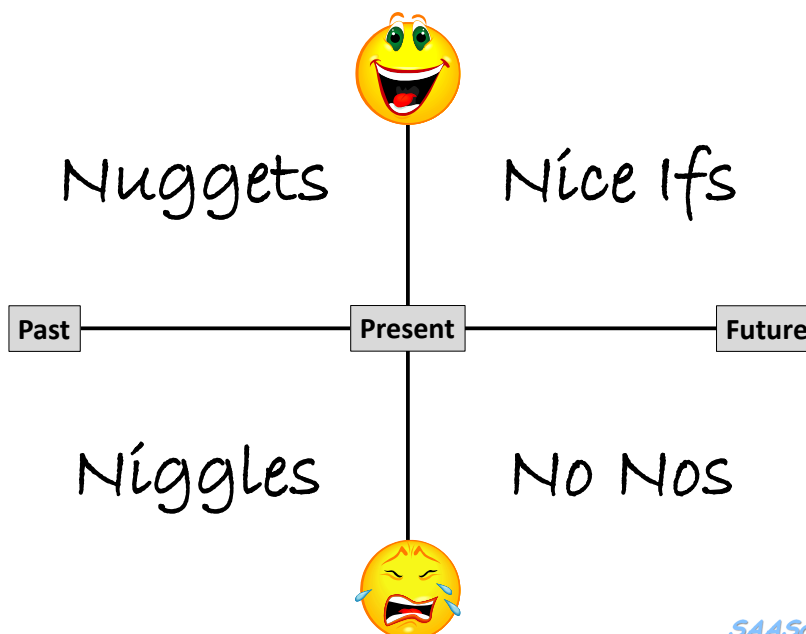


The 4N Chart

The 4N Chart is a quick, easy and effective way to get a balanced, qualitative perspective of any issue. When used as part of the improvement process it can help to focus an individual or team on where to get most benefit for least effort.

To create a 4N Chart ...

1. Take a blank piece of paper.
2. Draw a vertical line down the middle to separate the Past from the Future.
3. Draw a horizontal line across the middle to separate the Positive feelings above from the Negative feelings below.



4. Put the ideas about the topic on the chart, grouping them according to the four zones.

5. Ask the question "What is the feeling?" then ask "What happened just before to cause it?"

Effect then cause.

6. Start bottom-left and focus on the negative feelings that we have now - these are our **Niggles**. Work backwards to reveal what caused the feeling. e.g. "I feel anxious when I am late for work **because** I set off late **because** I could not find my car keys".

7. Move to top-left and focus on the positive feelings that are generated by what works well now. e.g. "I feel supported **because** we look out for each other". These are our **Nuggets** and there are usually more good things happening than we appreciate at first glance. We often take success for granted.

8. Move to bottom-right and list the negative feelings we do **not** want in the future. These are our **No Nos**. e.g. "I do not want to feel overburdened **by** bureaucracy".

9. Finally we go to the top-right and we focus on the positive feelings that we want more of in the future. These are our **Nice Ifs**. e.g. "I would like to feel secure **by** having a clear expectation of my role and responsibilities and have a way to do well."

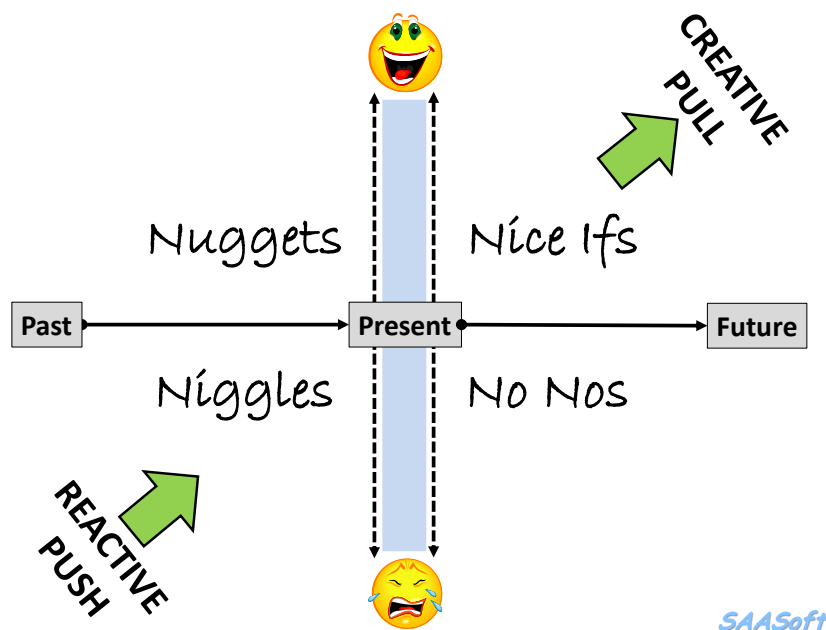
The 4N Chart

The process of continual improvement has two linked challenges:

