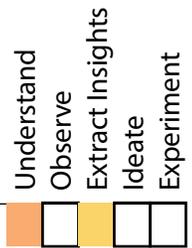




Web of Abstraction aka Webbing



Purpose: Reframe a challenge on which the team is working at the appropriate level of abstraction

Steps:

This tool allows you to increase or decrease the level of abstraction with which you are examining a situation. To be exhaustive in the process you may want to explore all the dimensions of the web by increasing and decreasing the level of abstraction as well as exploring alternative statements at the same level of abstraction. However, you may also decide to only explore one dimension.

To increase your level of abstraction and make the question broader or more meaningful, follow these steps:

1. Identify the original challenge, ideally stated as a question.
2. Ask the question “why?” Why is the challenge you have set forth a challenge? Why is it important?
3. Rephrase the answer to the question as a new question. (You may want to use the “Statement Starters” to help you rephrase.) Write the new question just above the initial one with an arrow connecting the two (see example).
4. Go back to the initial challenge and ask “why else?” Add the new questions alongside the others, repeating this step one or two more times.
5. For each of the new questions generated, ask “why?” again and generate another set of questions, writing them above the last set.
6. Continue to extend the web until it becomes obvious that the question is too broad and abstract to be valuable (e.g., How to be happy? How to save the world?)

“One way to understand webbing is to look at Spider-Man. Similar to how this superhero uses webs to move from building to building, practitioners can use webbing to move from question to question, leading to an ever-changing perspective of the world, or process. Webbing can help practitioners better understand why things are the way they are, or to look for a leverage point for future actions. Every question should provide insight into assumptions or details that can help practitioners understand a task more clearly – sometimes more objectively – and reach their target faster and with less effort.”

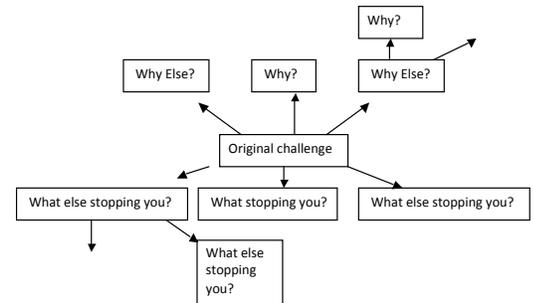
- Uwe K. Kaufmann and Hector Ramo

Web of Abstraction (con't)

To narrow the question your team is addressing, or make it more concrete, use the following steps:

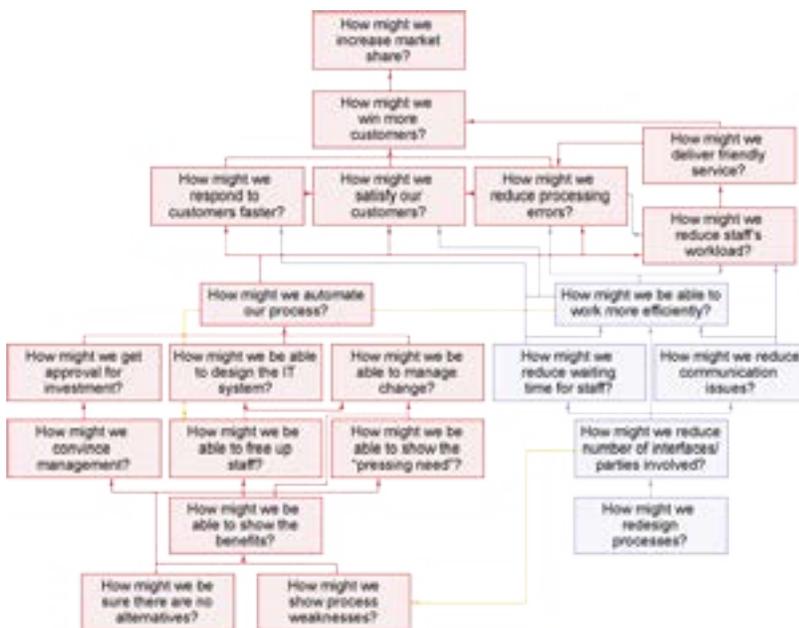
1. Identify the original challenge, ideally stated as a question.
2. Ask the question "What's stopping you?". Phrase the answer to that question as a new question (using the "Statement Starters" if needed), and write it just below the initial question with an arrow connecting the two (see example).
3. Return to the initial challenge and ask "what else is stopping you?" Repeat this step one or two more times as needed.
4. Now take the new questions generated in the last step, and repeat the process, generating another layer of questions below the last one. Continue to extend the web until it becomes obvious that the challenge is too basic to require a creative answer (e.g., how to decide between two manufacturers? how to contact a vendor?)
5. Look at the list of questions generated and use a converging tool to select one around which to move forward

Basic Principle:



Sources including chart above: Basadur (1995), Isaksen, Dorval, Treffinger (1994), Switalski & Switalski (2008)

Outcome: list of questions that may be selected to start ideating



An example of a Web of Abstraction chart also known as Webbing. This is dealing with the "Web" around Automating Processes (Abbreviated) from an article called, "Reveal Assumptions and Find Root Causes with Webbing By Uwe K. Kaufmann and Hector Ramos.

Source: <http://www.realinnovation.com/content/c091005a.asp>

- Understand
- Observe
- Extract Insights
- Ideate
- Experiment