Nine Windows

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March 2015

Description:

Creativity can be defined as the ability to transcend traditional ideas, rules, patterns, relationships, or the like, and to create meaningful new ideas, forms, methods, and interpretations.[3] When confronted by a problem or issue, we like to have a tool that helps us get a burst of creativity. The Nine Windows tool gives us an opportunity to look at a problem or issue through nine different lenses. This technique enables us to consider a wide range of opportunities for improvement. Nine Windows allows a team to look at improvement opportunities across the dimensions of time (past, present, future) and space (supersystem, system, subsystem). The American Society for Quality defines these space levels as:[4]

- Supersystem: External environment and components that the problem or system interacts or may interact with.
- System: The problem or system that was created.
- Subsystem: A component or parts of the problem or system.

Nine Windows allows a team to analyze an issue at the micro and macro levels simultaneously.

When to Use:

Nine Windows is effective when an improvement team tries to develop creative solutions to a problem and the team has trouble getting out of its current state of thinking, which limits the team's ability to visualize other possibilities.

Construction Steps:[5]

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[3] http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/creativity

[4] http://asq.org/learn-about-quality/idea-creation-tools/overview/tutorial-nine-windows.html (Accessed 9/20/2013)

[5] http://www.innovationmanagement.se/imtool-articles/nine-windows-creativity-technique-offers-a-practical-framework-to-consider-a-range-of-future-opportunities/

1. Prepare a Nine Windows grid - On a blank sheet of paper or flipchart, draw nine boxes arranged in a 3 x 3 matrix. Label the bottom row of boxes (from left to right) past, present and future. Label the far left boxes (from top to bottom) supersystem, system, subsystem. Steps 2-6 are to be completed by the team.
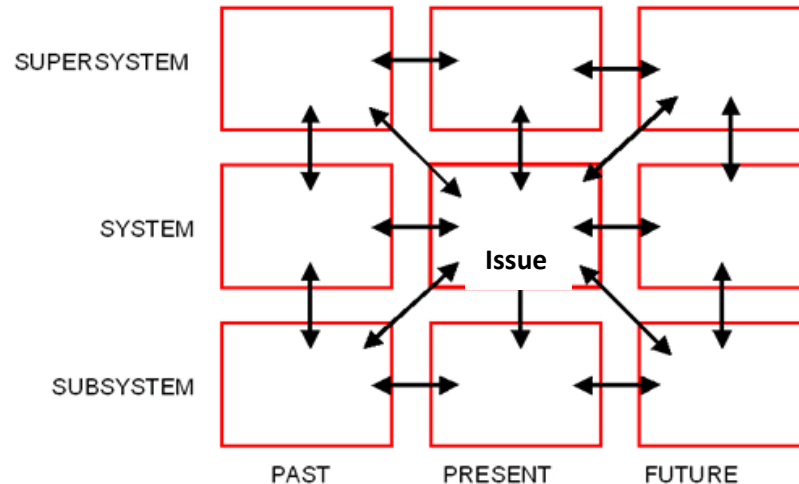
2. Fill in the center box - In the center box, insert a brief description or picture related to the innovation opportunity or challenge (i.e., the Issue).
3. Identify the supersystem and subsystem - In the present dimension, the middle column, fill in the supersystem and subsystem boxes above and below the center box. The supersystem relates to how the system or object interacts with the surrounding environment. To complete this box, ask, "What larger system encompasses the system or object?" The subsystem breaks the present system or object down into the components and characteristics that constitute it. To complete this box, ask, "What makes up the object in its present form?"
4. Determine the past and future system - Fill in the past and future boxes to the left and right of the center box. Do not limit yourself to just the immediate past or future. Instead, experiment with defining this temporal dimension in more than one way by asking questions such as:
   - What did the system or object look like before its current incarnation, and what will it look like in the future?
   - Where was the system or object before its present state, and where will it be in the future? The answer can be related to a range of time, from a few seconds to years into the past or future.
   - What happened to the system or object from its creation to its present form or function? What will happen after it ceases to function in the present?

- Before the present system or object existed, what was the previous solution for the job to be done, and what future solution could be developed to address the same job to be done?
- How can these system inputs be modified to eliminate, reduce or prevent the harmful function, event or condition from impacting the output? Or, how can the system's output be modified in a corrective or reactive way?

5. Complete the grid - Fill in the four corners, the past and future states of the supersystem and the subsystem. You can complete these boxes in any order. Although you don't have to fill in all the corners, it's worth spending a few minutes trying. If you get stuck, take a short break and return to the problem with fresh eyes. The answers depend on the specifics of the supersystem and subsystem you defined in step 3, as well as the approach you took to the temporal dimension in step 4.

6. Re-assess the opportunity - After filling in the Nine Windows grid, re-assess the innovation opportunity to determine if you should focus your efforts at the system, subsystem or supersystem level, and in which temporal dimension.

Example:[6]

	Plan for a Higher Performing State and Local Public Health System in Kansas		
Supersystem	No standard metric for assessing SHD and LHD performance	Limited statewide support for accreditation readiness	Residents are assured a high performing public health system as measured by the majority of LHD and the SHD completing the accreditation process.
System	Frequently repeated adage, "When you've seen one LHD, you've seen ONE LHD."	Two accredited LHDs in Kansas	Increase the number of accredited health departments by two – five per year
Subsystem	LHDs determine roles and responsibilities primarily based on grants and contracts.	Many departments lack the 3 prerequisites and the three necessary work plans to begin the accreditation process.	At least 50% of departments have completed a CHA, CHIP, Strategic Plan, Workforce Development Plan, QI Plan and Performance Management Plan

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Past **Present** **Future**

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[6]https://www.google.com/search?q=nine+windows+technique&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=LgmXU-7jDcir8gH6z4DIBw&ved=0CGkQsAQ&biw=1229&bih=570