Thinking Whole: The How To

John Krubski and Alexandra K. Camus, Psy.D.

All the theories in the universe aren't worthy of a microsecond's attention unless somebody can do something useful with them – here's how.

Tapping into Collective Native Intelligence

In his fascinating and lively book, Howard Gardner describes the cognitive abilities that will command a premium in the years ahead. They include:

1. The disciplinary mind

2. The synthesizing mind

3. The creating mind

4. The respectful mind

5. The ethical mind.

He doesn't specify whether those "minds" are supposed to be in separate people or whether they are ideally to exist in the same person. Either way, we agree with his point of view. That is mainly because our concept of collective native intelligence applies to either or both. In our experience, every individual member of a team comes to the party with a multiplicity of intelligences (see Howard Gardner's book on multiple intelligences.

Especially in a business setting, we tend to reduce people to job titles and functions. Consequently, when we include "Bob" or "Madge" in a meeting, it is with the assumption that they will represent their departmental or functional perspective.

That's all right as far as it goes. The truth, however, is that both Bob and Madge are also parents, one is also a student and the other an avid fisherman. She is a pilot. He is a rock climber… and on it goes. In a Thinking Whole session, we actively discover and engage as many of the minds of Bob and Madge that we can.

Why? Because there is a wealth of experience, expertise, and wisdom there. Every such perspective gives Bob and Madge yet another "take" on whatever this meeting is about. If two people can bring ten minds to the table between them, do the math. How any intelligences can we harness with 20 people in the room? What about 40?

It also gets richer than that. Tapping into the collective native intelligence of one person creates dynamic tensions and positive syntheses. All this mind power is tapped, released, combined and recombined in the meeting repeatedly.

Here's an important point – when two people talk, their minds can re-program every microsecond. I reprogram based on things you say, or do, or exude. You do the same. It's like "dueling banjos" on steroids. All of this happens so rapidly we don't even know it's happening. But it is… and with the right process, which we have, there are opportunities aplenty to channel all this mind energy into productive articulations and manifestations. Thinking Whole not only provides a safe space where all of the multiple minds can play nice together, it also provides a platform through which they can be expressed, articulated, and refine in astonishingly short time.

One of the most popular words in business these days is "collaboration;" as if collaboration were to be the most desirable dynamic between and among teams and organization. My family is from Poland where we have long had an uneasy appreciation of the word "collaboration" and of the status of "collaborator." According to the Oxford Dictionaries, the first definition of "collaboration" is "the action of working with someone to produce or create something." Oxford's second definition: "traitorous cooperation with the enemy." It is implicit in both definitions, although clearer in the latter, that there may or may not be equality between the collaborators.

We prefer to use the word "collegial" in our work. That word means "marked by power or authority vested equally in each of a number of colleagues." We don't just use the word or its definition; we have built Thinking Whole around a platform of collegiality. Inherent in the system is a leveling/elevating mechanism so that, in our meetings, the "squeaky wheel gets neither more nor less attention than the other wheels on the wagon.

Collegiality argues for the ultimate in inclusion. Most planning sessions for important organizational, corporate, or team meetings begin with the question: "Who needs to be in this meeting?" What is really being asked: "who do we need to keep out of this meeting" on the assumption that certain people will either fail to participate, fail to contribute, or, the worst case, undermine the meeting. Our motto has become - anyone who can ultimately screw things up belongs in this meeting – so just get a bigger room.

In some ways, it is precisely these same people who should be in that meeting; if for no other reason than that if their negativity is dealt with in the initial planning session and if they are left with the feeling that they were heard (and they will be) then they will be less likely to sabotage after the fact. While this sounds like eminently common sense, the difference is that dealing with this situation and these people is part of the mechanism of Thinking Whole.

The Elements of Thinking Whole

The three elements of Thinking Whole, by means of which the system of Thinking Whole becomes an actionable process, are the following:

1. The Form: A structure that provides the framework for Thinking Whole. It's like the irritant in the oyster, without which it cannot produce a pearl.

2. The Focus: A way of keeping the thinking, the group, and the process, on track. It's like a mantra that helps free your mind from all kinds of distractions so that it can focus on THE ONE THING that matters.

3. The Discipline: The energy generator that turns ordinary thinking into potential moments of genius. It's like sharpening a knife – you run the blade over the whetstone, feel the cutting edge, and repeat as necessary; until the knife is not just sharp – it's perfectly sharp!

The Form

Every high-school test taker knows that "filling in the blanks" is much easier and far more efficient than plodding through the essay questions. If you know the question, the answer comes easier. Why? Einstein believed that the focus of solutioning should be on addressing the questions that matter; so that's where most of your thinking energy can be productively applied. In creating Thinking Whole, we applied the same structure to an incredibly broad range of issues, problems, and challenges – and consistently got our clients to moments of genius. How did that happen? Mainly because we were able to begin every working session with a simple statement and a simple visual. "I may not know the answer to your question or the solution for your problem, but I can show you exactly what it looks like."

