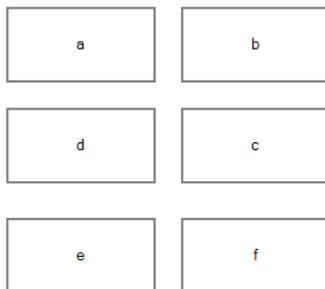


# The Tao of Southbeach

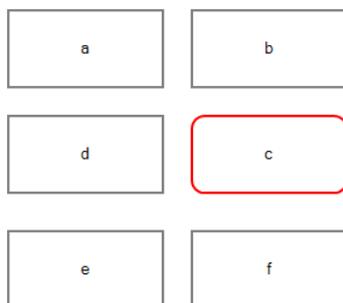
Howard Smith  
Twitter @smithh

Here is a picture of a simple design. All we can discern is that it has six parts.



The picture gives no clue as to how to improve the design. Unless you know what is useful or harmful about this system, what you want more of, and what you want less of, there is no way to move forward.

Let's use red to tag that c is necessary in the system, but has some harmful side effects:



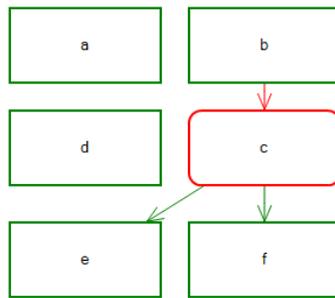
Knowing that c is harmful immediately allows us to ask questions about it?

- Where does c come from?
- Why do we need c?
- Can we reduce c?
- Can we eradicate c?
- Can we change c to make it more useful?

If c were useful, we would not be asking those questions. Instead we would ask:

- How can we get more of c?

These are all helpful questions, but we can ask more interesting questions if we know the relationships between the six design elements.

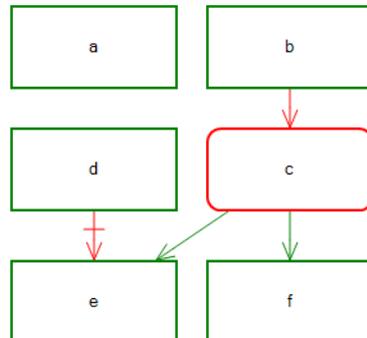


Now we know that c is in the system only to provide e and f, and that it derives from b. This allows us to ask a raft of new questions, such as:

- Is there a way of modifying b so that less c is created without reducing e?
- Is there another way to get e from b that does not lead to c?
- Is there an alternative to b that could provide e?
- Is there an alternative to e?
- And likewise for f

### Now we are designing!

We could go on and on like this, adding information to the model that allows us to generate more creative questions. Suppose we knew, for example, that d was needed in our design, but that it had a counteracting effect on e:



New questions would then come to mind, such as:

- How does d effect e?
- Can we reduce the impact of d on e?
- Do we need d in the system, is there an alternative?

## **Introducing Southbeach**

The diagrams above are (very simple) examples of what are called Southbeach models. Think of Southbeach as a visual language for problem solving.

Southbeach is a rich notation for all kinds of creative, design and improvement tasks. Southbeach allows designers to conceptualize the design of their products, services, systems and processes, in ways that lead naturally to improvement directions. Southbeach is also used for what is called 'situational improvement' in business, government and wider society issues.

Built into Southbeach is a calculus of improvement.

Using Southbeach, designers create questions that they find useful in their work. As models are developed, the output generated guides design change and situational improvement. The questions can be saved and reused at any time in another context or project.

Users of Southbeach, working in many different fields, add knowledge to their Southbeach models in order to stimulate their thinking, to challenge colleagues and to communicate clearly and powerfully with clients.

## **Adding Perspectives**

All complex problems and design challenges rely upon looking at the situation from multiple perspectives. Nothing is truly useful or harmful, everything is useful and harmful. Southbeach takes advantage of this, leading you to align perspectives and solving contradictions.

## **History**

Southbeach Notation was specified by myself and Mark Burnett, and was partly inspired by the Russian theory of problem solving, TRIZ. The notation we developed has given rise to a new category of software that links visualization to creative direction. Southbeach Modeller, developed by Southbeach Solutions, was introduced to the market in 2007. The software immediately found favor among small communities of process designers and TRIZ practitioners. Since then it has found a wider audience, but is still relatively obscure. The concepts behind Southbeach are not immediately obvious, especially to those schooled in more traditional modeling approaches. More needs to be done in training and education.

The designers of this software have worked hard to ensure that Southbeach is not tied to any one methodology. The full range of applications has yet to become clear.

It is not easy to pigeon-hole Southbeach. It is a general purpose software tool, just like a spreadsheet program or a mind map.

Some users describe Southbeach as 'mind mapping on steroids'. Others, especially management consultants, enterprise architects and business analysts, use Southbeach Modeller because of its ease of use and the unique features it provides. It allows them to move 'beyond diagrams' and to deepen their analysis of a complex design or situation. The ability of Southbeach to generate insights and relationships from simple visual models empowers them to challenge their colleagues or clients.

### **Finding out more**

The links below will help you to find out more about Southbeach.

I encourage you to twitter @smithh if you have questions.

History of development of Southbeach Notation

<https://sites.google.com/site/southbeachnotation/history>

Web site of Southbeach solutions

<http://www.southbeachinc.com/>

Information about the 'creativity' engine built into the software

<https://sites.google.com/site/southbeachhelp/>

Download link for the model and creative questions used in this paper

<https://sites.google.com/site/southbeachexamples/tao>