

The Flowchart

By Todd Bender

The idea of a flowchart is imperative in proper planning and in problem solving, and we can use a flowchart to help us with problem solve in shooting. When a shooter makes a mistake, or misses a shot, what usually is remembered is the last event that transpired. But in actuality, there was a chain reaction of events, a natural progression that occurred, that created the last event, but the last event was not the cause.

This process is what I call going up the “wrong end” of the flow chart. By examining what happened in reverse, and then asking a series of questions, “why” did these events happen, we can expect to find the root problem, assuming that we answer all the questions correctly. We’ll use some examples to illustrate this process of problem solving. These examples are not just created for this writing, but are situations that I encounter daily when coaching.

Let’s assume in the first example that Rufus Leaking is attempting a shot at High Three. Rufus has just missed this target and has missed out in front, too much lead, and in conjunction, has come out of the gun. The analysis should be simple, Rufus needs less lead, and should keep his head on the gun. But this analysis only addresses the end result and not what actually occurred and produced this end result.

Obviously, as you’re reading this, you would not have the benefit of actually seeing the shot from start to finish, but through the flowchart you should be able to follow the sequence of events that caused this miss. So, the last thing we saw was the miss on High Three was in front, and the head was off the gun, which could have also caused the miss to be a little high.

Assuming Rufus is not just a complete idiot and tried to miss this way, why did it happen? Well, the gun was accelerated just before the trigger was pulled because the shooter was behind the target, and as the gun speed was wildly increased, this created the excess lead, and in this desperate grasp for lead, the arms pushed the gun away from the face.

So, already we have determined the head raise was not coming out of the gun as much as it was the upper body creating greater gun speed to obtain some type of lead. But why didn’t we have lead when we wanted to pull the trigger? Because the target beat the shooter immediately as the target appeared from the house. Now we’re getting somewhere. More often than not, a target will beat a shooter for one of three reasons, hold point in too close, eyes in the wrong place, or the shooter is just not ready. In this case, if you had my ability to actually observe the shot, we would have seen that the hold point was in way too close to the house, setting all of the above into motion. In fact, we would have actually seen this coming, or knew that something was going to go awry with the shot because of the improper hold point.

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Some shooters or observers after seeing this, would again focus on the end result, and say “shorten the lead, and keep your head down”, when the correct response would be to move out the hold point, which would allow for easier gun speed and avoid the break down in fundamentals that occurred at the end of the shot. Got it?

Clearly, the trick here is to “ask” the right questions, and then “come up” with the right answers. Maybe easier said than done. It comes pretty easy to me, but I have had a lot of practice doing it. But with a little thought it shouldn’t be too difficult. Many of my students walk away with a much better understanding of this than the average guy, and generally at the end of a day, have the ability to do this and be right more often than not. And that of course, is my goal. At the end of a day, if I just got someone to shoot better for that day, but not have the ability to correctly self-analyze in the future, essentially, I’d be worthless. Knowing what caused your mistakes, and making the correct adjustment, is what will make you a better shooter.

Without question, the ability to go up the “wrong end” of the flow chart would be beneficial to any shooter, but it should be a required capability of any qualified coach. Although it happens, rarely do shooters “just” mislead targets. Something else causes the result. Most people think that the most abundant elements in the universe are hydrogen and helium. Wrong. The most abundant element in the universe is free advice at a gun club.

Although almost all advice given by fellow shooters is well meant, but it may be a huge leap of faith that it is correct. Many times a shooter can miss a target, turn around and ask the squad, “Where was I?” Then this will happen, he’ll get two of these, “you’re behind”, a “you’re over”, and one “you’re in front”. Then how the hell could I have missed it, I had it surrounded! But let’s assume that you get a “you’re behind”, and we’ll also assume that this is a correct response. OK, great, you’re behind, but until you know why you’re behind and what got you there, most likely on the next shot, you will just make the same mistake with more lead. So understanding the “whys” is the key to your success as a shooter, and in your capacity to help others.