1. Finding ways to stop doing some Niggles and then to avoid doing them in the future. i.e. converting Niggles into No Nos. This is reactive push away from what we do not want, otherwise known as a *burning platform*.
2. Finding ways to start doing some Nice Ifs and then to keep doing them in the future. i.e. converting Nice Ifs into Nuggets. This is creative pull towards what we do want, otherwise known as a *burning ambition*.

The engine of improvement usually starts with nailing a Niggle because this will release the resources required to nurture a Nugget. When we choose a way to nail a Niggle we will liberate emotional energy, time and money. These are the three "currencies" that we need to invest in converting a Nice If into a Nugget.

Our next step is to cut our 4N Chart in half vertically and separate the left and right parts. The space we have created in the middle is the gap we must cross to improve our system.



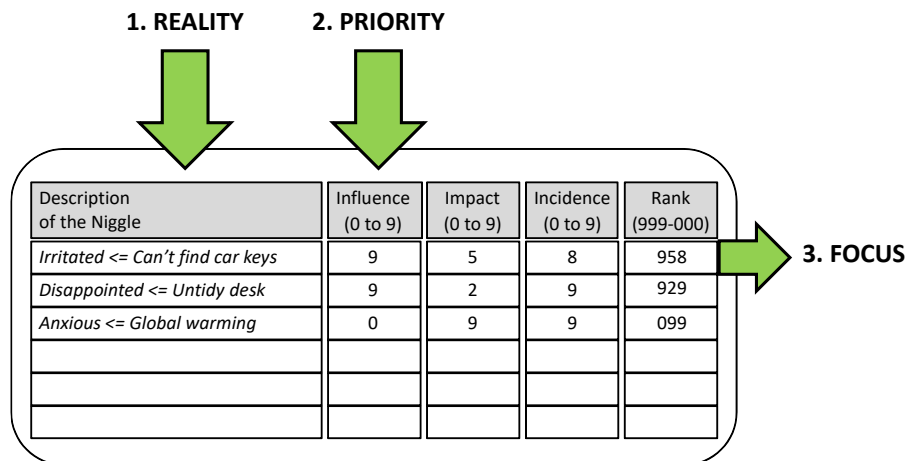
If that gap is too wide we will not start because we fear we will fall into the chasm.

So, we need to **focus** on where to start, and to do that we must rank the Niggles to reveal the ones we feel we can do something about now. Our objective is to make the gap feel small enough to be confident to take the step.

The 4N Chart

The Niggle-o-Gram®

First, list the niggles together with their emotional effects and their causal chains. Then add four scoring columns as shown the diagram.



For each Niggle we ask three questions and we score our answer as a number:

Q1. How often it happens - the **Incidence**. (0=Never to 9=Always).

Q2. What is the effect - the **Impact** (0=None to 9=Showstopper).

Q3. How much can we do - our **Influence** over the root cause (0=None to 9=Complete).

The weighting of the scores is Influence >> Impact >> Incidence and we create a ranking for each Niggle that will range between 999 and 000.

The Niggle with the highest rank and that is closest to 999 is the one to focus ALL our effort on first because this will give the maximum return on our investment of effort, time and money.

In the example above the "Can't find car keys" is the top Niggle. So we might convert it to a No No by installing a key hook next to the front door. That will help us to develop the habit of putting our keys on it when we come in ... so they are always where we expect them to be when we go out.

Nailing a Niggle gives us an emotional boost and sets us up to focus on the next one which might feel a bit tougher because we thought we had less influence over its cause. By nailing Niggles we gain confidence and experience and our sense of influence changes. What at first felt too difficult, will now feel more achievable.

And when we feel ready we can focus on our future needs. We list the positive feelings we want, the Nice-Ifs, and consider some cause-and-effect chains we could follow to achieve them. Then we sketch a Need-o-Gram to focus on what to do first.