



## **Contributing Implications: An Experiment**

### **Facilitator – Research Notes**

### **Insights from Strategic Explorations**

#### **Summary**

This note describes an experiment in which a group of MBA students contributed implications, first in an open format, then using the Implications Wheel. The experiment demonstrated that a significantly more thorough exploration was generated using the Implications Wheel.

# The Implications Wheel® as a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Thinking Process

## An Experiment

People don't normally think in the way that the Implications Wheel® process works. Research by a variety of "thinking skill" experts has shown that people rarely think beyond the first order implications.

In the specific cases of thinking about implications, we wanted to test this concept. 30 MBA students, enrolled in a human resource management class, participated in an experiment. They were provided with the background information on the workforce demographic trends, the effects of large numbers of "baby boomers" retiring. In the first step of the research, they were asked to "identify the implications" of this trend. An online, 30 minute timed, survey system was used to collect the information.

On average, students spent just over 20 minutes individually identifying implications. 86.2% of the 312 implications identified were "first-order" implications. Obviously, because this was done individually, many of these were duplicates. 12.5% of the implications were "second-order;" and only 1.3% were "third-order." Interestingly, 50% of the "second-order" implications were generated by three students who also generated 75% of the "third-order" implications. Figure 1 shows these results.

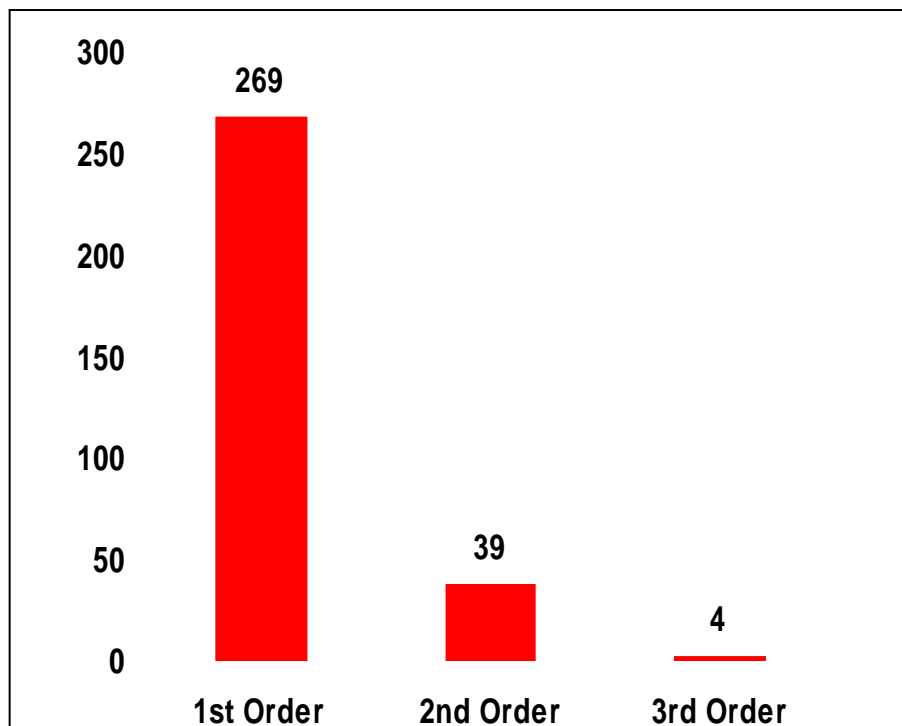


Figure 1  
**MBA Students  
Unstructured**



The students were then introduced to the Implications Wheel<sup>®</sup> process and provided with training on how to write good implications. In two hours, they identified 12 “first-order” implications, 60 “second-order” implications, and 300 “third-order” implications. While some of these were duplicates, because the same “possible implication” can be triggered by different things, the majority of the implications were different – following dramatically different pathways than the first part of the experiment. Figure 2 shows these results. Notice the complete switch in focus to the future.

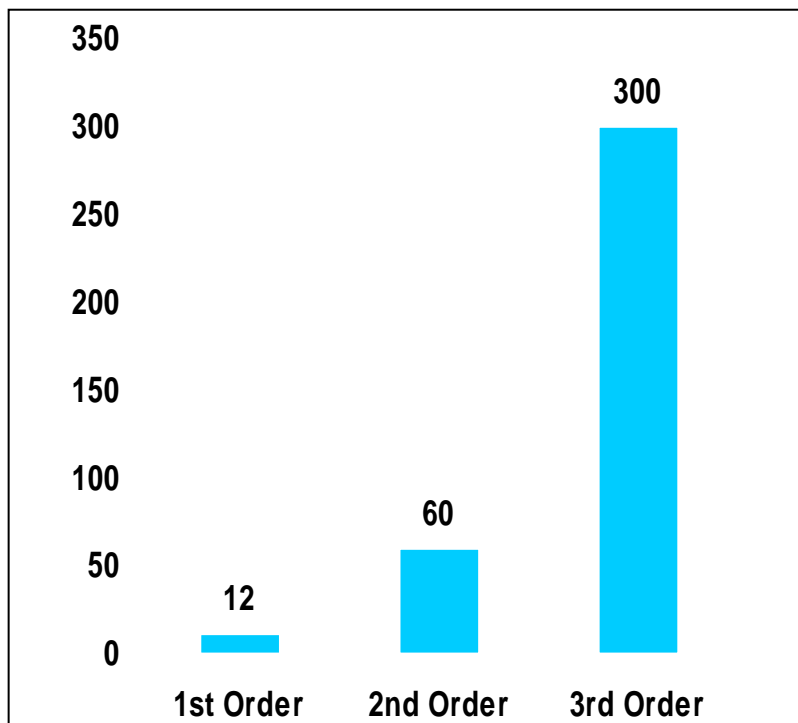


Figure 2  
**MBA Students  
Using I-Wheel<sup>®</sup>**

## Conclusion

The Implications Wheel<sup>®</sup> process for exploring the future increases the collaboration and quality of the decision-making process. In doing this it becomes more effective for leaders in preparing for the future. As a leader, you:

- Gain a larger horizon of futures visibility.
- Reduce levels of uncertainty about change.
- See pathways to important long terms implications, both positive and negative.
- Have a clearer map for building bridges and barriers.

***“No one will thank you for taking care of today  
if you fail to take care of the future.”***



Joel Barker's  
**IMPLICATIONS  
WHEEL<sup>®</sup>**

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