SevenCs™

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

WELCOME TO SEVEN CS™

This manual presents the guidelines to use the innovation tool SevenCs™.

SevenCs is designed to help innovators at all levels to analyse, challenge and expand their worldviews.

It is a mapping tool, that can help drive the early stages of business development.

If you have any questions about the model, the process or how to facilitate please reach out to us at *www.workz.dk*

WHAT IS SEVENCS?

SevenCs is a tool designed to help innovators at all levels to analyse, challenge and expand their worldview and find potential for innovation.

The scope can be the innovation of a whole organization (e.g. a company), the innovation of a specific product or service (e.g. a soft drink), or the rethinking of a particular demand (e.g. health care).

A SevenCs analysis consists of interviewing individuals or organisations in order to explore and map explicit knowledge, unspoken values and assumptions.

We recommend that you use SevenCs in the initial steps of a development process. Hereafter, the SevenCs can be used as a helpful, common point of reference to keep your efforts on track.

Seven Cs can be used internally or externally with clients depending on the need.

As you go through this manual, keep in mind that depending on your context there will be different needs and requirements for the facilitator as well as the participants.

Sometimes, it makes sense to bring in people from outside the organisation, sometimes it does not.

Sometimes, internal experts can bring forth helpful specialist knowledge but at other times it just makes a lot of noise.

Sometimes, the facilitator solely runs the process, but he or she may take the role of the devil's advocate during the ideation session too. It's your call.

There are many ways to use SevenCs. The tool can provide a quick analysis of an existing situation, a source of endless ideas, or the basis for a concrete action plan.

This manual describes the basic SevenCs process, along with some ideas for tweaks and added steps. As you gain experience, you will find your own ways to use the tool.

ELEMENTS AND CONCEPTS OF THE MODEL

Before we go into each step of the process, we will take a look at the elements of the SevenCs model and the central concepts supporting it.

THE SEVEN CS

What we are looking for in the analysis and exploration is a snapshot of the worldview of an entity such as a society, an organisation or an individual. In order to provide a structured view the SevenCs model appears as follows:

Customers

Customers are the people you serve, and you should interpret the category broadly.

Customers can be end-users, those who purchase your product or service, or other people who benefit directly or indirectly from it. In this sense, the customer could also be you or your own company depending the context.

Capabilities

All the capabilities of the organization including proprietary technologies and specialized skills.

Capabilities also includes financial, physical and intellectual property resources.

If you are using the model to focus on a product rather than an organisation, you can think of this field as characteristics and features instead.

Competitors

Competitors is a straightforward category that covers all actors you compete with for market, attention, time, positions, etc.

You will often find it hard to distinguish between competitors and collaborators.

Collaborators

Your allies and friends. This could be e.g. subcontractors, distributors or research partners.

Think of the collaborators as your network.

Culture

The corporate culture, values and mindset of the organization. Are you driven by fear, hope, ambition or pride? The culture describes how things are done in your team or organisation.

