Investigating Change

John W. Moran[1] and Harry Lenderman[2]

January 2016

Description:

Changing anything in an organization is traumatic for the organization and the individuals involved; change breaks the status quo that has become a comfortable way of life. The first step in making change is to understand and articulate to the organization the desired change, the benefits of making this change, the challenges that will be encountered, and how the organization will overcome them.

Investigating Change requires an understanding of the **Eight Change Parameters to be Explored** and how they will impact the organization's change initiative:

1. **Benefits** – Gains to be made from making the change that should be articulated to the organization. Benefits the organization should promote as an advantage when selling the change.
2. **Strengths** – Driving factors we should use to make the change successful and help accelerate it.
3. **Weaknesses** – Things we have to improve to make the change. These are restraining factors that are blocking the change from being successful.
4. **Fears** – Things that keep us up at night and need to be addressed in the organization. They may not be tangible factors but are feelings of foreboding, apprehension, consternation, dismay, dread, terror, fright, panic, horror, or trepidation of what can go wrong.
5. **External Threats** – Outside influences that can cause issues or undermine our change initiatives.
6. **Pot Holes** – Minor issues (distractions) that could derail our change effort but that we can recover from. Clear and regular communications are the ways to fill in pot holes.
7. **Land Mines** – Crises that could blow up the initiative and end it. These are things we need to avoid at all costs, be prepared for, and have contingency plans to minimize their impacts if they occur.
8. **Opportunities** – New things we can do, which we could not do before the change. These are future potentials that the organization can exploit when they have mastered the change.

---

[1] John W. Moran, PhD, is a Senior Quality Advisor to the Public Health Foundation and a Senior Fellow at the University of Minnesota, School of Public Health in the Division of Health Policy and Management. He is a member of PHAB's Evaluation and Quality Improvement Committee and Adjunct Professor in the Arizona State University College of Health Solutions' School for the Science of Health.

[2] Harry Lenderman, EdD, is a consultant for the Public Health Foundation where he applies his 25 years at Marriott Corporation Healthcare and Sodexho USA Healthcare in Quality Improvement, Process Improvement, Human Resources and Supervisory, Management and Training Leadership.

When to Use:

Before undertaking a change initiative, it is wise to explore in a group the challenges that could be encountered. Part of understanding these challenges is to understand the organizational strengths we can draw upon to facilitate the change, and the weaknesses that could derail the desired change.

Construction Steps:

1. Divide the group into eight teams, each at their own table.
2. Assign each team one of the **Eight Change Parameters to be Explored**, providing a handout describing the change initiative to be analyzed.
3. Provide each team their assigned Change Parameters sheets, with each of the eight Change Parameters printed on different colored paper.
4. Have the teams discuss their assigned Change Parameter and list ideas and issues related to the Change Parameter on the assigned Change Parameter sheet. (20 minutes)
5. After the initial 20 minute round, rotate the teams to a new table every 10 minutes. Repeat this process for the other seven Change Parameters. Each team should add to the existing items that have been recorded, or they can put a check mark ($\sqrt{}$) to indicate agreement and support.
6. After each group has rotated to all eight Change Parameters, rotate everyone back to where they started.
7. At the initially-assigned Change Parameter, groups will spend 20 – 40 minutes to (depending on the volume of ideas generated):
   a. Review what has been added.
   b. Prioritize the top three to five ideas and issues.
   c. Determine why the priority ideas and issues exist.
   d. Develop ways to use the ideas and issues to overcome or help drive the new change.
   e. Determine the improvement or utilization timeline.
   f. Report out on the eight Change Parameters.
8. Determine next steps, action plans, and future meetings to review progress.

