Mental Models: The Key to Making Reality-Based Decisions

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Objectives

• Define mental models and describe how they influence the workplace.
• Identify your own mental models.
• Recognize the assumptions in your mental models.
• Reveal hidden assumptions.
• Avoid typical mental mistakes.
• Implement strategies to adjust inaccurate mental models.

Activity

• What do you expect this webinar to be like?
Definition of a Mental Model

Your perception of reality about how something works in the real world.

Benefits and Drawbacks

Serve as information filter
Make you more efficient at processing information
Predict behaviors, decisions and actions
Eliminate internal confusion
Simplify complicated strategies

Not always based on facts
Blind you to ideas that challenge deeply held beliefs
Divert your attention from important cues
Not always accurate when you generalize
May limit you to familiar ways of thinking

What Do You Predict Will Happen?

- Established mental model: Hand will burn
- Hand will not burn (induction cooktop)
Activity: Driving a Car

- Pros of a mental model
- Cons of a mental model

Origins of Mental Models

- Influence of others
- Personal experience
- Rewards and incentives
Comparing Mental Models

Reading requires a physical book
Reading can take place in audio, digital, and hard copy formats
Gourmet food can be created in a truck
High quality requires a local agent
Fine dining happens sitting down
High quality is achievable online

Companies That Adjusted Their Mental Models

Nintendo  Tiffany & Co.  Intel
LG  Life's Good  GAP  Xerox

Activity: Adjusting Mental Models

Public library
Separate Facts from Opinions

- Observable and verifiable information
- Opinions based on the data
- Value judgments we place on the data

Clarify Assumptions

- What are my assumptions?
- What are your assumptions?
- What do we really know and what are we assuming?

Reveal Hidden Assumptions

- What do you believe that others do not?
- What things in your daily life do you take as a matter of fact?
- How do you explain the actions and decisions of others?
- How do you predict what others are going to do?
Case Study: Polaroid

Mistaken assumptions

- Customers will always want hard copies of their images
- Photographic chemistry is our core essence
- Digital photography isn’t viable because it doesn’t involve film

Assumption Traps

- Noticing what supports your mental model and ignoring what doesn’t
- Remaining attached to what made you successful
- Not trying what you believe is bad or impossible
- Focusing on current situation, not anticipating

Assessing Accuracy

- What data do you have or can you collect that will support (or refute) your mental model?
- What assumptions, interpretations, or evaluations are included in your mental model that may or may not be accurate or valid?
- What predictions or expectations have you made based on mental model? How can you determine their accuracy?
- What missing information do you need to assess the accuracy of your mental model? In other words, what are you guessing at?
Be Willing to Change

- What would happen if you didn't change your mental model?
- How important is changing your mental model to the success of the organization?

Open Your Mind

- Tune in
- Look for opportunities
- Challenge yourself

Creative Swiping

- Do different things in the same way
- Do the same thing in different ways
- Do different things in different ways
Reverse Your Assumption

- State your assumption.
- Reverse the assumption and write the opposite.
- Consider the actions/behaviors/consequences of the opposite assumption.
- What information does that provide about the accuracy of your assumption?

Practice Thinking in New Ways

\[ X = I + XI \]

Practice Thinking in New Ways

- What word goes with "garage"?
  a. Sun
  b. Bake
  c. Star
Creating New Mental Models

• What industry can you study for ideas?
• What can you adapt from that industry?
• What level of service can you add or subtract from your current mental model?
• What can you add or eliminate from your existing mental model?
• What other uses can you find for your existing products and services?
• How can you combine them to come up with something new or different from your competition?
• Describe your new, more accurate mental model.

Thank You

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