Is This the Right Tool? Ask...

- Does your team have limited resources and need to focus its efforts on one or two priorities?
- Do you need a way to help your team use its collective experience and instinct, not just scientific data, to determine its best course of action?
- Does your team need to identify the cause and effect relationships among various issues?
- Is your team ready to identify not only the root issues, but also possible areas for measuring the success in treating those issues?
- Do you need a way of surfacing the values and priorities of team members?

Steps at a Glance

1. Start
2. Agree on the issue
   - Agreement: Yes → Assemble the right team
   - Agreement: No
3. Lay out the ideas
4. Look for relationships
   - Consensus: Yes → Review and revise
   - Consensus: No
5. Tally the arrows
6. Draw the ID
7. Share ID with others
   - Others have input? Yes → Incorporate input from others
   - Others have input? No
8. Select driver to work on
   - Try Tree Diagram for planning
Q. **How can this tool achieve credible results when it doesn’t use any quantifiable data?**

A. Teams are foolhardy if they don’t faithfully gather and use data to guide them. However, it’s important to remember that the collective experience and intuition resident in most working teams can be as powerful and reliable as much of the data they generate. If you encounter skepticism, remember to involve key stakeholders in the generation of the tool and the discussion that follows. Helping key players understand the logic behind the tool might make them more comfortable accepting the results.

Q. **Why not just have everyone determine the relationships individually and then compile the results?**

A. The tool’s explicit value is to help a team identify cause and effect relationships. A less obvious, but equally important benefit is the direct and often revealing discussion that occurs while constructing the ID. Besides forfeiting the chance to understand each other’s logic and assumptions, you’d also lose an opportunity for the people to surface and address, in a healthy way, the conflict and disagreement that is part of team maturation.

Q. **What's so bad about drawing two-headed arrows?**

A. The purpose of the ID is to determine cause and effect or influencing relationships between items. If people use a two-way arrow, they are essentially negating the impact of the relationship between two variables. Using two-headed arrows can also inadvertently allow team members to take an “easy out” of a meaningful discussion of why team members’ viewpoints may differ. Insisting on one-way arrows compels the team members to make their priorities and perceptions explicit.

Q. **Is the item with the highest number of “out” arrows always the one the team should work on?**

A. No. A team should apply common sense when reviewing its completed ID. Sometimes the team, for a variety of reasons, needs to have a quick and certain success. Team members might want to temporarily set aside an issue that surfaces as a driver if it is very complex or has a high degree of risk. Other reasons for not jumping into the issue with the most “out” arrows might include: the people needed to work on that issue are unavailable; the funding to address the issue properly is not available; team members have the energy and spirit to work on another issue that surfaced as a secondary driver, i.e., the item next closest in number of “out” arrows.
If: The team gets bogged down in a circular discussion on one specific relationship . . .

Then: Keep the statement of the problem the team is working on within sight at all times. Remind the team of its purpose, and try the “ID mantra”: state each of the two issues under consideration and then ask the questions “Is there a relationship?” “Which drives which?” Continually repeat this verbal cycle. The constant sing-song pattern seems awkward at first, but once you and the team get accustomed to the rhythm, it can really improve the pace and quality of the team’s work.

If: The team cannot decide which way the arrow should go . . .

Then: Remind the team that while it may seem appropriate for the arrow to go both ways, it should represent the relational direction that is strongest. The team can also use dotted lines, sparingly, to represent weak, but existing relationships. These will count for .5 when adding up the arrows. Consensus on the direction of the arrow is the objective. While “majority rules” decisions should be avoided, it can sometimes be helpful to ask all members to state their position. This also ensures that each team member has a chance to state his or her case. If after all this, the team is just “stuck,” draw the line in a different color without an arrowhead. Return to this relationship later. In the end it may be critical to fight for consensus or the result might be inconsequential in light of the final chart.

If: When the ID is complete, the team does not like or believe the result . . .