Sample: This is a generic sheet and the facilitator should provide one for each Change Parameter. The sample shown is for Opportunities. A complete set of the eight Change Parameter sheets is available at the end of this document.
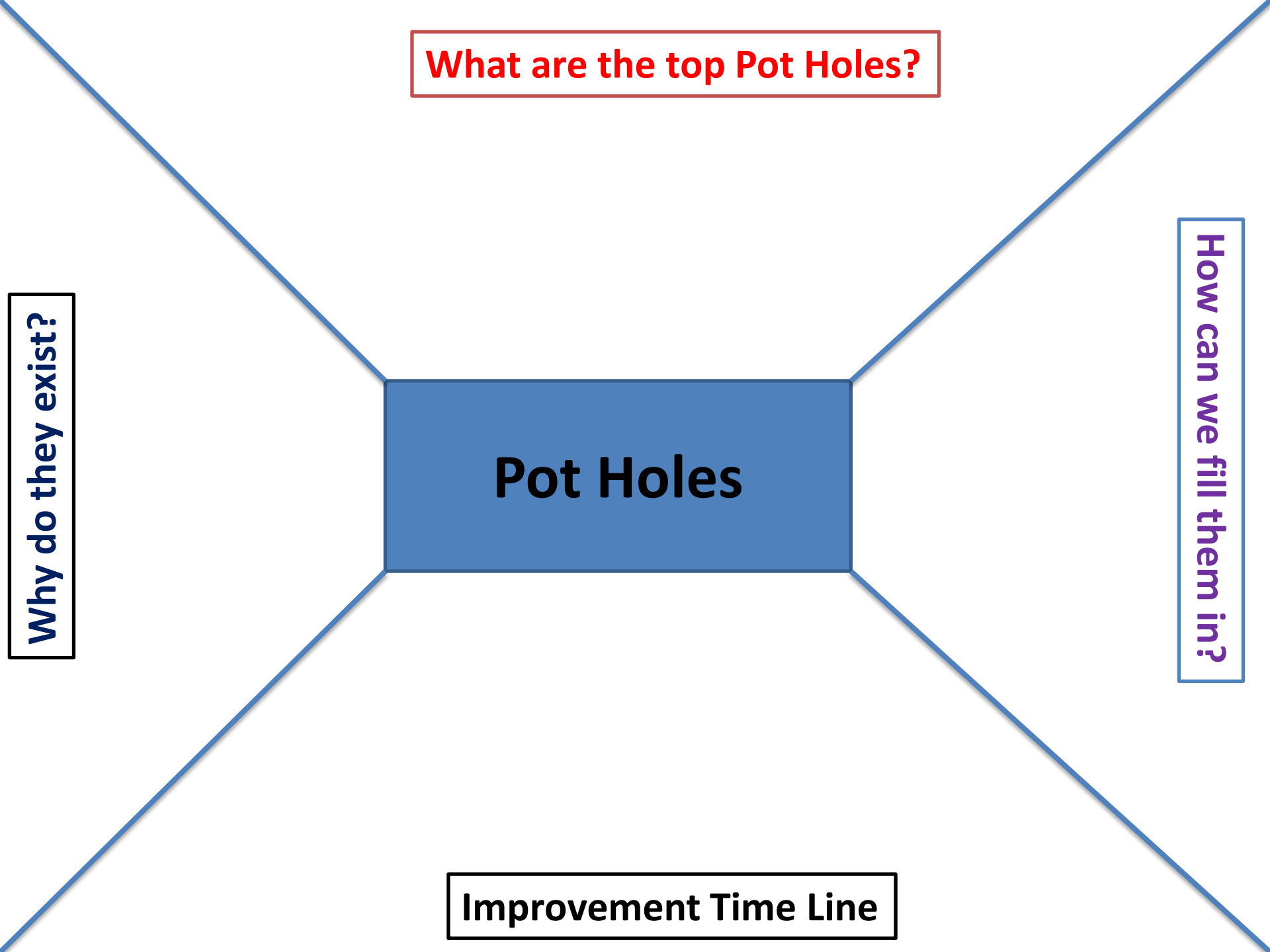
What are the top Opportunities?

Why do they exist?

Opportunities

How can we use them?

Improvement Time Line
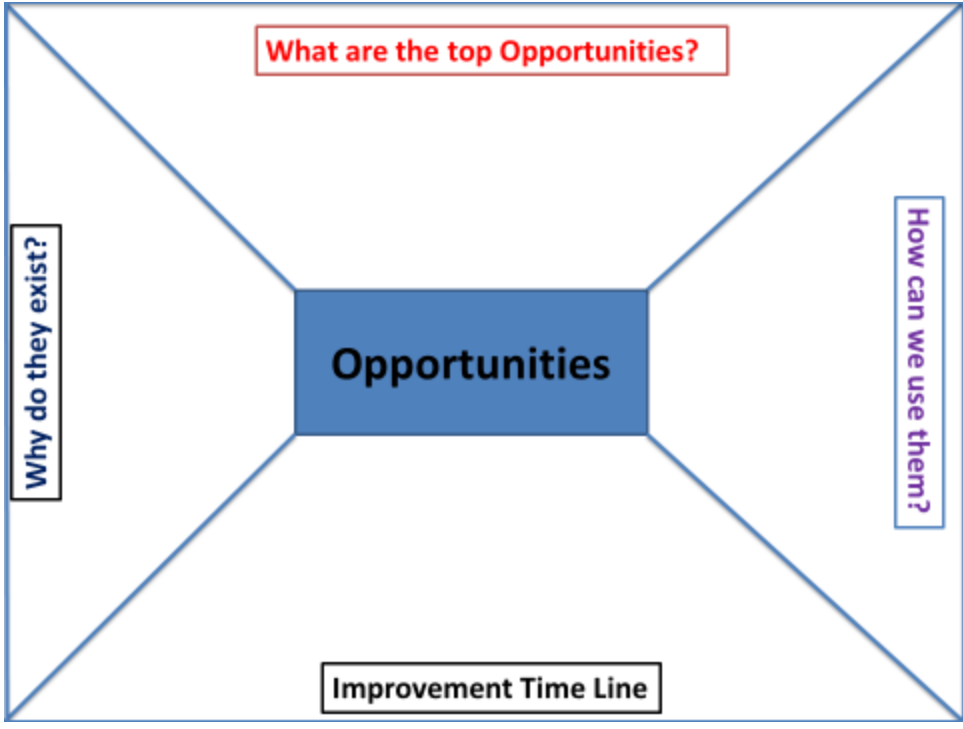
What are the top Pot Holes?