Here's what the solution to every challenge or problem looks like:
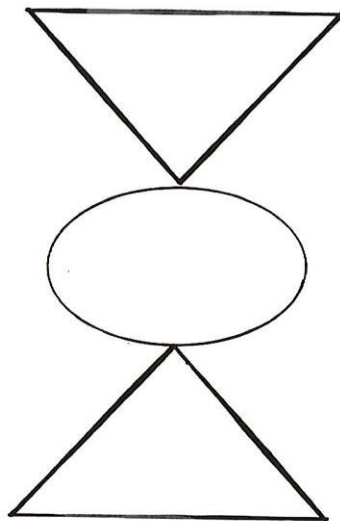
This Form is a tangible expression of E.F. Schumacher's principle of simplification as the antidote to complexity. It also sets the stage for how we are going to get from "a lot to consider" to a brilliantly simple solution…. seamlessly. There is an old adage that goes: ""Tell 'em what you're gonna tell 'em. Tell 'em. Then tell 'em what you told 'em." Our form does that in the simplest visual terms imaginable. It also frames what success will look like for the exercise.

We all appreciate that it's easier to figure out the answers when you have the answer key. Equally, it is easier to figure out the questions when you have the question key. This is our question key. The Form is the universal question key on the basis of which Thinking Whole and Thinking Whole do their "magic." The first thing you should know is that the two triangles and the circle represent three distinct, and contributive "chunks" of Thinking Whole and map the sequence in which they will help the team progress to success.

The inverted triangle at the top is about the chunk we call Actionable Insighting. The circle in the middle is what we call the crystallized Central Operating Principle. The standard triangle on the bottom is the chunk of Actionable Inciting. Inside each triangle, there are two additional chunks ("7" and "3"):
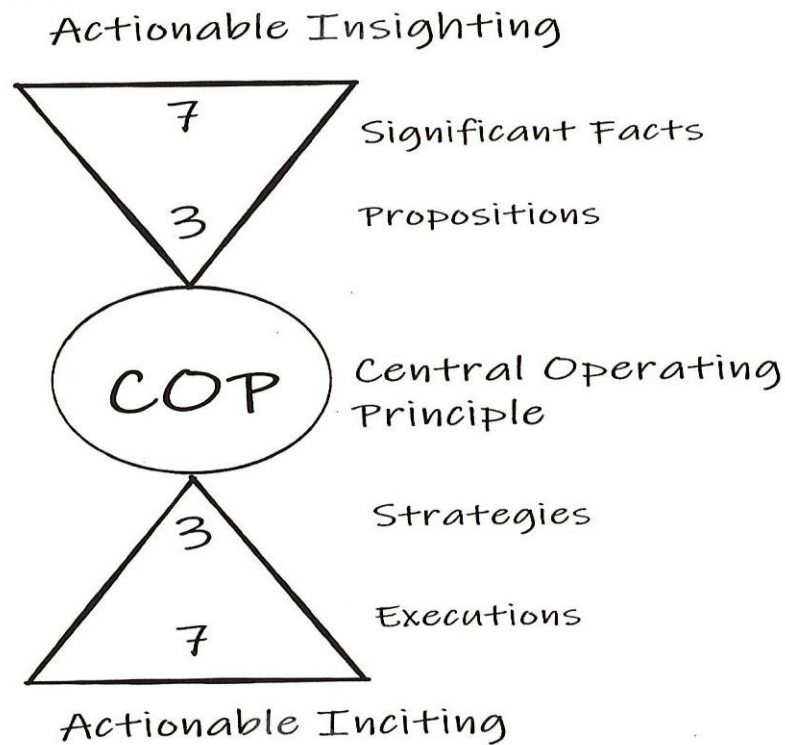
7 and 3 are not suggestions.

You need neither more nor less in respective chunks. The exercise is all about getting to understand the problem well enough to be brief, then articulating that thinking (in brief), and finally, describing when and how that gets converted from thinking to doing (very briefly).

Here's how you use these visuals in your actual Thinking Whole Session. Set up the room with two flip charts at the front. Mark one "Working Form" and mark the other "Parking Lot." Why the "parking lot?" Thinking Whole is not about prioritization. It's not about argumentation. It is about whether each idea is articulated well enough so that it…

a. makes sense on its own.

b. contributes, works with, or complements the other ideas.

c. helps to complete the whole of the chunk we're working on, along with the ultimate solution.

Socrates said: "The unexamined life is not worth living" – then he drank the poison. As far as we're concerned: No unexamined idea scores a slot on the flipchart! Don't put every idea in the parking lot, just the ones that "feel" significant but aren't well enough articulated to move to the working form, just yet.

Revisit the parking lot as often as desirable. Anyone might, at any time, either see a better way of articulating the parking lot ideas or perceive how they connect to what's on the working form. To paraphrase Obi-Wan Kenobi: "Trust the Form." (There are examples of each form in the upcoming section entitled "Workbook.")

As each Thinking Whole chunk is worked and completed, put it up on the wall next to its predecessor, leaving room for its successor, in order, and in context. Being able to see all the completed chunk forms next to their complementary counterparts will serve to tease out their connections.

Those connections usually bring themselves out, if they get enough serious attention. Keep completed chunk forms where they are always visible to everyone in the room during the session. This will help the team to stay focused but, more importantly, it will lead to one or more moments of passively precipitated perception. We humans have been gifted with visual and aural learning and perception styles. Some of us feel we are either/or one style or the other. The truth is that our best thinking happens when we can engage both.

