

Introduction

The OODA Loop model was developed by Col. John Boyd, USAF (Ret) during the Korean War. This looping concept referred to the ability possessed by fighter pilots to cycle through the four actions that allowed them to succeed in combat. It is now used by the U.S. Marines and other organizations. The premise of the model is that decision-making is the result of rational behavior in which problems are viewed as a cycle of Observation, Orientation (situational awareness), Decision Making, and Action. Boyd diagrammed the OODA loop.

Credit: Donald Clark

<http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/leadership/ooda.html>

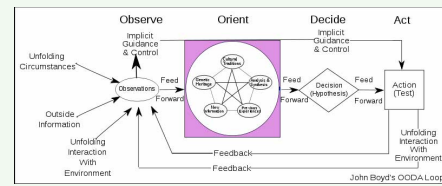
Observation

Scan the environment and gather information from it. Gather as much current information from as many sources as possible. One of the key challenges to effective observation is knowing what information to monitor and applying the right filters to each piece of information.

Orientation

Use the information to form a mental image of the circumstances. That is, synthesize the data into information. As more information is received, you "deconstruct" old images and then "create" new images. Note that different people require different levels of details to perceive an event. Often, we imply that the reason people cannot make good decisions is that people are bad decisions makers — sort of like saying that the reason some people cannot drive is that they are bad drivers. However, the real reason most people make bad decisions is that they often fail to place the information that they do have into its proper context. This is where "Orientation" comes in. Orientation emphasizes the context in which events occur, so that we may facilitate our decisions and actions. That is, orientation helps to turn information into knowledge. And knowledge, not information, is the real predictor of making good decisions..

OODA



Decision

Consider options and select a subsequent course of action. The goal is to make better and faster choices than your opponent. The ability to predict the future can make the difference between success or failure.

Boyd also identified five main forces that influence our decisions:

- Cultural traditions
- Genetic heritage
- The ability to analyze and synthesize
- Previous experience level
- New information coming in

Action

Carry out the conceived decision. Once the result of the action is observed, you start over. Note that in combat or when competing against others, you want to cycle through the four steps faster and better than the competition, hence, it is a loop, rather than a one-time affair.

Finally, the actions and reasoning behind it should be transmitted to others through the use of an **After Action Review** so that other can gain experience from the challenge and its resolution or failure.