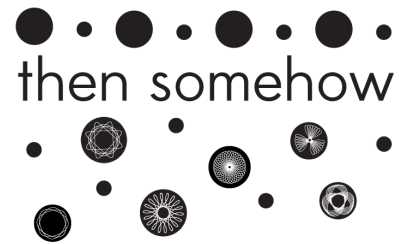


Circle of Influence 1/2

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



Use this tool as part of team day or as a stand-alone activity to support a project or start a conversation. You can use it in conjunction with Good Day / Bad Day, to help set the tone.

Materials You Will Need

- On your own or face-to-face: pens, sticky notes, large sheet of paper
- Remote: use an online whiteboard tool or shared slide

How to do the exercise (60 mins)

First - Frame the conversation (5mins)

Explain that you are going to use the tool and give an overview of how it works:

1. Think about your concerns around the theme
2. Add them to the chart according to how much control you feel you have
3. Talk about ways you could have more influence
4. If it goes well, we'll come up with some practical ideas for things we can do

Step 1 - Reflection (5 mins)

Ask participants to write down their individual concerns on the topic in question. One idea per sticky note. If you are in a group, adding your initials can help identify who is concerned about what.

We suggest three to six things per person.

Step 2 - Placing (5 mins)

1. Draw a large circle. As big as you can on a sheet of paper or a digital whiteboard. This is the **Circle of Concern**. Inside it are all the things you are bothered about. Outside is stuff you don't care about.
2. Draw a smaller circle inside the big circle so that it looks a bit like a fried egg. This smaller circle is **The Circle of Control**. Inside here, are all the things you have control over.
3. Ask participants to place their sticky notes into the circles depending on where they think that thing lies.

For each note, they consider, "Do you have control over it or not?" At some point it usually comes up that it might depend, or people want to put their note on the line between the two.

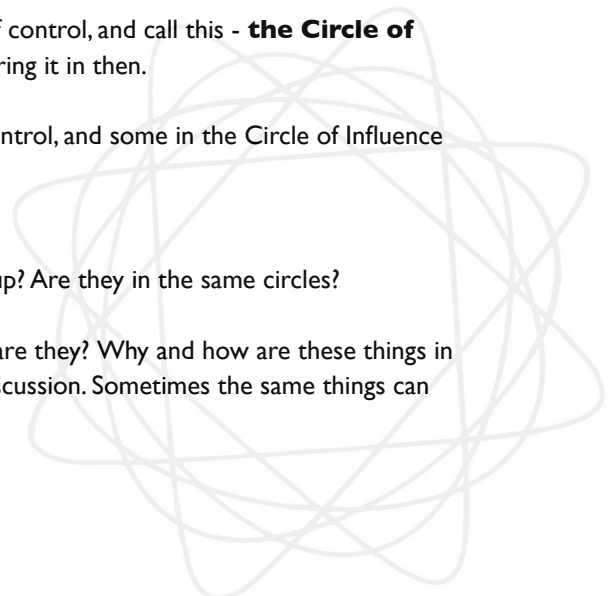
4. Acknowledge this and draw another circle around the circle of control, and call this - **the Circle of Influence**. If it doesn't come up at this point it will later, so bring it in then.

Usually there are some sticky notes inside and outside the Circle of Control, and some in the Circle of Influence if you have drawn that in.

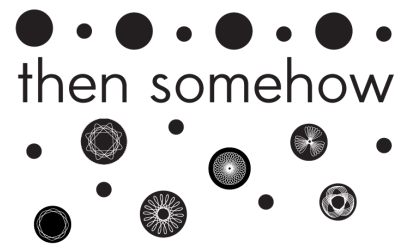
Step 3 - Reviewing (10 mins)

As a group discuss what you can see. Are people putting similar things up? Are they in the same circles?

1. Have a look at what things are in the Circle of 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.



Circle of Influence 2/2



2. Next have a look at what is in the Circle of Influence - find out why these things are here.
3. 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.

Step 4 - Influencing (20 mins +)

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 to influence this? You may not be able to bring them entirely under your control. What you are looking for are options for something that can be done.

It really pays to spend some time here. Go through as many as you have time for, try to pick one for each person in the group. If time is limited focus on concerns that are shared.

Keep going until you exhaust the options. It's surprising sometimes what options come up if you just ask, "What Else?"

Step 5 - Acceptance (10 mins)

Eventually you may reach brick walls - there will still be some things outside of your control.

At this point, look at ways of dealing with the reality: you can't stop it raining, but can you see the rain differently?

Viktor Frankl wrote, whatever the circumstances, you have the freedom "to choose your attitude" - this can't ever be taken away from you.

Accepting what you can't influence can be liberating, freeing up energy to focus on what you can influence. It's an important part of the benefit people get from using this tool.

Step 6 - Commitment (5 mins)

To end the exercise we suggest participants commit to at least one action they can take to increase their influence over the things they are concerned about.

In a group you can strengthen the commitment by asking people to write it down or tell their neighbour.

Lastly, 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.