



Multiple Hypotheses Generator

Setting the Stage

The analyst has considerable information and data, some conflicting, and is attempting to develop an explanation. Alternatively, the analyst has been given a hypothesis explaining an issue, activity, or behavior and has been asked to determine its validity.

The Process

- Crisply define the issue, activity, or behavior that is subject to examination.
- Establish the lead hypothesis for explaining this issue, activity, or behavior.
 - The lead hypothesis could be the one you were given, the most obvious explanation, or the conventional wisdom.
- Critically examine the lead hypothesis by identifying and listing its key components.
 - Use the journalist's classic list of Who, What, When, Where, Why and How to evaluate all critical dimensions of the lead hypothesis.
 - Some of these questions may not be appropriate for the particular issue, activity, or behavior you are examining.
- Generate plausible alternative explanations for each key component.
 - Once this process is complete, you should have lists of alternative explanations for several components of the lead hypothesis.
 - Strive to keep the alternative explanations on each list mutually exclusive.

The Output

- The software will generate all possible permutations using these lists.
- Discard any permutation that simply makes no logical sense.
- Evaluate the credibility of the remaining hypotheses by challenging the key assumptions of each component.
 - Some of these assumptions may be testable themselves.
 - Assign a "credibility score" to each hypothesis using a 3 point scale.
- The software will then resort the remaining hypotheses, listing them from most to least credible.
- Select from the top of the list those alternative hypotheses most deserving of attention (and inclusion in the Analysis of Competing Hypotheses matrix, if appropriate).