Then: Teams are frequently surprised by the results of their IDs. It’s that very revelation that sometimes leads the team to a breakthrough. Encourage people to apply logic to the result and to explore their discomfort: Does it make sense? Why does the result trouble team members?

LEARNING ACTIVITY

Often the most difficult part of getting accustomed to this tool is understanding the sequence and direction of placing the arrows. To help a timid group get more comfortable with this, try using a hands-on means to illustrate the process.

Put an almost complete ID on a flipchart, using Post-it™ Notes and visually appealing colors and icons. Have some of the arrows filled in, but leave five or six out. Fill in the missing arrows with the group. Spend a lot of time on each arrow, until you’re sure that each member of the team is comfortable with the decision.
What was the problem?
Andover, a town of nearly 30,000 people, located north of Boston, already enjoyed a reputation for its quality of life and excellent management. The challenge was to create a shared vision and practical plan for the future supported by citizens, elected officials, and employees.

Who was on the team?
Citizens provided input at a series of 6 public forums and there were separate IDs done by the Board of Selectmen (5 people), and the town department heads (12 people). The Town Manager participated in all meetings.

How long did the process take?
The citizen forums were done over a 4-month period. Each ID took about 1 hour and 30 minutes to complete.

What did we learn?
We learned that the keys to our future were extremely interdependent. Much of what our citizens told us we must be, depended on making progress on many fronts. Based on the issues with the greatest number of outgoing arrows, the ID showed us that there were a few key drivers that would create leverage if we made significant progress in those areas. We always have scarce resources and the ID showed us where we might get the greatest return on our investment. Likewise, the issues with the greatest concentration of incoming arrows showed us the key outcomes that would be the measure of success or progress for the entire process.

How was the team affected?
As with any team, both the Board of Selectmen and the municipal department heads have a history, some positive, some negative. The ID helped us to separate ourselves from the past and forced us to consider the merits of each issue. There was less “positioning” and more listening.

What else did we use?
The issues that we used in the IDs were actually header cards from separate Affinity Diagrams that each team had created. The input for the Affinities came from common issues that each team member took from the citizen forums.

What was the conclusion?
The Board of Selectmen and the municipal department heads, at a joint meeting, brought together the results of the separate processes. We were all pleasantly surprised at the level of agreement among team members on the overall issues, as well as those issues that included key drivers and results. Next, the Selectmen created a town vision statement that emphasized the critical importance of “treating citizens as valued, active customers” and “preserving the legacy of Andover.” Then the municipal department heads created mission statements for their departments that supported the vision statement.

What were the results?
With the creation of the vision complete, the real challenge is to likewise agree on reasonable budgets and plans that will move us closer to the vision each year.
A Vision of Andover in the 21st Century

Driver: If the focus on the citizen as a customer becomes the core of the town’s vision then everything else will be advanced.

Outcome: It puts the preservation of nature in the town as a key indicator of the vision working.
The ID allowed senior leaders to vent their ideas, concerns and frustrations, and later on we were able to make decisions with the information.

MSgt. Kemper Watkins

The ID was the next logical step after the Affinity. We chose the Affinity statement, “How do we effectively maintain quality initiatives in our organization?” to address critical issues many of the senior leaders are now facing. Many of the leaders in Air Combat Command (ACC) are now at the critical juncture where philosophy meets application.

Who was on the team?
The team was composed of ACC senior leaders. Senior leaders in this case were colonels and senior civilians from throughout the Command. Functional areas represented were Operations, Logistics, Civil Engineering, Inspector General, and Information Management.

How long did the process take?
The process took approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes. After completion, a discussion and refinement lasted about 30 minutes.

What did we learn?
Until we actually went through the process, we had originally concentrated on education and training as our cure-all for quality. As senior leaders, we felt that if everyone went through some sort of training, the implementation would sustain itself. Not so! By using the ID, we determined that leadership involvement and customer satisfaction were the main drivers. Only by agreeing to focus on these two key elements as key drivers to success, were we able to move forward effectively.

