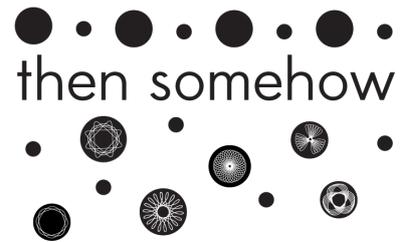


Circle of Influence 1/2

A simple tool to help teams identify their blocks and explore options to increase their sphere of influence. Originally by Stephen Covey



Materials

Flip chart / Sticky notes / Pens / Paper

First - Good Day / Bad Day - 10 mins

Before you begin the Circle of Influence exercise, a gentle way in is to ask participants to take a sheet of blank paper fold it in half and draw two pictures: A picture of what makes a good day and a picture of what makes a bad day - at work. No words, just bad art.

Talking through the pictures brings up common themes as well as providing ideas for the main exercise.

How to do the Circle of Influence Exercise (30 mins)

Draw a large circle. As big as you can. This is the **Circle of Concern**. Inside it are all the things you are bothered about. Outside, stuff goes on, but you don't care about it.

Draw a smaller circle inside the big circle so that it looks a bit like a fried egg. This smaller circle is called the **Circle of Control**. Inside here, are all the things you have control over.

From your Good Day: choose the three things that - if you had them - would make the most long term positive difference to your day.

From your Bad Day: choose three things - that if these were gone or changed or made better - would make the most long-term positive difference.

Write each thing on one Post-it note. If you are doing this in a team it helps to pop your initials on the Post-it notes. If you are doing this alone you can choose more than six things. Place them into the circles depending on whether you think that thing lies. Do you have control over it or not?

At some point, it usually comes up, that people want to put their note on the line between the two. Acknowledge this and draw another circle around the circle of control, and call this - the **Circle of Influence**. If it doesn't come up at this point it will later, so bring it in then.

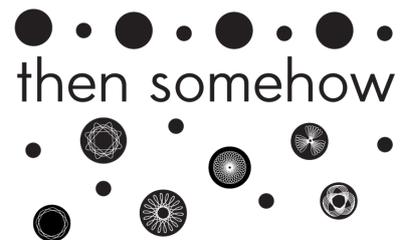
Once all the Post-it notes are in the circles, stand back and see where you are. Usually, there are some Post-it notes inside and outside the **Circle of Control**, some in the **Circle of Influence** if you have drawn that in.

Need help with running this with your team? [Get in touch here](#)

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Circle of Influence 2/2



Using the Circle

First, have a look at what is in control. What are they? Why and how are these things in your control. If you are in a team, this can be an interesting discussion. Sometimes the same things can be put inside and outside of our control.

Then have a look at what is in the **Circle of Influence** - find out why these things are here.

Move on to the outer circle. What is outside of our influence? And Why?

This is where the work is. These are usually the sticky areas that cause us the most grief.

Other people, unclear objectives, shifting priorities, unwieldy bureaucratic systems. The real messy stuff that we all struggle with.

For each of these things - the aim is to find ways to bring them into the inner circles.

What is it that you could do about this?

You may not be able to bring them in entirely - but what we are looking for are options for something that can be done.

It really pays to spend some time here. Go through each one. Keep going until you exhaust the options. It is surprising sometimes what options come up, even when we think we have exhausted them, if we just ask, 'What Else?' If you are in a group, this is great. Use the knowledge in the room.

Eventually, you do reach the brick walls and you may find that there are still some things outside of your control.

At this point, we are looking at ways of dealing with the reality. We can't stop it raining, but we could see the rain in a different light? As Viktor Frankl wrote, whatever the circumstances, we have the freedom, "to choose our attitude" and this cannot ever be taken away from us.

To round up and end the exercise - we suggest you commit to at least one action you are going to take in the next week to make a big positive difference to your day. You may of course have more! Don't limit yourself!

Lastly, the that the point of this exercise is NOT to prove anyone wrong. It's simply that having stuff you care about, but which lies outside of your influence just feels crap. If you have a big Circle of Concern and a tiny Circle of Influence, it feels terrible.

Finding ways to make your Circle of Influence bigger, by putting your brain to work and thinking of the things that you CAN do - will make you feel BETTER, happier, more motivated.

And, if there are brick walls? At least stop banging your head against them.

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