

How Advanced Methods and Tools Significantly Improve Managers' Think-Work Processes

Several human mental limitations and organizational information system oversights prevent managers from thinking and planning as well as they might.

1. A major constraint is a **person's inability to know all the factors or variables that could exert important influences on his or her organization's success.** (All the questions that need asking, issues that need confronting, and things that people need to think about revolve around specific factors/variables.)

Solution: We provide **various extensive indices or checklists** of factors/variables to consider. Examples:

- a. A **186-page, 8-level Index (Checklist) of (3,500+) Industry, Marketplace and Marketing Mix Factors** (a "marketing meta-construct" for "zero-base marketing"): industry structure, competitors, and practices — 45 pages; products (or services) — 10 pages; consumer characteristics, demographics, and behavior — 13 pages; channels of distribution — 16 pages; general/"push"/"pull" promotion — 45 pages; pricing — 17 pages; and strengths and weaknesses checklist — 13 pages.
- b. A **126-page Index (Checklist) of External/Outside Forces and Factors** that will tend to affect an industry and/or given organization over time (a "business environment meta-construct"). It is based on our extensive files concerning (a) factors, phenomena, data, and trends in numerous technological areas; (b) phenomena, events, data, and trends in numerous industries; (c) economic factors, phenomena, data, and trends; (d) socio-cultural factors, phenomena, data, and trends; (e) governmental factors, phenomena, and trends; (f) international factors, phenomena, and trends; (g) environmental factors, phenomena, and trends; etc.
- c. A **74-Page Index of Major Socio-Technical/Cultural Factors** that influence motivation, at-

titudes, behavior, interactions, and performance within an organization. [Used for organizational analyses, this checklist is from our training series booklet entitled *Organizational Behavior: An Analytic Frame of Reference.*]

2. The Delphi Group reports that the **majority of corporate knowledge (still) resides in people's heads.** Most of that information is "tacit" or **qualitative** rather than quantitative (numeric). (The numeric information is already in databases.)

Solution: A Structured, Systematized Learning and Information-Sharing Process in which participants fill in a **checklist-oriented Qualitative Information Base.** A *QIB* is essentially a framework or tool for getting non-numeric (tacit) information out of people's heads into a well-organized knowledge base that can be searched and used more effectively than a common document base.

Benefits:

- a. **Audit Knowledge:** Identify what people already know — and what they must still research and/or learn.
- b. **Collect information** — especially from people's heads — into one place, and in the process ...
 1. Crystallize, sort, and sift what participants "know."
 2. Lead participants to many fresh insights and innovative ideas.
 3. Enable participants to share and verify information.
- c. **Display** information in the most meaningful and insight-generating manner possible.
- d. Use the detailed analyses as (updatable) input to any future planning, problem-solving, or decision-making processes, so it won't be necessary to "reinvent the wheel" each time.
- e. **Protect** the information in people's heads from possible loss.

3. Another major limitation is the **human mind's inability to handle more than around seven factors at a time** (according to a Harvard study).

Solution: A **Diagrammatic Knowledge Base™** (displayed on a wall) helps people handle many times more information during a think-work (planning) process.

Example: By diagramming the industry, marketplace, and external business environment on a wall in front of participants, we generate a knowledge base that graphically displays large systems of variables along with the relevant data. This innovative approach enables managers to view both non-numeric and numeric information in an integrated manner that maximizes their ability to gain insight into complex systems and make sense of the large amounts of data involved.

Benefits that Enhance Capabilities, Promote Success:

- + Analyze many times more strategic information at once than ever before.
- + Be more insightful and innovative. Diagramming information frees the mind from having to juggle details and enables it to concentrate on developing deeper insights and better ideas.
- + Grasp the "big picture" much more clearly and easily. Be able to see how systems of factors are interacting with and upon each other.
- + Increase "future vision." Make the future more apparent. Reduce risk by better anticipating the future and taking steps to deal with it more expeditiously.
 - Illustrate how forces will interact and/or converge over time.
 - Predict more accurately how the industry, market, business environment, and organization will react to, and be affected by, changes in the others. Better evaluate various scenarios.
- Recognize and alleviate vulnerabilities and threats both sooner and more effectually.
- Identify strategic opportunities earlier, and better position the organization to take greater advantage of them.
- Focus attention on the key factors that will determine success.
- + Solve existing problems more completely and permanently. Improve more of the causal or influential variables involved.
- + Recognize and solve hidden problems more expeditiously.
- + Make wiser long- and short-term decisions.
- + Increase return on investment in the time, money, and talent required to gather, sort, organize, format, and utilize the company's information.
- + Employ a "diagrammatic interface" as an EIS tool to better access and view important industry/marketplace, and business environment information — both qualitative and quantitative.
- + Maximize personal and organizational learning.
 - Vastly increase learning through an analytic approach to problem-solving. Learn by creating diagrammatic analyses of the industry/marketplace and the organization. Also learn by utilizing them to solve problems, plan, and make decisions.
 - Use a computerized knowledge base to develop a more sophisticated business simulation model for testing courses of action.
 - More effectively and efficiently share knowledge, insights, and ideas throughout the company.
- + "Work even smarter" with the advanced methods and tools now available.