How was the team affected?
To realize the full impact of how the team was affected, it is helpful to know the attitude of the group before coming together. ACC has been formally working on quality for about 3 years. During that time, many senior leaders still harbored reservations about this “quality stuff.” By using the Management and Planning tools, especially the ID, we were able to capture those reservations and do something with them. This is key, that previous discussions about quality led nowhere. It didn’t occur to us that a tool existed that could help us capture these thoughts and do something constructive with them.

What else did we use?
From the Affinity to the ID to the Tree, and finally to the T-Matrix.

What was the conclusion?
The ID helped us come to consensus that even if we trained 100% of the base population, leadership support and customer satisfaction were paramount to sustaining quality. Individually, we all knew this. Collectively, we were able to do something about it and stop placing the blame elsewhere.

What were the results?
Using the results of the ID and our Culture and Leadership survey, we are now tapping the unparalleled resource of senior leadership instruction. From the Commander of ACC on down, senior leaders are now teaching their peers. We have found this is monumental in sustaining our quality journey.
## Maintaining Quality Initiatives: Exploring Leadership Involvement and Customer Satisfaction

### ID–Matrix Format (Variation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Logistic Support</th>
<th>Customer Satisfaction</th>
<th>Education &amp; Training</th>
<th>Personnel Incentives</th>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>Cause/Driver</th>
<th>Result/Rider</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Logistic Support</strong></td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Customer Satisfaction</strong></td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education &amp; Training</strong></td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personnel Incentives</strong></td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership</strong></td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Relationship Strength**

- ![Symbol] = 9 Significant
- ![Symbol] = 3 Medium
- ![Symbol] = 1 Weak or none

Information provided courtesy of U.S. Air Force, Air Combat Command
**Step 1 Agreeing on the Issue**

- **Keep the Issue Visible:** It’s absolutely essential to keep the problem/issue statement visible throughout the entire ID exercise. If you can fit the statement in the space that the team is using to work on the tool, do.

- **Agree on the Issue:** Invest as much time as the team needs to get agreement on this statement. Keep a single focus. Statements that are multipart, complex, or ambiguous will cause the team to have problems later. To test the statement, ask, “If we achieve this, what will things/our situation/the world look like?” If the team members can paint a clear scenario, then they will be clear about what they’re working toward.

**Step 2 Assembling the Right Team**

- **Team Makeup:** It’s been said before, but it warrants reinforcement. This tool requires a team with in-depth knowledge of the issue at hand. Large variations in knowledge and understanding within the team will result in frustration as those less informed struggle to keep up and those with more information reach for a higher level of discussion.

- **What to Do with Big Teams:** IDs with large groups (more than 10 people) can be very positive experiences. After all, more minds means more ideas and information. Potential challenges and suggested solutions include:

  **Challenge**
  Some people simply won’t have the courage to speak up in a crowd that size. The team could lose some valuable input.

  **Solution**
  It’s impractical to call on everyone, but keep your eye out for people who seem to have something to say, but never quite get it out. Look directly at them or just gesture with your hand. Usually everyone else will follow your gaze.

  **Challenge**
  It’s difficult to assess the consensus of the group, since there are almost always views representing different sides of an issue.

  **Solution**
  This is one of the rare cases where hand voting might actually be okay. Don’t count hands in detail, but asking for a show of hands should give you a general idea of where potential consensus might lie.

  **Challenge**
  Not everyone can read the ID items from a distance.

  **Solution**
  Forego the use of Post-its™ and write as large as is needed over multiple sheets of flipchart paper.
**Who’s in Charge Around Here?**

With this tool, it’s important for you not to participate in the content of the discussion if you are to be an effective facilitator. It’s also best not to be overbearing in your guidance of the group. However, when it comes to the mechanics of the tool, you must project a sense of authority and confidence and help people trust the process. Here are some tips.