If you are mapping a product think of Culture as the "personality" of the product.
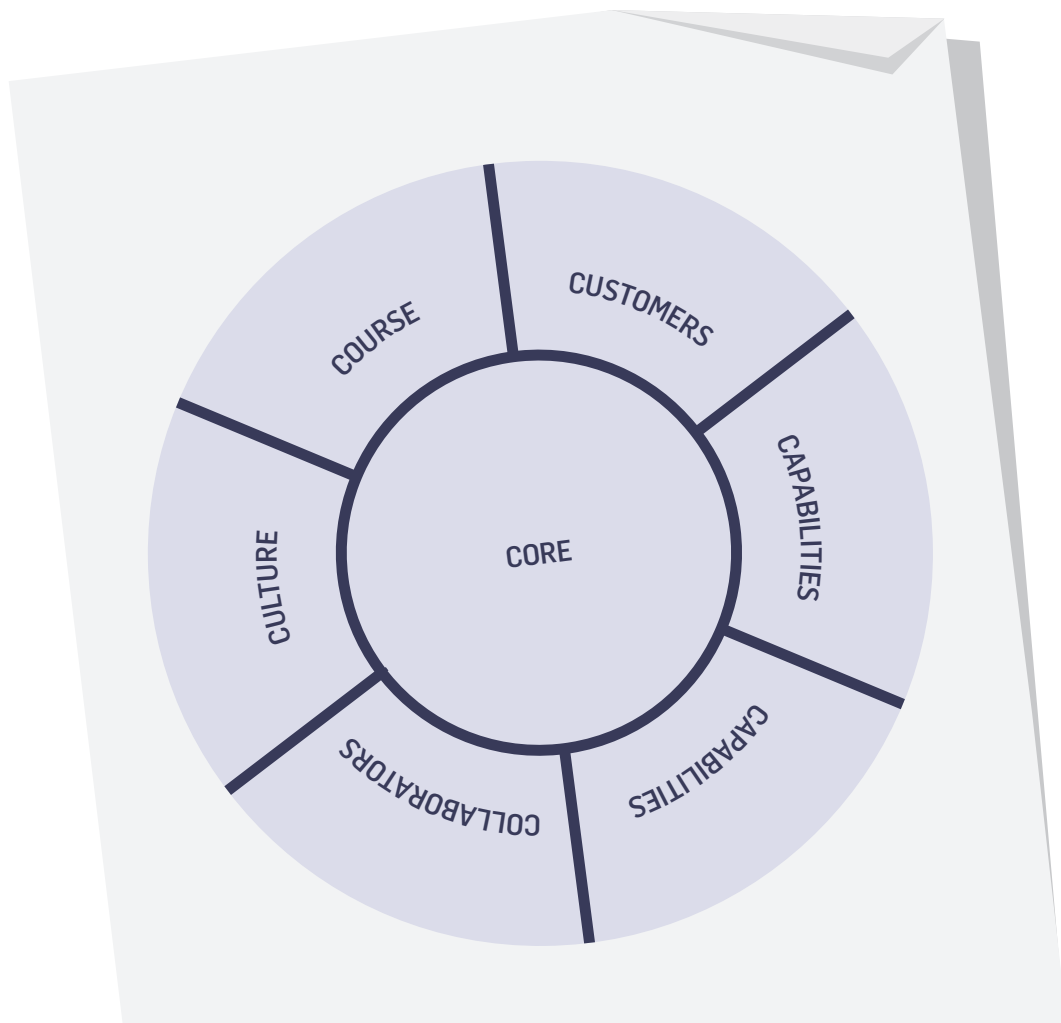
Course

Where would the organisation go if it were set on autopilot in accordance with the current strategy - or lack of strategy? Is it "make faster cars!" or "organic growth of 7% per year"?

The course is the explicitor imnplicit strategy for the organization.

Core

This is the essence and the unarticulated (tacit) part of the organization. The core is often closely related to the culture of the organization.

Often it is difficult to identify the core because it is embedded deeply in the organization. Do not blindly accept the official organisational values as the core.

For this reason, it may be relevant for your process to invite people external to your organisation in order to get an outside perspective and avoid blindness.

BASE AND MISSION

A strategic innovation process can be seen as a journey into the unknown in search for something new, which can be brought back home to help restore or create prosperity.

SevenCs is a tool for mapping the terrain and planning the course before the actual journey begins.

The Base

In order to find the right solutions, the participants must decide, what they are trying to transform through strategic innovation; a place, a product, an organisation?

This focus will be the target of your mapping. We call it the *Base*.

The Mission

The journey is driven by a *Mission*, which defines the desired change and guides the whole process as a point of reference.

A good *mission* is a short pitch, which states the motivation and the ambitions for the process, e.g.: *"Our market share is lagging behind on the important European markets when it comes to the younger customers. We know that our brand awareness is weak in this segment but there might also be other problems. Go fix."*

THE PRACTICALITIES

THE SEVEN CS SESSION

A SevenCs session consists of three phases. Each phase is essentially a brainstorm followed by a prioritisation.