Simply put, The Form, is the wireframe around we can do exactly that – and more. The Focus Everybody we know has been in at least one (dozen, hundred, million?) team meeting(s) where the following scenario applied: The group makes progress and comes to a decisive moment or insight. Everyone breathes a sigh of relief and enjoys a momentary sense of accomplishment. They someone says something like "shouldn't we also…? or "what about…?" In that moment of black magic moment, everything that was accomplished falls apart.

The rest of the meeting is a rehash and the glimmer of genius evaporates like the dew on a flower in the desert. It's a lot like getting so caught up in the scenery that you drive right through your original destination and don't realize it until you've passed the point of no return to your next destination… and the cycle starts all over again from square one. We have experienced way too many such moments. In

fact, for both of us authors, that is why we believe Thinking Whole and Thinking Whole have proven so powerful an antidote against the disease of distraction. In pretty much the same way that mnemonics are useful to jogging memory, we included The Focus to help "nudge."

The great Zen Master, Shunryu Suzuki said: "If your mind is empty, it is always ready for anything, it is open to everything. In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert's mind there are few."

There's a great deal of evidence to demonstrate that people have a hard time thinking of nothing. It is extremely difficult if not entirely impossible to so still the mind that it is literally devoid of thought." That is why mantras were invented; replace the overabundance and multiplicity of thoughts with a single thought.

Mantras are essentially centering chants. Serious practitioners believe that there is much significance to the words being chanted. Buddhist monks repeat the mantra of Buddha himself: "Aum mani padme hum" – the meaning of which is difficult to translate Other, more secular, students of meditation believe that it is not the words but the act of repeating the sound of the mantra that does the trick. For the record, we fall pretty much in between the two.

Whether it's conscious intention through language or ancillary effect through the cerebral cortex… they both still distraction and improve our ability to be creative. Either way, the mantra is a way to open a space in the mind so that there is a sort of creative void into which your higher thinking can naturally flow. Neuroscientists call this phenomenon highly productive "flow states."

After a lot of research and analysis, we have concluded that, whenever our sessions begin to feel like they're unraveling, the mantra to which we subscribe is the penultimately simple: "Seven. Three. One" – repeated as frequently, and often, and as necessary to get Thinking Whole back on track.

The other Eastern concept to which we link this mantra is Lao Tzu's proposition that human consciousness is governed by three forces – Material, Structure, and Energy. So, when you are either in or conducting a Thinking Whole session that you feel needs to get back on track, chant "Seven. Three, One," with all the passion and energy you might direct to a favorite basketball team: "Defense. Defense. Defense." It works in basketball. It works in the military… and it works in Thinking Whole.

The Discipline

"To know yet to think that one does not know is best; Not to know yet to think that one knows will lead to difficulty." Lao Tzu The third component of Thinking Whole, after The Form and The Mantra, is The Discipline. To keep The Form uncluttered, functional, and progressing, we need to get every idea to the point of irreducible brevity, clarity, and connectedness to all the other similarly elevated thinking.

How do we do that? Remember all those potentially significant but "not yet 'there' ideas" in the parking lot? How do you either get them to a state of eloquent articulation or how do you know you've 'worked' them enough so you can be certain they are not worth working on anymore? For that, we have what we call "The Discipline."

All too frequently, much of what is said in meetings is basic, "pro forma" stuff. You put on your "I am in a meeting" thinking cap and your "I am in a meeting" face and you pretty much say what you would generally say; even pretty much what anyone in your position has said, says, and will say in most

meetings past, present, and future. Maybe that's why at least one research study found that 85% of all meetings are held, pretty much, for the express purpose of holding the next meeting.

If you're good with that, you would probably not have bought, or been reading, this book. If you want a way to stop maneuvering the endless treadmill and if you want to clear your schedule of pointless time-wasting and purposeless engagements, then you'll find this section valuable and useful.

Your ticket out of the terminal of mediocrity and off the energy drain has a name. It is the discipline of Thinking Out Loud. Thinking out loud. The discipline is hearing and refining your ideas and thoughts even as you articulate them.

We said earlier that no unexamined idea ends up as one of the seven significant facts or propositions or COP's, or strategies, or executions. Here's how that happens. As you say something (or as you listen to someone else say something) repeat it with your own inner voice. See the words take shape inside your mind, not just on the flipchart.

Listen to every word and take the time to contemplate how every word in a phrase or a sentence relates to every other word in that. Practice Thinking Out Loud visually. Practice Thinking Out Loud aurally. Thinking Out loud is one of the hallmarks of people we call geniuses. They aren't babbling to themselves. They are thinking out loud because it makes understanding that much easier.

Probably 90% of the pictures you've seen of Albert Einstein has a chalkboard in the background. That's Thinking Out Loud. If Einstein needed a chalkboard to make sense of his thinking, how much more so for the rest of us mere intellectual mortals? TOL is the platform beneath Socratic Method. Either I question myself about what I'm saying or someone else questions me immediately after I have said it.

