

12.2 The Five-Stage Growth Path

Figure 12-1 shows how, through a series of steps in a gentle gradient, you can expect the people you are training to grow in stature, competence, and confidence as they build upon the lessons learned at an earlier stage. By the end of the program, they are prepared for any eventuality but at no time are they put through an overwhelming or unhappy experience. Each step is another challenging extension of their capability.

1. Stage One: Desktop Exercise.
2. Stage Two: Walkthrough.
3. Stage Three: Active Testing.
4. Stage Four: Command Post Exercise.
5. Stage Five: Full-Scale Exercise.

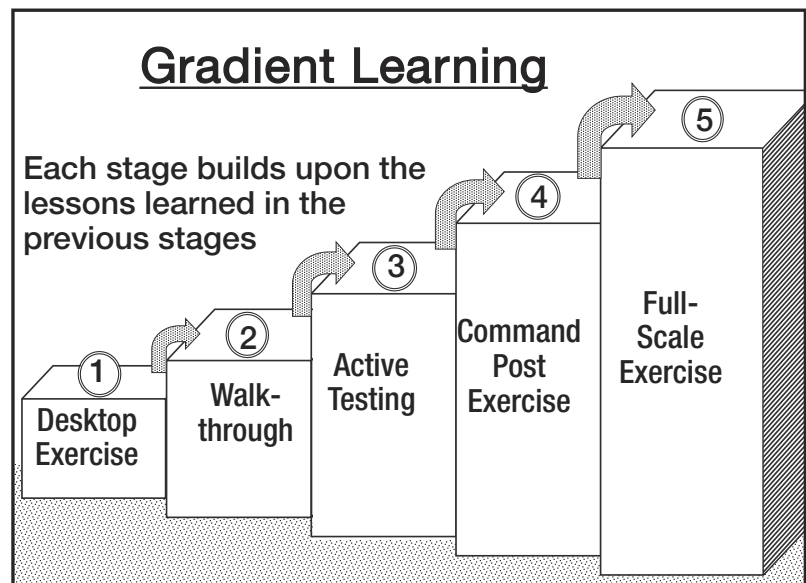


Figure 12-1. Gradient Learning: The Five-Stage Growth Path

12.2.1 Desktop Exercise

Stage One is the *desktop exercise* which is designed to familiarize the exercise participants with the plan and their role within it. A Chinese philosopher once said, “Tell me and I will forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I will understand.” Bear this in mind as you initiate your players into BC.

When you first introduce the plan, allow plenty of time to involve them in discussing the relevance of the plan and its purpose. Without getting into the detail of particular procedures or individual responsibilities, you should encourage them to comment on the layout, logic, and structure of the plan. This will help them to develop their understanding.

The key focus of this first desktop exercise should be to try and spot weaknesses or areas for improvement in the plan as a whole. By looking for faults and limitations, they will become involved and begin to understand what might be expected of them in due course. This is a good time for you to show and explain the gradient learning curve from Figure 12-1. They will find it reassuring to know that the training program will allow them the time and opportunity to learn to play this interesting new game, with the incentive that maybe one day they may be called upon to face up to the real thing, supported by the inner confidence which springs from a successful education and development program.

If there is time, the ideal way to conduct these desktop exercises is on a one-to-one basis, or with a number of relatively small groups. This allows the participants to become fully engaged in the process, although this approach can be rather time-consuming. Larger groups require more adroit handling to derive the best benefit, but with an accomplished facilitator they can be very effective as long as you capture all of the feedback. Having someone there to make notes on a flip chart can be very helpful; it shows that you take their views seriously and it encourages further reflection and comment.