The phases have a flexible time frame. We suggest that you set aside roughly the same amount of time for each phase.

Phase 1: Mapping the known (1-3 hours)
In this phase, the participants analyse the current situation in relation to each of the SevenCs. The result of the mapping phase is the state of affairs as they relates to the *mission*.

Phase 2: Expanding the horizon (1-3 hours)
In this phase, the participants identify potential sources of inspiration and development in order to broaden the traditional perception of opportunities and possibilities. This is the time to bring in new perspectives and possibly invite outsiders in for inspiration.

Phase 3: Finding possible futures (1-3 hours)
In the final phase, the participants plan their journey ahead and explore scenarios for the future by describing a vision. The outcome is not a specific idea or concept – it is a framework for further development.

Before the session starts participants will need to determine the *Base* to work on and their *Mission*.

Later on page 8 there is a step-by-step guide through the three phases of SevenCs.

It should be noted, that there are many ways to use SevenCs. It can be a quick analysis of an existing situation, a source of endless ideas, or the basis for a concrete action plan. This manual describes the full SevenCs process, but as you gain experience, you will find your own ways to use the tool.

THE PARTICIPANTS

SevenCs is best used by teams of three to seven participants. If more than seven people participate, we recommend that you form two teams that work in parallel.

A good team is comprised of members who know the *Base* from different angles. Whether you are using SevenCs with clients or internally, you should find members from different departments of the organization and with different levels of seniority, or even outside the organisation.

In addition, the teams could include insiders with intimate knowledge about the *base* and as well as outsiders (e.g. customers, board members, employees if the team consists of managers or vice versa) with the ability to ask unexpected questions in phase 2.

Remember, how you cast the teams depends on their specific context and goal. However, if the team consists of insiders only, the conversation tends to get wrapped up in old assumptions, whereas a group consisting of outsiders only will fail to appreciate and utilize the uniqueness and history of the *base*.

THE FACILITATOR

As the facilitator your role is to introduce the method, run the process and coach the participants in their teamwork.

SevenCs is an easy process to facilitate as the team(s) quickly gain independence. As such, it is possible for one facilitator to oversee several teams working in parallel on the same or on different cases.

The key tasks of the facilitator are:

- To formulate the *Mission* and *Base* before the session begins or to instruct participants to prepare their version of the *mission* prior to the session.

- To gather any background information that might be needed. This could be surveys, product samples or reports.

- To cast the members of each *Team*.

- To take care of the all the practicalities – e.g. materials, post-it notes, setting up the room, etc.

- To start the session with a short introduction of the purpose and the overall program.

- To be a timekeeper. People can talk forever if you let them.

- To run the process and make the transitions between the different phases.

OTHER PRACTICAILITIES

As the facilitator you need to be aware of the following practical details.

The table and room

To use SevenCs you need a big table. The table should big enough to place one or two SevenCs board nicely in the middle. Alternatively you can have the model mounted on workboards and place it on easels so that it takes up less space.

If you are facilitating several sessions in parallel, we recommend that you place all the teams in the same room.

Time

A standard session takes between one and three hours per phase. A long one-day workshop is adequate for going through the three phases.

If needed, it is possible to speed up the process and go through the three phases in a half-day workshop. However, we do not recommend this as it leaves little time for reflection and in-depth discussions.

Materials

Have the following material ready for each team:

- Two SevenCs boards. If you print them yourself we suggest scaling them at 70x70 cm as a minimum. The boards we use are 100x100 cm.

- A generous pile of sticky-notes, notepaper and markers. Use thick markers to help steer the participants towards writing short statements on the post-it notes.

It is also helpful to have a collection of materials in the room that describe the case you are working with or serve as inspiration. It can be posters, product samples, presentation materials etc.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

It is a good idea to make a quick SevenCs of your own before starting the session.

This way you get to prepare yourself on how to apply the six Cs to the case.

PHASE 1: MAPPING THE KNOWN

In this phase, the participants analyse their current situation in relation to each of the SevenCs. The result of the mapping phase is the state of affairs relating to the *mission*.

