

Challenge our Thinking

The Operational Excellence Enablers Course



INTRODUCTION

Operational Excellence requires that we constantly challenge the status quo and how we are currently doing things. This requires us to “think outside of the box”.

In order to change the way we think, we first need to understand what informs our thinking patterns.

In this module, we will explore:



INTRODUCTION

The way we think about things can be influenced by:

- The mental models we hold about something.
- The thinking of the group we associate with.
- Orthodoxies that we believe about something.

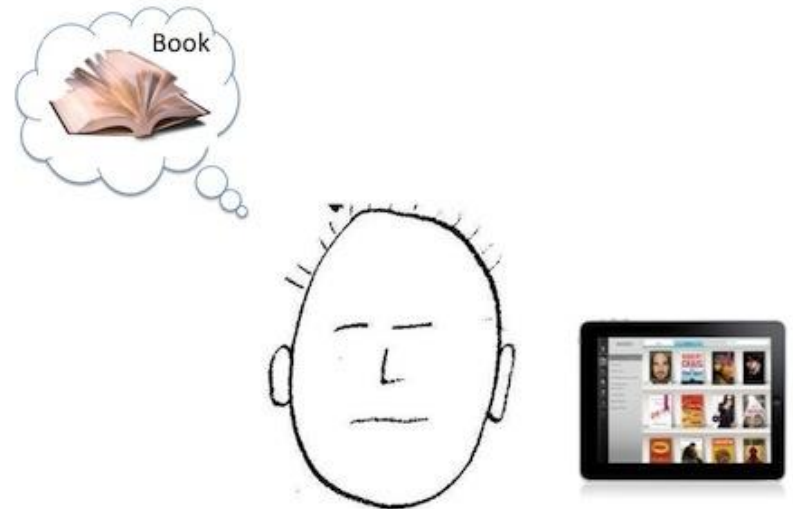
When we understand the influences on our thinking, we can recognise when they are getting in the way of us seeing something through different lenses.

MENTAL MODELS

Mental Models are “images, assumptions and stories which we carry in our minds of ourselves, other people, institutions and every aspect of the world.” *1

Mental Models influence:

- How we process information.
- What we are able to observe or not.
- What we see as important or not.
- What conclusions we draw from information.
- What actions we take or don't take.
- Our effectiveness.



*1 Senge, Kleiner, Roberts & Smith, The fifth discipline field book

MENTAL MODELS

Mental Models exist below our level of conscious awareness.

We are generally unaware of them unless we make a conscious effort to uncover them.

If we can identify them, we can talk about them, think about their impact, and develop new mental models that serve us better.



MENTAL MODELS

In order to uncover our **Mental Models**, ask the following question about a given situation:

- How do my own **Mental Models** contribute to this situation?
- How do my **Mental Models** prevent me from seeing improvement opportunities?
- What **Mental Models** have served me well so far?
- What are the new **Mental Models** for me to be successful in future?

ORTHODOXIES

Orthodoxies are generally accepted opinions on what is seen as right or true:

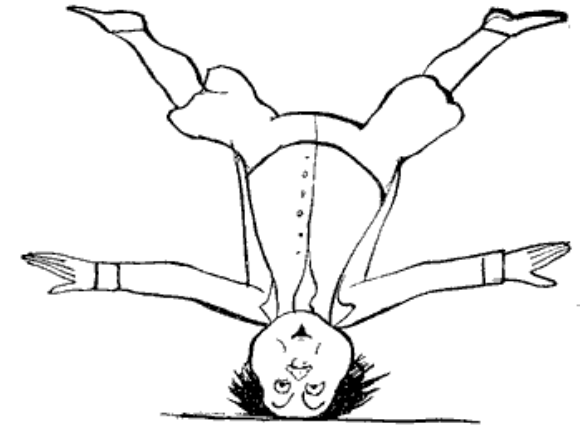
- Deeply held beliefs about how things work in our society, industry, market, or processes.
- Perceived wisdom about what created success or failure in our society, industry, market, or processes.
- **Orthodoxies** are rarely questioned. They therefore set the boundaries of our thinking.



ORTHODOXIES

In order to uncover our **Orthodoxies**, ask the following questions about a given situation:

- What 5 things do you never hear people say about our industry / process?
- What **Orthodoxies** do the above represent?
- If we turn these **Orthodoxies** on their head, what new opportunities or rules will emerge?



GROUP THINKING

Group Thinking is the tendency to reach consensus based on a common set of shared, unchallenged beliefs.

It is a result of the Mental Models or Orthodoxies that exist in our world. All incoming information is screened and viewed in the same manner by members of the group.

Group Thinking is the process by which the Mental Models of the leadership become the Orthodoxies of the organisation.



CHALLENGING OUR THINKING IN OE

Our assumptions may well be hindering our ability to see break-through process improvements.

For each customer journey, process or task, the team should ask themselves?

- What Mental-Models, Orthodoxies or Group-Thinking do we hold?
- *How could we do things differently if we were to challenge our thinking?
- What specific improvement opportunities would emerge from our new way of thinking?

CHALLENGING OUR THINKING IN OE

You can use the Rethink OE **Challenge our Thinking Template** to assist you with the thinking processes. In this template, you ask:

1. What five (5) things do we notice about the "way we do things in our business"?
2. What established ways of thinking / beliefs / assumptions underpin these (from point 1)?
3. What vulnerabilities result from these established ways of thinking / beliefs / assumptions?
4. If we turn these established ways of thinking on their head, what new opportunities or new rules emerge?

CHALLENGING OUR THINKING IN OE

Here is an example of how the template would be completed.

Challenging our Thinking Template



#	Step 1 List five (5) things you notice about the "way we do things in our business"	Step 2 What established ways of thinking / beliefs / assumptions underpin these?	Step 3 What vulnerabilities result from these established ways of thinking / beliefs / assumptions?	Step 4 If we turn these established ways of thinking on their head, what new opportunities or new rules emerge?
1	We always work from the office and working from home is frowned upon.	People are less productive when working from home.	We are limiting the talent pool into which we can find new employees	We can tap into new sources of talent and even reduce our facilities costs
2				

REFLECTIONS

Here are some key points to consider in relation to your own thinking, and that commonly found in your company:

- What Mental Models do I hold about my company, manager, team, etc.
- How do these Mental Models contribute towards my own current situation, or how I feel about my company, department or team?
- Which of these Mental Models have served me well so far?
- How do these Mental Models prevent me seeing improvement opportunities?
- What new Mental Models could I adopt to be successful in future?
- What 5 things do I never heard being said about our industry or processes?
- What Orthodoxies, or deeply held beliefs, are prevalent in our company, market or process?
- What Group Thinking is prevalent in my company, department or team?

REFLECTIONS

- What opportunities could emerge if we turned the Orthodoxies or Group Thinking on it's head?



THE END