If you don't mind having people mistake you for someone who's babbling to themselves, TOL is a highly productive habit to get into. Here's the simple arithmetic: If, instead of popping off a stream of things in which you are little invested, you take the time to weigh the components of your idea by repeating it multiple times until you've actually figured it out; which is likely to be more productive.

One final word on The Discipline. we have participated, and led, innumerable so-called "ideation sessions" in which the big idea is to plaster the walls with ideas on the assumption that quantity will lead to quality.

We, on the other hand, believe that every idea sucks up a bit of the intellectual energy in the room. The more ideas, the less energy any one of them can have. You end up with a roomful of thinking in which a few brilliant ideas lie somewhere in a huge pile of uninteresting ones. A lesser number of ideas, fully examined and well-articulated set the stage for genius.

Besides, it's so much easier to see the connections, the wholeness, the oneness of a few great ideas than it is to figure out the endlessly convoluted dotted lines between dozens or even hundreds of them. That's the other reason for insisting on neither more nor less than seven significant facts and seven executions.

It is the same with having neither more than three nor less than three propositions and strategies. Most importantly, that's why there needs to be only one Central Operating Principle. And there you have it. The story, art, science, and practice of Thinking Whole. Go out there and create the future YOU deserve, with all the genius of which you are fully capable.

The Workbook – for Teams & Organizations

Setting up the meeting Who should attend? Everyone who can ultimately "screw" things up belongs in the meeting. The key to success and ultimate 'buy in" is participation at the front end of the process. The people you exclude from coming up with the plan are the ones most likely to come up with objections and obstructions at implementation…

AND they just might have something useful to add to the conversation something with the potential to improve the team's thinking. The only pre-work required Each participant should bring a list of the three (no more and no less) most important facts that need to be considered in the meeting.

Setting up the room

• If the number of participants is eight or fewer, you only need one round table.

• Seating should promote intimacy and collegiality. Round tables are best at doing that.

• If total attendance is greater than eight, divide the team into sub-teams.

• The ideal sub-team at each round table should be no less than four people and no more than eight.

• Each table gets a flipchart and markers, along with scratch pads and pens. • Each table picks a table captain.

• Each table picks a "scribe" (who may or may not be the table captain as the captain will be the "spokesperson" for the group).

• The scribe's role will be to make sure all statements are written so as to be the most articulate rendering of the thinking; not the most cryptic.
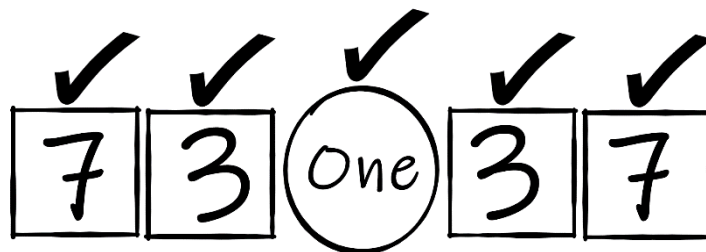
Setting up the Dynamic

• The team table is not the place for argumentation;

• It is the place for collective, collegial articulation.

• We are beginning to think together creatively OUT LOUD.

• You can't begin to argue all sides of an issue until all sides fully understand the issue.

• You can't understand that issue unless it's been fully and well-articulated.

• It is best to approach everything with the assumption that you don't already know the answer.

• We routinely take the role of being the "most ignorant" person in the room; mainly because that person can keep asking for clarification, without creating oppositional tension, and thereby end up getting the team to reach their best collective understanding of the issue

• Everyone gets to help hone each statement that goes up on the table board so that o It accurately describes the thinking it is meant to describe o It results from dialog between discussion among all members of the team at each table.

• Not only is it OK to ask questions; asking questions is the whole point • By the way, asking questions about an idea applies just as much to the person who proposes it as it does to the rest of the team.

• The proposer is the initiator of the idea.

• The proposer is not the defender of the idea.

• If you are not sure you understand what was said. Ask questions. Engage in discussion. • Use the group to make each statement as "perfect" as it can be.

• Remember: the goal is to understand every idea being proposed well enough to be brief!

• Everything that happens at each table is a full-participation, full-contact activity, with all hands-on deck.

• The table discussion will ultimately mirror the discussion of the whole team in the room at large.

Setting up the front of the room

• Two flip charts at the front of the room.

• Lots of wall space around the room on which you can post completed flipcharts.

• It is extremely helpful for everyone to see everything the team has accomplished throughout the meeting.

• Pick one wall where the sequence of completed "chunks" is displayed in order

        o 7 Significant Facts

        o 3 Propositions

        o ONE Central Operating Principle

        o 3 Strategies

        o 7 Executions

Think of this as a progress chart of the evolving work in progress. It will simultaneously focus, energize, and recognize the progress of the team.
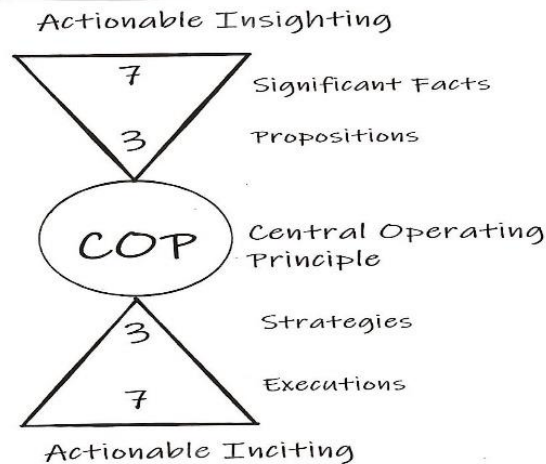

This is the one place where they can see what they have accomplished and what remains.