A: INTRODUCTION

Make a quick round of presentations so all participants are well acquainted, and present the agenda of the workshop.

Divide the participants into teams and hand out one board and a stack of post-it notes to each team.

Introduce the seven fields (the SevenCs) and the *Base* and the *Mission*. Make a short introduction of the basic rules and explain that the first board is a map of 'as is' whereas the second board is a map of 'to be'.

B: INITIAL BRAINSTORM

To begin the process, the team members work individually. Ask the them, to (quickly) add a steady flow of notes to the six outer fields of the model. At this point they are not to put anything in the *Core*.

Each team member must provide at least one key-word in each of the six fields.

At the end of this initial brainstorm, there will be numerous keywordson the board, and it's time to narrow them down.

C: NARROWING DOWN

The team must now agree on the three most important keywords in each of the six fields sourrounding the Core.

Importance is always decided in relation to the *Mission*. A key-word can be important for the *Base* but have little relevance to the *Mission* at hand.

In this process a lot of notes will be discarded. Don't get rid of them just yet but place them at the rim of the board.

It is OK to add new notes at this stage, just like some notes can be rewritten or combined.

Once the selection is done there must be exactly 18 notes on the board.

D: EVALUATION

The last chance to review and fine-tune the six fields of the board.

The team must place each note so that the most important keyword in each field is placed closest to the centre of the board (still within the same field on the board).

E: THE CORE

Finally, the teams have to write three notes to be placed in the Core. These will typically be copies of the notes placed closest to the center but it is possible to write new key-words.

At the end of this step there must be 21 notes on the board, three in each of the seven fields.

F: PRESENTATION

Ask the teams to give short presentation of their work and decisions.

This concludes the first phase.

WRITING GOOD NOTES

When working with the SevenCs board, we use keywords written down on small post-it notes.

Instruct participants to write only one keyword or short sentence on each note. They may compile two, three or more keywords into one note if it makes sense.

It is alright to use internal jargon or references if everybody on the team understands it.

Avoid umbrella-terms like "values" or "products" - instead have them write the specific value or product that makes most sense.

PHASE 2: EXPANDING THE HORIZON

In this phase, the participants identify potential sources of inspiration and development in order to broaden their perception of opportunities and possibilities.

This is the time to bring in new perspectives and possibly invite outsiders in for inspiration and provocation.

The phase is not about ideas for new things; it is about discovering the hidden aspects or untapped potential of the current situation.

A: INTRODUCTION

Make a short introduction to the purpose of this phase and remind participants to focus on the *Mission*.

B: INITIAL BRAINSTORM

Start with a quick brainstorm. Once again, each team member works individually adding post-it notes to the board.

The keywords in this phase should describe potential areas of interest and inspiration. Thinking outside the box is of the essence here. Nothing is too provoking or weird.

This time the participants work on the rim of the model, placing the sticky-notres along the outer edge of the six fields.

As in the previous phase each team member must place at least one keyword alongside each of the six outer fields.

Consider using post-it notes of a different color for this phase.

C: NARROWING DOWN

Participants now select the three most interesting keywords for each of the six fields.

When the work is done there must be a maximum of 39 notes on the board; three on each of the seven fields of the model and three on the rim along the six outer fields.

D: PRESENTATION

If time allows, we recommend that each team present their board.

This concludes the second phase.

EXTERNAL PARTICIPANTS

It can be difficult for the teams to look at themselves from the outside.

For this reason, it makes sense to invite some external participants to assist with new perspectives and challenging questions.

Who should you invite?
External participants must be selected to provide a different but useable perspective on the *Base* and *Mission*.

Invite people who has a different view on one or more of the six outer fields of the Seven Cs model BUT also has something in common with the teams.

For instance, externals can have a diferent take on Customers – *invite the manager of a hotel to a workshop about a hospital* – or on the Course – *invite a seasoned corporate strategist to a start-up workshop.*

Resist the temptation to invite people whos only skill is that they a very innovative.

