceptable for a short amount of time, what can happen is the Will Cans end up slipping down towards 'Will Not' because they are not getting the time and attention they need to maintain their momentum and keep them motivated in the Will Can.

If someone is dropping out of the Will/Can it will often be a loss of focus and motivation. Setting new challenging goals or finding opportunities for development – i.e. briefly pushing them over into the Will/Can't can in itself be motivating as they learn new tasks and knowledge.

The bottom line is, Will Cans still need to be nurtured and have a clear sense of focus and career opportunity.

The Will/Can't

These are usually easy to spot and fairly easy to fix – though sometimes it can take a while to move them across to the Will/Can. It will depend on the complexity of the skill they lack. They are usually new starters, or trying a new task, a new job role, new process or equipment etc.

Here (the can'ts) you are identifying are all about gaining knowledge and skill.

The Will Not/Can't

Where the Will Not/Cans are sometimes seen as naughty children, the Will Not/Can'ts are seen as 'problem' children!

Quite often a team manager might consider putting these team members on a Performance Improvement Plan and in worst case scenarios if this doesn't work, exiting them from the business.

What's important before you go down this route is to explore why they are there in that box and a good question to ask is: "have they always been there?" – which is very unlikely as generally people are not demotivated when they start in a job, it happens over time. As with the Will Not/Cans, pinpointing when it happened can really help in identifying the root cause.

People do not come to work to be unhappy or to do a bad job – being a Will Not/Can't is not a happy place to be every day.

If you give them the skills, they may still be a Can't, but will change to a Will because they feel supported and motivated.

And if they find it impossible to move to the Will Can't or Can, moving through the change curve and out the other side, then perhaps the business is no longer the right place for them. Hopefully those cases will be few and far between, but at least they should feel that every option has been explored and they have been supported throughout this difficult process.

Approaches to using the Will/Can

The Will Can helps you to really identify what's going on for every member of your team – If you put someone in one box – a will not or a can't - it's all about how to bridge the gap to the next.

But what can you do to bridge the gap?

By using the Will Can model on a regular basis, you can create a sense of the journey the individual team member is on. By making sure you add the date to the Will Can every time you create it, you can review to see if the actions you have taken have moved them in the right direction. Ultimately your goal is to get everyone in the Will/Can quadrant.

There are a number of approaches:

1. You can use a Will/Can matrix for the whole team to compare motivation and skill, plotting their names or initials in the quadrants and remembering to carefully consider where exactly they sit in the box (don't just put them in the middle). If you are finding this difficult – ask yourself the following questions:
 - Who would I hate to lose from my team? – they will be your high Will/Cans.
 - Who would I be less disappointed about or struggle at times to manage? – they will be those at the bottom of Will/Can or moving into Will Not/Can etc.?
 - Who am I confident I can up-skill given the opportunity to do so? – they will be your Will/Can'ts
2. You can also use the Will/Can to explore a specific aspect of the job role – e.g. where is everyone in relation to dealing with a particular task or type of call/admin etc.?
3. You can also use them as part of a 1:1 – always date them, as it's insightful to chart progression from one month to the next and to quickly spot if someone is heading down from a Will to a Will Not



WILL / CAN'T	WILL / CAN
WILL NOT / CAN	WILL NOT / CAN'T

In summary, the Will Can Matrix is a great tool for you to identify quickly where individuals within your team are sitting. It should form part of your weekly reflection and help you to set actions for team members' development. You can then plan and organise your conversations and actions relating to attitude/motivation and competency by considering the coaching techniques that you should apply based on where the employee falls in the Will/Can coaching model.

A quick guide could be seen by looking at the following summary of the Will/Can always remembering however that root cause MUST be identified in order to motivate a team member who is sitting in the Will Not/Can, and whilst setting expectations will be key for those in the Will Not/Can't, we must still 'seek first to understand' before labeling a team member in this quadrant. Ultimately, it is the Team Manager's and NOT the individual's responsibility to engage, motivate and up-skill their team.