Setting Up the Mindset

There are only three things to remember throughout the exercise.

The Form:

The Mantra: "Trust the Form."

The Discipline: "Think Out Loud. Hear yourself. Hear everyone."

The person at the front of the room The pivotal, but not necessarily the most important, responsibility is that of the person at the front of the room. Instead of "moderator" or "facilitator," we prefer the title of "guide." The Oxford Dictionary defines "guide" as "a person who advises or shows the way to others."

The role of the guide in Thinking Whole is threefold:

1. Keep the team on the path of Thinking Whole and advancing towards the goal of Thinking Whole in pursuit of The Comprehensive Solution to their specific problem or issue.

2. In the real world where titles all too often substitute for wisdom, serve as the defender of ideas by ensuring each gets its opportunity for articulation and collegiality. Do not take sides with people.

3. Ask Questions. Get Clarifications. Accept only fully articulated responses for inclusion in The Form. Before you make your first outing in the role of Guide to Thinking Whole, you might want to review Chapter Two of Part Three of this book: Thinking Whole in the working world.

We suggest you pay particular attention to the part about Mitzi Perdue and the family business as it provides an excellent example of the function and the attitude needed to guide a Thinking Whole Session. If you're ready, let's walk through the process.

Let Thinking Whole Begin!

Exercise One: What Success Looks Like

The Guide: (speaking to the assembly) The first thing we should do is this - Take a moment. Close your eyes. Let's travel twelve months into the future. We are sitting together again twelve months from now. In that time, we have achieved everything that we intended to achieve in this meeting, here, today. Write only three answers on the form that follows.

The assembly needs to discuss and agree on THE THREE outcomes that prove we did our job exceptionally well today. (If there are many participants, you might do a table exercise first.) This is what success looks like 12 months from now:

1.

2.

3.

(Write on flipchart, complete, and post on the wall).

Exercise Two: Thinking Whole/Collective Native Intelligence

The Guide: What we're doing here is something called Thinking Whole. (Write "Thinking Whole" on flipchart) Thinking Whole is about getting groups like this one not only to a solution but also to the best possible thinking… even moments of real genius.

To make that happen, we're going to need to tap into something called the Collective Native Intelligence, of the team. Collective native intelligence is all the d The Guide: What we're doing here is something called Thinking Whole. (Write "Thinking Whole" on flipchart)

Thinking Whole is about getting groups like this one not only to a solution but also to the best possible thinking… even moments of real genius. To make that happen, we're going to need to tap into something called the Collective Native Intelligence, of the team.

Collective native intelligence is all the different intelligences each one of us has; not just by job title but also by all the different things we do, we know, we have experienced. (Write Collective Native Intelligence on the same flipchart and post on the wall where it will be visible throughout the session.)

Exercise Three Collective Native Intelligence Ice Breaker

The Guide: No matter how many people are in the room, this exercise is critical in its entirety. No matter how long it takes. It matters. We're going to go around the room, left to right. Please tell us three things about yourself.

1. Name and job title

2. Something about your family.

3. Most importantly, what do you do for fun?

I'll go first (to model the responses)? Go around the room and make sure everyone answers all three questions. If somebody says "I love going to the movies." Ask them: "What kind of movies?" or "Best movie you've ever seen?"

Why? Personal follow-up questions are very important. They will be demonstrating to the team that you, along with everyone else, is open to sharing.

As the guide, you need to be taking note of what people do for fun (either in memory or literally in notes). Why?

a) Because it gives you, and the rest of the room, a new insight into people they have worked with for years, in many cases. It's a wonderful validation of who they are.

b) Every "fun" activity thinking cap comes with a perspective that is different from that of the same person's "work thinking cap." They are not only not incompatible; they can also be incredibly synergistic.

c) These insights can be brought to the general discussion as they might be warranted or needed.

If, for example, somebody says they love to sail, then you might at some point tie in the navigational skills needed for sailing to the issues the team is addressing. Every time something like this happens, the team tightens in intimacy and enlarges in scope of thinking. This is a very good thing.

Exercise Four We are ready to start working on the list of 7 Significant Facts

The Guide: Thanks for sharing. Let's go to work. We're going to make a list of what should end up with the seven significant facts around which we will be working.

First of all, we're going to end up with no more than seven, and no less, than seven. No more than seven… because it's a fact that people can't get their arms around any more than seven ideas. So, what's the point of going higher.

Besides, it's that much more difficult to get to conclusions if we try to think of too many things at the same time. It's also true that the more ideas you throw up on the board, the less energy each one can tap. Fewer ideas, the more power each one has. Why no fewer than seven?

Because, having fewer than seven ideas means we haven't really considered this in its entirety. Besides, if somebody questioned you about a conclusion, and you had seven facts to back it up; you're pretty much guaranteed to win any argument with anybody having fewer.