When is the best time?
Phase 2 is the perfect place to use exernals because the very nature of the work done here is to be expansive and out-of-the-box.

The externals provide little value in the first phase as they do not know the *Base* that is being mapped.

The same goes for the 3rd phase as the task here is to explore futures that the internal team find promising.

Presentations
Consider letting each external make a short presentation that inspires and provokes the teams. This could take place after the introduction of phase 2.

PHASE 3: FINDING POSSIBLE FUTURES

In the final phase, the participants plan the journey ahead and explore scenarios for the future by rethinking the situation.

Remember, the outcome is not a specific idea or concept – it is a framework for further development.

This phase is where we get to make ideas and work on how things could be.

A: INTRODUCTION

Make a short introduction to the purpose of this phase. Again, recap the importance of the *Mission.*

Place a new board on the table of each team and remind participants that the first board is a snapshot of 'as is' whereas the second board is a snapshot of 'to be'. This difference is crucial so make sure that everybody is aware of the change.

B: COPY NOTES

The team must now select keywords from the first board that are essential or can provide inspiration for the future situation.

Notes can be selected in various ways:

Some of the keywords in Core are indispensable and must be included.

Other notes from the first phase are carried over if they are relevant to the *Mission.*

Notes added in the second phase might also be so full of potential that they are to be included.

Keywords should be copied to new notes, not removed from this first board.

C: MAKING THE VISION

Now the most creative part of session starts. The team must work together to complete the vision for a radically innovative solution to the *Mission.*

Only the seven inner fields of the board are used and there must be a maximum of three keywords in each field.

The team(s) should take inspiration from the first board but they can also make completely new keywords.

During their work the team can try to move some of the keyword from one field to another - *for example moving a competitor to a collaborator.*

Also, the team can take seemingly negative keywords and try to flip them to look for positive elements – for example turning *"no-risk culture"* into *"pride in flawless quality"*.

When this step ends there must be 21 keywords, three in each of the seven fields.

D: FIND THE TITLE

The teams are asked to review their sketches and come up with a descriptive title including a punch line or motto for their vision. Good titles are often funny and easy to visualize – and helps people remember the result later on.

E: FEEDBACK AND ADJUSTMENT

Ask the teams to present their futures to the other teams for constructive feedback. If there is only one team you ask them to present to you, so that you can give feedback.

Ask the audience to only ask for clarifications or offer improvments. The goal is not to agree bwteen the futures, but to get as many potential futures as possible.

Each team, now make a review of their vision, including the title, and make any adjustments to the notes they feel is nessecary based on the feedback.

This is the final chance to change things.

F: FINAL PITCH

The teams take turns presenting their vision, using the pitch as speaking notes. The presentation is done standing in front of the two boards.

It is a good idea to invite some guests to view the presentation as it is motivating to have someone to pitch to after a hard workshop.

These guests could be customers, management or colleagues from other parts of the organization. Also remember to invite any externals who helped out early in the process.

Remember to set aside some time for reflection and feedback on the process in the end.

