Fishbone Purgatory!

Runaway divergence NOT convergence

We received this question from a recent graduate of our **Systematic Problem-Solving (SPS)** workshop:

"Our organization is a supplier to the U.S. Military. We are required to submit a Fishbone Diagram for problems they and others refer back to us for resolution. We even have whiteboards in our team meeting rooms upon which the Fishbone Diagram is permanently printed to remind us to always use this approach. What do you suggest?"

Of course, we recognize you must **give your customer what they want**! Just don't let this be the only thing you do. It is possible to rapidly create a Fishbone that covers all the necessary categories. Then, be sure to avoid Fishbone Purgatory by completing an **SPS Problem Solving** analysis. The completed Fishbone will assure your customer you considered a wide range of potential causes. The SPS analysis will enable you to converge and verify the true cause of the problem.

For those of you who may be unfamiliar with why there is a need for our non-Fishbone approach to resolving problems, please read on!

⬇ (Continues from the **BPI** Discussion Blog post)

The situation: Its 2019 and many teams are struggling with their mandated responsibilities to solve problems quickly and permanently. These teams have performed slowly for so long that management is jumping to actions without benefit of cause verification, just to show they are doing something about waste and low yields. Some organizations pay steep fees for outside consultants to come in to solve the highest priority problems for them, using team members as mere data sources to be interviewed by them. When organizations pay to create their own internal experts of these esoteric methods, those internal experts often fail, overwhelmed by the method's complexity and their own lack of experience. Therefore, the outside consultants must return over and over again. Teams, for their part, can become complacent, lacking urgency or pride about problem resolutions.

Why? Why are teams performing so poorly? One major cause of this situation is a legacy passed forward by USA quality circles of the 1970's. Then, collaboration was rare in organizations. One of the grab bag of quality circle tools selected to fix the collaboration shortfall was the Fishbone Diagram (Kaoru Ishikawa, 1943, University of Tokyo). Although many still categorize the "Fishbone" as a problem analysis tool that lists causes, that is incorrect. WhatIs.com gets it right when they state: "A fishbone diagram . . . is a visualization tool for categorizing . . . potential causes . . .". In other words, the Fishbone is a structured brainstorming tool – no structure at all for analysis. (To learn more, access the member's

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part of our website and read, “The Fishbone and Three Thinking Apps”). In short, the Fishbone is incomplete, lacking a defined way to evaluate the potential causes it generates. Teams are forced to fill this gap themselves. Some vote, some guess, some look into each potential cause, but all delay convergence on the cause of the problem.

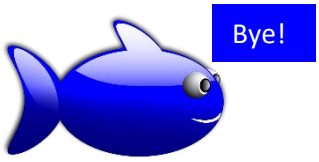
What about your organization? Are your team methods divergent or convergent?

BPI solution? We specialize in teaching and applying critical thinking. Our customers learn a streamlined process for solving all types of problems, individually and in teams. **BPI** tools are not just collaborative, they are strongly convergent. To begin with, we teach how to develop high quality potential causes, so teams don’t waste time developing and then discussing poorly conceived ideas. Then, we teach how to quickly scrub a much shorter list of potential causes to converge on the true cause of the problem. Teams no longer have to suffer long delays waiting for every last bit of information to trickle in from the pursuit of unlikely guesses and assorted poorly conceived potential causes. And fully 80-90% of the problems teams face will never need the esoteric tools outside consultants bring to bear on problems.

Results? We’ve documented teams fully resolving problems that had existed for years in less than an hour or two! That’s because we teach teams how to identify what information is needed and how best to use it. Our problem-solving thinking process limits with precision what information is required. With our methods step synergy, thinking focus, and rapid convergence on the true cause are the norm. Typically, each analysis concludes with the verification of the true cause of the problem, making consensus on the best corrective action possible. In short, teams escape and avoid Fishbone Purgatory with its delays and inadequate results.

Problem solving adepts. We know that people differ in their natural ability to think clearly about problems. Some people quickly get to the heart of problems. Others struggle. It is now possible for teams and individuals to learn how to think like brilliant problem solvers using the same process that “naturals” perform so easily. We have a test that helps organizations identify naturals by assessing people’s habits of mind in solving problems. This information is invaluable for making hiring and staffing decisions related to assessment of the ability to quickly and effectively solve problems. The test may also be used to find candidates for advanced problem-solving training as part of your effort to develop your own in-house problem-solving adepts.

Hey! Was it something we said? --->



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