Now, what's a significant fact? Well, nothing we might describe as "table stakes," or "the usual suspects" would qualify. We're looking for ideas with a lot of energy; something more visceral than cerebral. Use your intuition to feel that energy.

I ask that we be pretty rigorous about what makes the cut and what doesn't. That means challenging yourself before making a statement. Challenging yourself to say it so you do full credit to the idea. And challenging one another to get only the best, strongest, most dynamic, and cleanest ideas up on the board. Shall we?

Create this on the flipchart:

Using the form above, remind everyone they were asked to come with a list of the three most important things to be considered.

a. If there is only one group, proceed directly to the form.

b. If there are multiple tables in the room, give the assembly 15 minutes to make a collective list of 3 items from each table. THREE. No more. No less.

c. Have each table prepare its list Invite participation

But… Before you actually write the first suggested fact on the flipchart, ask the assembly whether they agree that the idea in question (in its current form at the moment) has enough merit and/or is clear enough to take a spot on the Significant Seven.

Don't take anything at face value. Don't write anything simply because the highest ranking person in the room is the one making the statement. You know you are being a good guide when you see people begin to help one another make the idea "good enough" to go up on the flip chart.

That's when the power of collective native intelligence starts kicking in. The best way to keep "upping" the energy and increasing both the amount and the degree of collegial participation in this, and subsequent exercises, is to invite everyone to "think out loud." What's that?

Thinking out loud is basically listening to yourself even as you express an idea; listen to each word as it connects to the next word, and the next, until you get to the end of what you are saying. The human mind is capable of reprogramming itself every microsecond.

We do this all the time. We reprogram our thinking, and what we say next, based on what we perceived in the previous microsecond. So, if you're really paying attention to what you are saying as you say it, you have plenty of opportunity to refine it before you have finished saying it.

That's the filter through which every idea proposed for the Significant Seven should pass. Repeat the same statement several times, out loud, and you will likely begin to see how the words should fit together rather than how they were put together in the first place
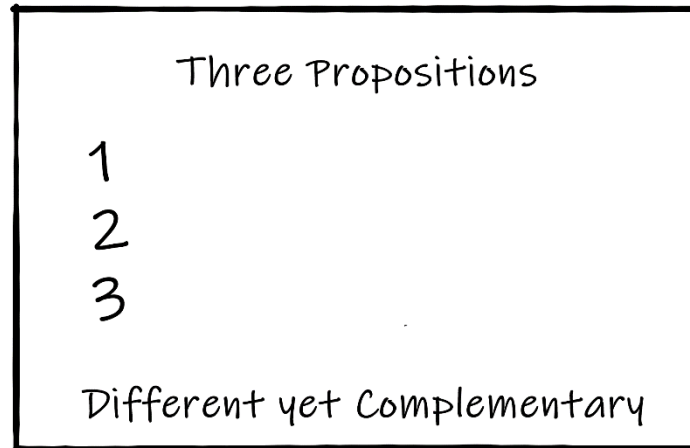
Thinking out loud (sometimes mistaken for the babbling of the insane) is one of the hallmarks of geniuses at work. It is the externalization of the evaluation, refinement, restatement, re-evaluation, etc., etc., etc. – in real time – that's going on in their brain. That's where you want to get to. Keep going until you have seven significant facts up on the board. Neither more nor fewer. If someone insists there's an 8th fact to consider, that's where the FUN begins.

The Guide: OK, we've got seven significant facts on the board right now. We said there can't be an 8th, yet now we've got one. For that to go up on the board, something has to come down. What has to come off the board to make room for this new idea?

Can we combine some things on the board to make room? Is this new idea a subset of anything already on the board? Are there ideas that are really subsets of ideas already up on the board? What do you all think?

When the Seven Significant Facts are all that is up on the flipchart… ask one more time if everybody's happy with where we've gotten to. If the consensus is "yes" then put the flipchart up on the wall where it can be seen.

The Significant Seven should be the first (going left to right) of all the 7-3-1-3-7 flipcharts that will get completed in the course of the session and put up on the wall. Next, it's time to turn facts in propositions. Seven facts are great fuel for thinking and seven is a great information foundation; but it is too much for making sense of information. That's where the propositions come in.
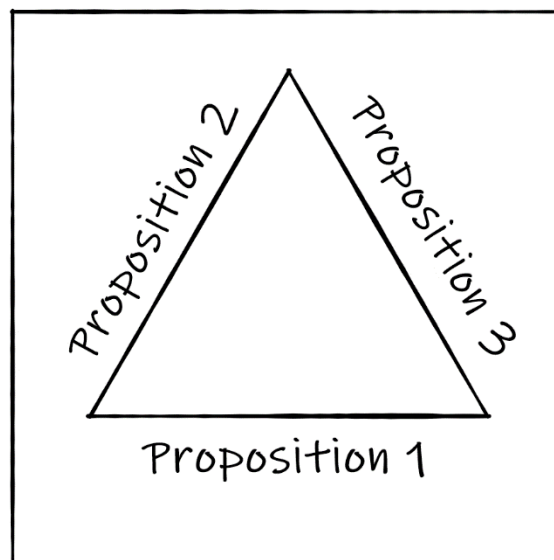
```
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│          Three Propositions         │
│                                     │
│   1                                 │
│   2                                 │
│   3                                 │
│                                     │
│   Different yet Complementary       │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
```

The best way to "tee up" the conversation about propositions might be to use the following scenario: The Guide: We are working to move this process from ideas to action plan. The next step in advancing the Seven Significant Facts is to derive from those facts a total of three propositions.