EXAMPLE BOARDS
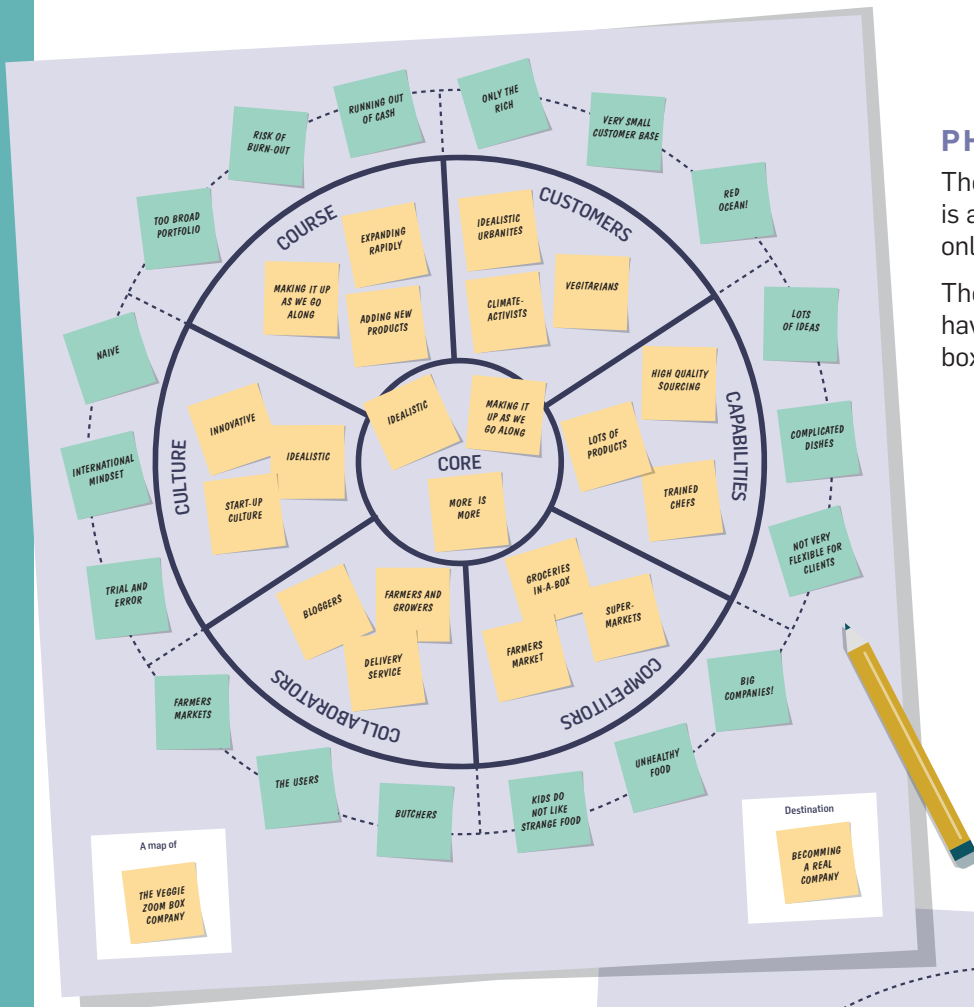
PHASE 1 AND 2: NOW

The Veggie Zoom Box Company is a start-up in the crowded field of online croceries and meals-in-a-box.

Their focus is on vegetarian food and have a very broad range of different boxes to choose from.

PHASE 3: THE FUTURE

As a result of the Seven Cs process they end up realising that their current customer focus is too narrow and their product portfolio is too broad to maintain and too inflexible for the clients to use.

They decide to go after veggie-curious customers instead of pure vegitarians, and to sell a small selection of boxes designed to be combined with whatever the clients feel like eating.

This opens up the possiblility of collaborating with local butchers and farmers markets to offer com-plimentary boxes to their meat.