Why do they exist?

How can we fill them in?

Pot Holes

Improvement Time Line

What are the top Opportunities?

Why do they exist?

Opportunities

How can we use them?

Improvement Time Line

What are the top Weaknesses?

Why do they exist?

How can we overcome them?

Weaknesses

Improvement Time Line
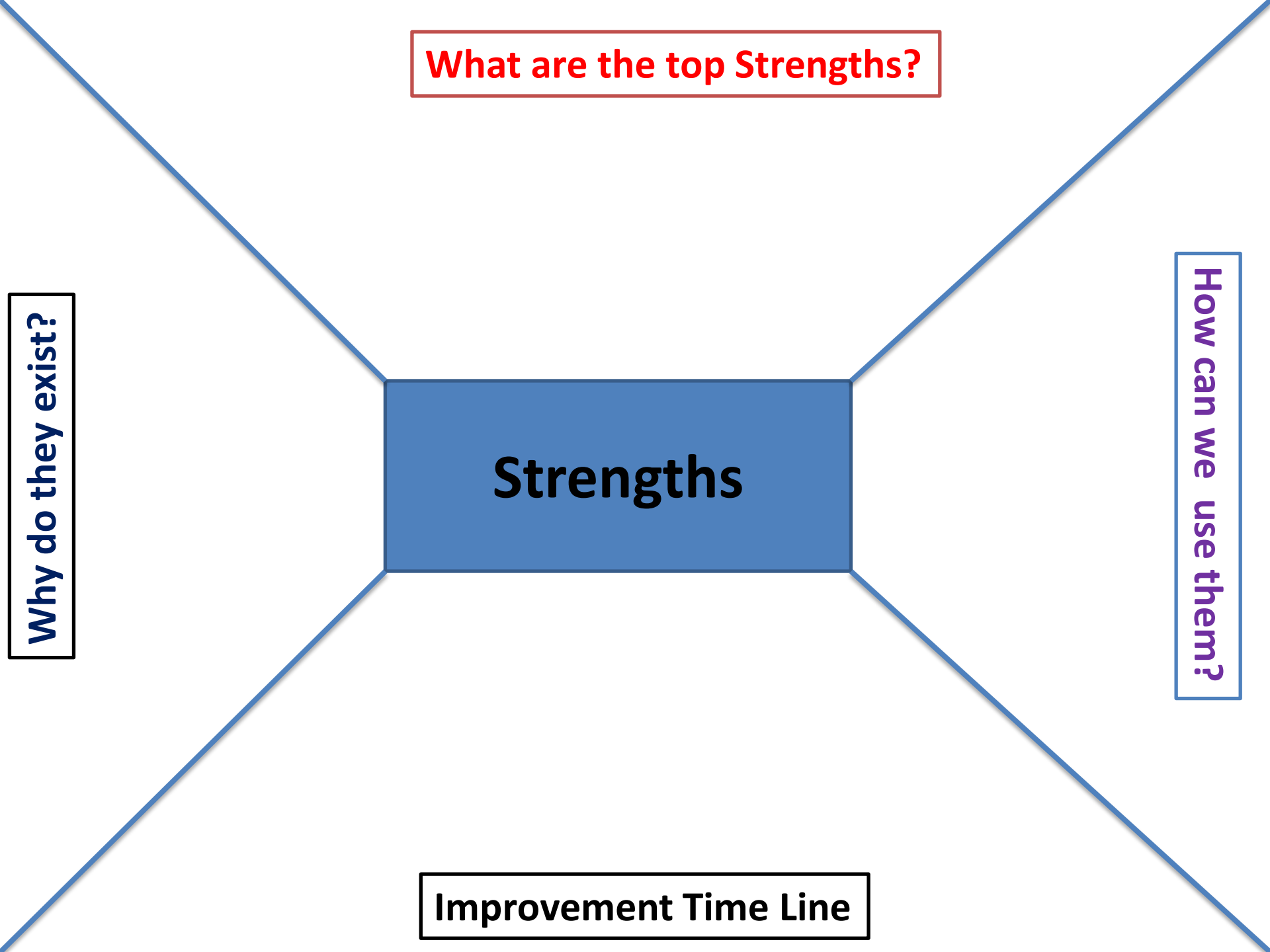
What are the top Threats?