**Do’s**
- Do step in when the discussion is only taking place between two people. This is not the appropriate environment for personal duels.
- Do point out patterns in the discussion and areas of commonality.
- Do encourage the team to help shape the process in terms of scheduling, people who should be on the team, and the issue to be worked on, but again, preserve the main essence of the tool process.

**Don’ts**
- Don’t draw an arrow just because one person insists. Keep asking questions and make sure that when an arrow is drawn, it represents the whole team.
- Don’t judge the comments of team members. Even a subtle gesture from you can sway the direction of the team.
- Don’t give in on the essential elements of the tool process. It might be tense at times, but team members will thank you for it later.
Anchors Away

Don’t lose track of where the team is. It’s easy in the midst of a heated discussion to forget which relationship is being discussed. Try drawing an anchor on a Post-it™ and placing it next to each issue as it’s being addressed. Then move the anchor to the next issue as the team completes the one before. Also, put a check next to each issue as it is completed. It helps team members feel they’re making progress and allows you to know when they’ve completed the full cycle.

Are We There Yet?

IDs take time, especially if you want to foster good discussion throughout the process. Be sure to set aside sufficient time so that the team won’t feel rushed or frustrated.

Also, if the tool goes on for more than an hour, take a break. This work can be fatiguing, and tired, cranky people are not very productive. An ID with 10 items might take between one and three hours.

**STEP 5 REVIEWING AND REVISIONING**

Sanity Check

It’s a good idea to invite people outside the team to provide feedback on the ID the team has generated. As the team’s coach, you can serve as an impartial liaison for the flow of that feedback.

People who might be invited to review the ID include:

- Those who will be affected by work on the issue that surfaced as the driver and/or was selected for further attention.
- People who will be key to providing leadership and authority over the processes related to the issue selected.
- Members of other departments who the team members might want to solicit support from in the future as they work on the selected item.

Making Changes

It’s important to preserve the integrity of the team’s original work. People frequently refer back to old versions of tools to remember their logic or to capture something that was lost in a later iteration.

The Memory Jogger Plus® Software is useful in this instance. A person can draw the ID in the software, make an electronic copy of it, and incorporate changes onto the copy without disrupting the original.

**STEP 6 TALLYING THE ARROWS**

Time Saver

Have each team member count the arrows going in and out for an issue. This adds to the fun in the group and keeps everyone involved. It doesn’t matter how the arrow information is recorded as long as it is consistent among the issues.
What are some variations in recording the direction of the arrows?

- In = 3 or 3\(\frac{1}{5}\) or 3,5
- Out = 5 or 5

**What Does It All Mean?**

The team is not done when the arrows are counted. Help them process the results of their effort by asking, “Does this make sense?” “Are you surprised at the result?” “What now?”

This is often the most rewarding discussion in the process. Congratulate the team and let them linger in the discussion. This will help reinforce the result and buoy them for the next steps.

**Visual Guidance**

As mentioned in The Memory Jogger™ II, you can indicate the drivers and outcomes with a bold box and double box, respectively. Other options include using different colors or shapes to distinguish them from each other. Let the team decide and then have them stick to the same method in the future to avoid confusion.

**It’s Alive!**

It might look like something from the arthropod family, but the ID is the child of the team’s work together. Don’t be surprised if team members seem possessive and protective of their ID. You may hear them say things like, “Yeah, it might look stupid, but it really does make sense,” “I know it’s confusing, but let me explain,” or “You really had to be there.”

When sharing the ID with others, suggest that the team leave out the lines and arrows. Just keep the number of ins and outs next to each item. This will present a more palatable image to the recipient. The team can share the glory of the lines and arrows later.

Another alternative, when the ID is being shared with others, is to use the ID-Matrix format to summarize the results.
Taking a Fun Camping Trip

Assemble and bring the right equipment

Create a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere

Select an appropriate campsite

Determine everyone’s preferences

Shop for and prepare food

Outcome

Driver

In = 0  Out = 1

In = 1  Out = 1

In = 1  Out = 1

In = 0  Out = 3

In = 4  Out = 0

In = 1  Out = 0