What's a proposition? Propositions are not summaries of the facts. Propositions are not the "Top 3" of the Significant Seven. If we look at the list of significant facts, what do they, collectively, say about the problem or the issue we're discussing?

These three observations need to be different and at the same time complementary. In the same way that 3 is the smallest number of sides that can enclose a space, or three is the smallest number of legs that can hold up a stool – what are the three things that make the facts more understandable, useful, or actionable?

Invite additional thinking-out-loud discussion until the team defines three statements to fill in the blanks on the proposition flipchart. When that's completed, put it up on the wall along with its finished counterparts.

The next step in Thinking Whole begins with this visual:

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│                  ▲                  │
│               ╱  │  ╲               │
│          P   ╱   │   ╲   P          │
│          r  ╱    │    ╲  r          │
│          o ╱     │     ╲ o          │
│          p╱      │      ╲p          │
│          o       │       o          │
│          s       │       s          │
│          i       │       i          │
│          t       │       t          │
│          i       │       i          │
│          o       │       o          │
│          n       │       n          │
│          2       │       3          │
│         ╱        │        ╲         │
│        ╱─────────┴─────────╲        │
│            Proposition 1            │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
```

Draw a triangle and write each of the propositions on one side of that triangle.

The Guide: The propositions are calling attention to the space around which they are arranged. The question for the team is: What is it that goes in the middle of the triangle? What one statement ties it all together? What is the Central Operating Principle we're looking for? Introduce the notion of a Central Operating Principle, or a COP, possibly using this visual:
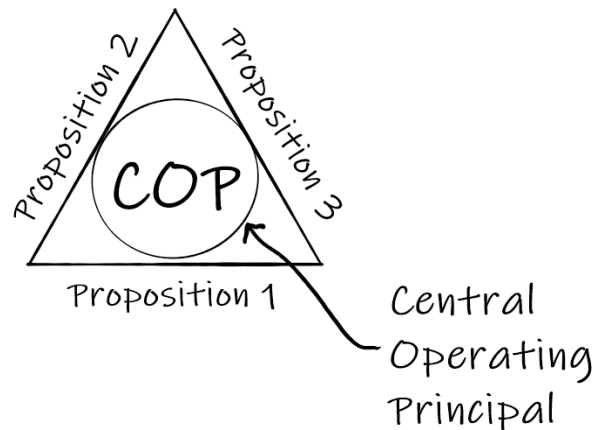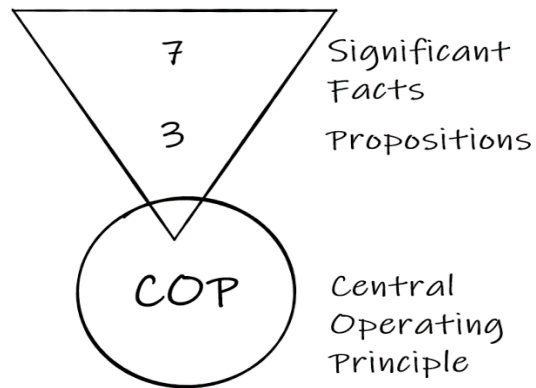

Invite discussion and fill the center of a circle on the flipchart with your Central Operating Principle.
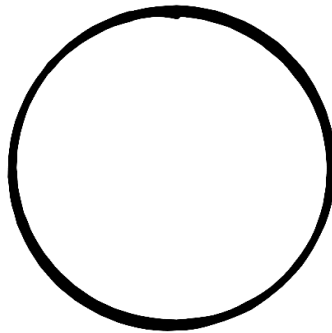
At this point, you and the team have completed the two elements of Thinking Whole, Actionable Insighting and Crystallization of the Central Operating Principle.

Actionable Insighting

7   Significant Facts

3   Propositions

COP   Central Operating Principle

The thinking part is done. It's time to get to the doing. The Central Operating Principle is not a passive conclusion – it should serve as the guide to action. It is an active statement.

The Guide: Now that we have defined the Central Operating Principle, it's time to incite some action. For that, we're going to need to come up with three action strategies, and three executions that flow from the Central Operating Principle.
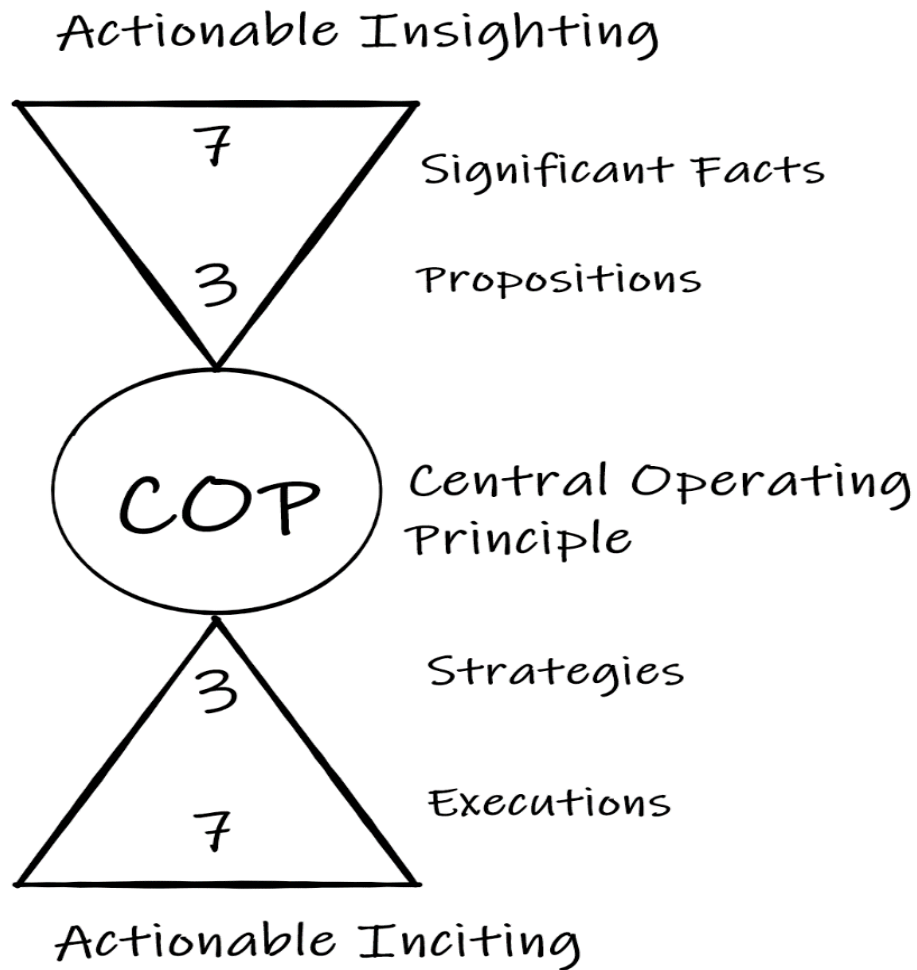
Actionable Inciting

COP   Central Operating Principle

3   Strategies
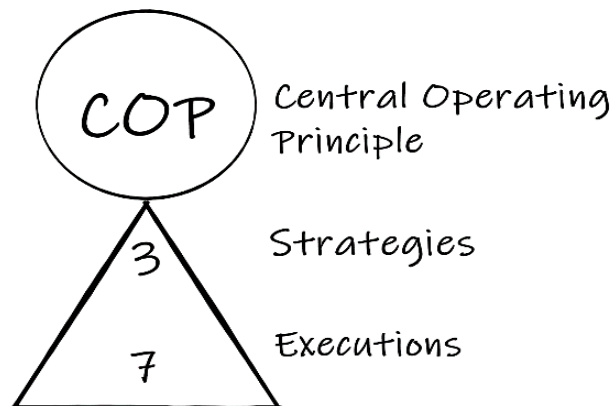
7   Executions

Let's start with a list of strategies we need to consider. Use this visual, and the same procedure to work on the list of strategies.

Three Strategies

1

2

3
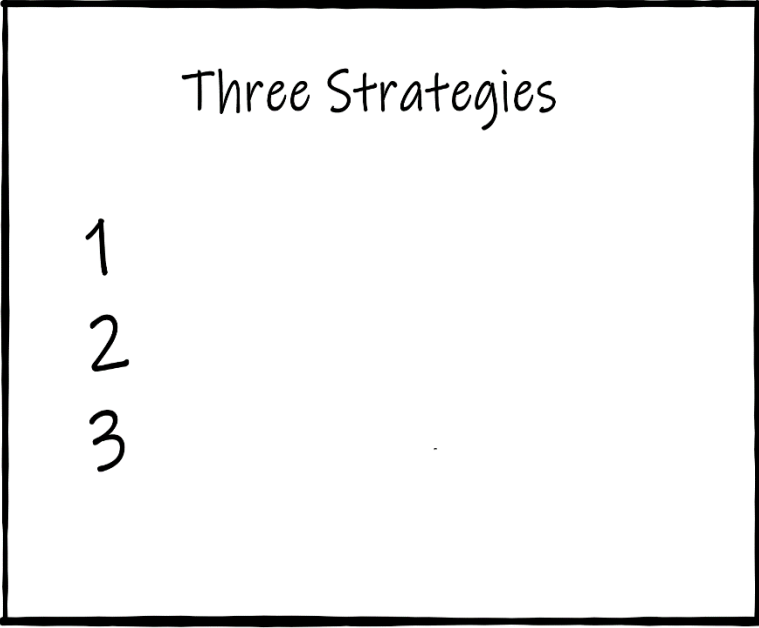
Use this visual, and the same procedure, to work on the list of executions.

Seven Executions

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Your completed process should reflect this form:

Actionable Insighting

7 — Significant Facts

3 — Propositions

COP — Central Operating Principle

3 — Strategies

7 — Executions

Actionable Inciting

Welcome to Thinking Whole. We hope you enjoyed the first ride.