They like their current culture, and their high quality of products, so nothing is changed here.
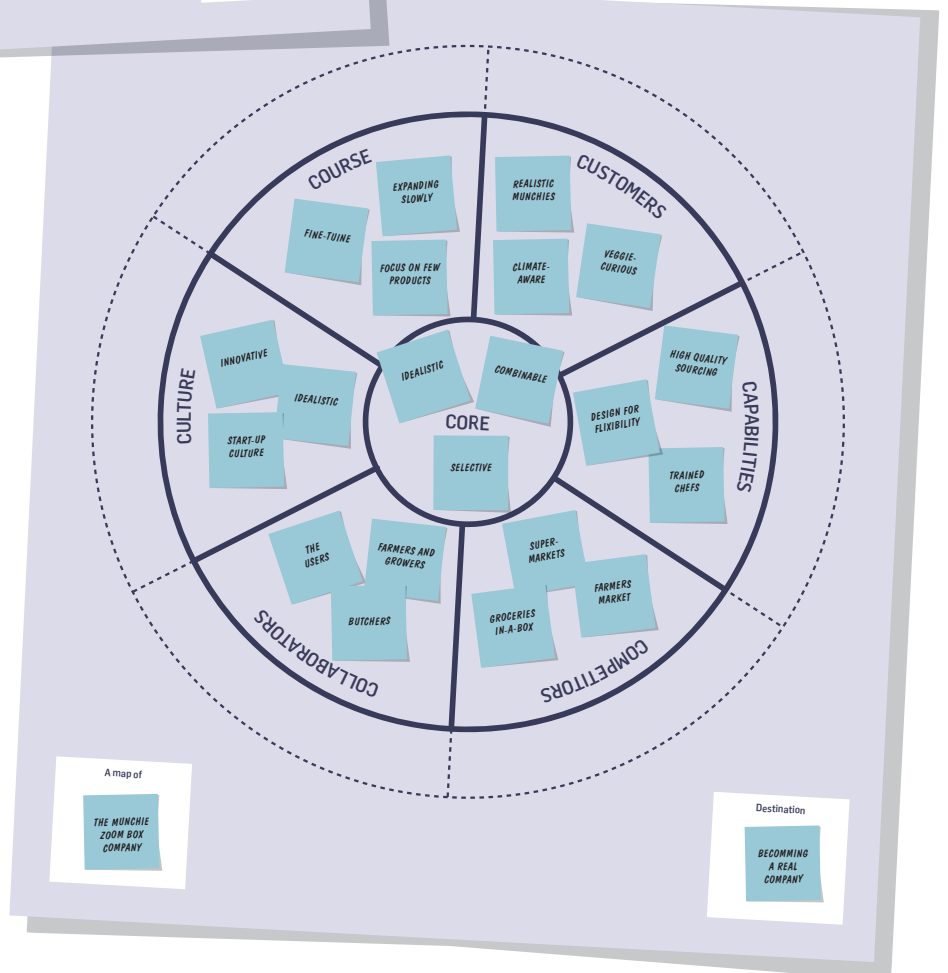
BACKGROUND

SevenCs is partly based on the work of Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky, who developed the notion of the Zone of Proximal Development, also known as ZPD. ZPD has its origin in educational research and today it is broadly understood as the zone between what is known and what is unknown.

In this zone, individuals are ready and able to receive new input with guidance and facilitation. In other words, it is the zone to absorb ideas that are not yet known or accessible, but relevant to us. It is a great place for new discoveries, and unlocking this zone is not a one-woman job.

Organizations and societies differ very little from individuals in this regard. They too, have formed zones of what is known and what is unknown. Like individuals, organisations have been shaped by their experiences, and over time the totality of these experiences will in essence define a worldview. This view of the world decides what is seen as relevant or irrelevant, possible or impossible, useful or useless in the eyes of the individual, or the organisation.

As such, innovation processes in organizations are very similar to the individual learning processes in which new input is taken in and worldviews are altered or challenged. This is why ZPD is a great basis for an innovation tool.