Why do they exist?

How can we overcome them?

External Threats

Improvement Time Line
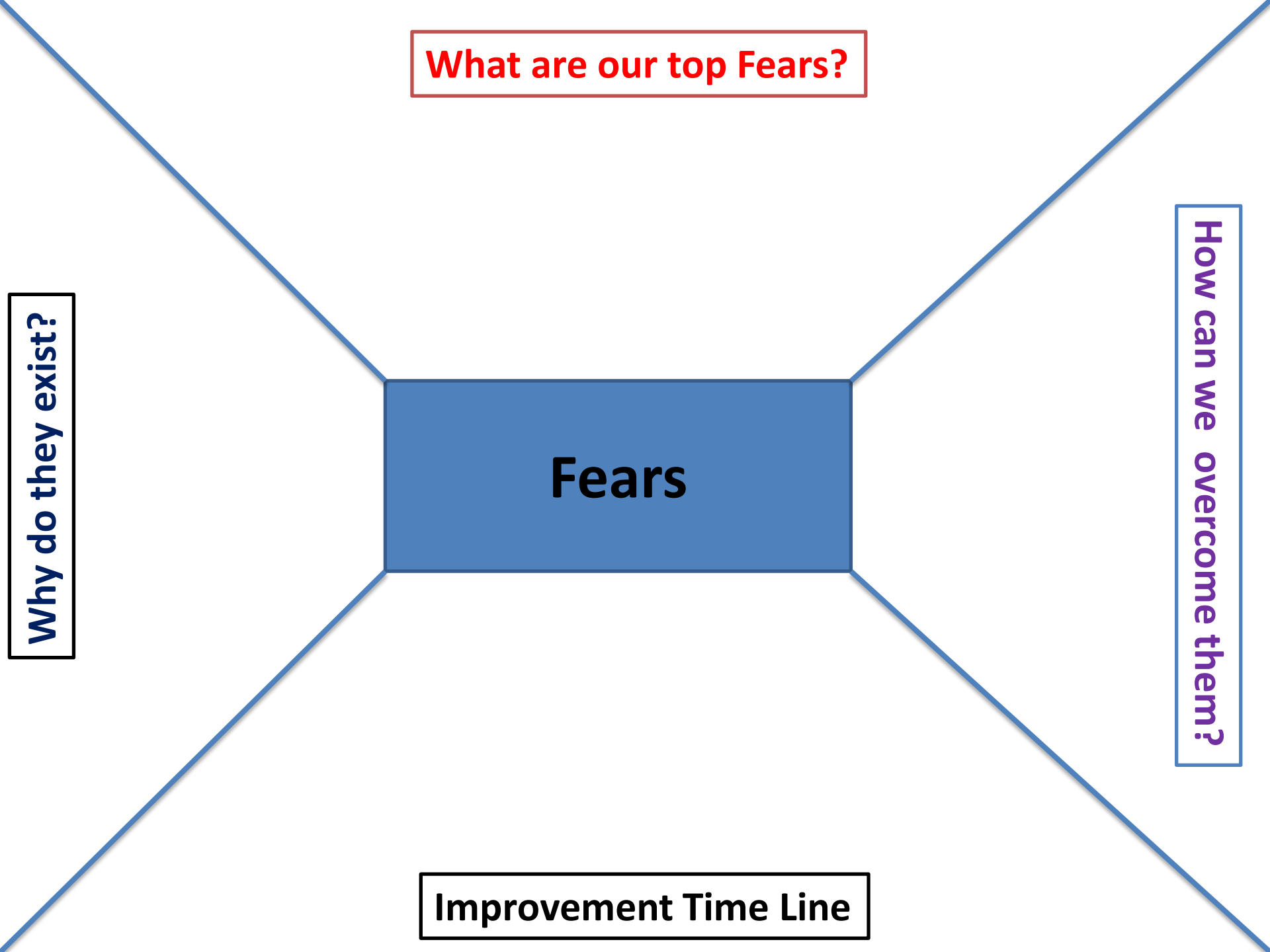
What are the major Benefits of the is Change?

Why do they exist?

Benefits

How can we articulate them?

Improvement Time Line