NO. 01

Zone of Proximal Development

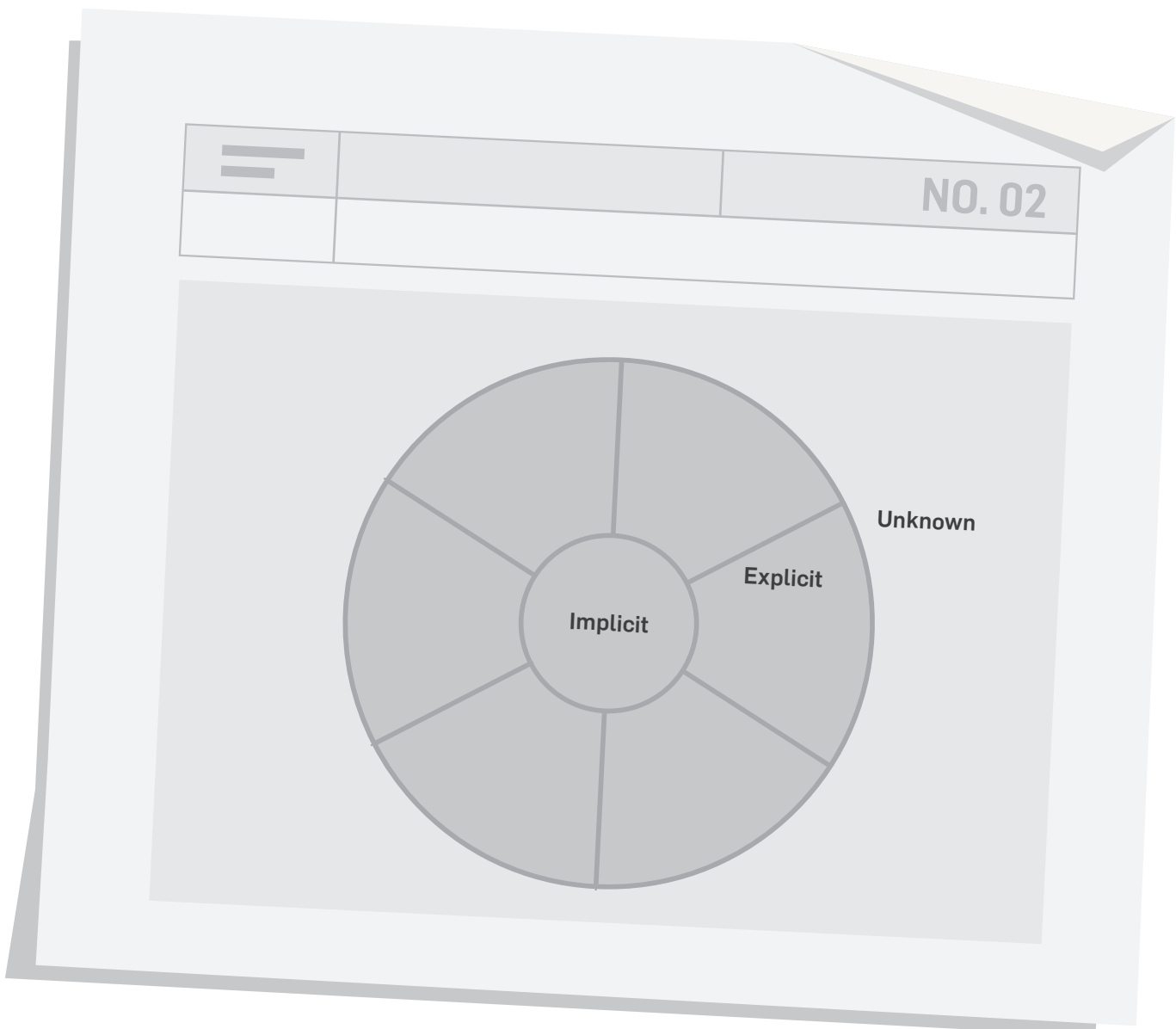What I can't do

What I can do with guidance

What I can do

CIRCLES OF LIFE

Building on Lev Vygotsky's thinking, the basic structure of the SevenCs model is also based on the notion that entities be it societies, organizations or individuals can be described by the two circles of life.

The inner circle contains the subconscious and unarticulated such as tacit knowledge, assumptions and taboos surrounding the core – the DNA of the entity, if you like. At the same time, the inner circle is what may prevent the entity from escaping an established worldview. What lies in the inner circle can only be accessed in an indirect fashion through observation and, sometimes provoking, investigation.

The outer circle is the area of explicit knowledge, i.e. what the entity knows and can articulate. What the outer circle contains can be found through interviews and regular information search processes. Beyond the outer circle lies unknown territory and the opportunity for change and innovation.

Strategic innovation can be defined as innovation that changes the worldview of a given society, organisation, social grouping or individual. It arises in the combination of existing tacit or explicit knowledge and the undiscovered. And in fact, the entity's chance of pursuing new avenues depends on its ability to look at its unique (implicit or explicit) qualities through a new lens.

NO. 02

Unknown

Explicit

Implicit

NOTES

NOTES