

Goal Setting, Planning and Decision Making

911th Airlift Wing
Family Support Office

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INTRODUCTION

Positive goal setting, effective planning and decision making promote a life well lived. When we fail to set goals we have nothing to plan for, and our time is poorly spent. One of the realities of life is we are affected by our decisions, our families are, and so are others we impact on the job and in our community. Planning can make a major difference in the quality of our decision making, as well as the fulfillment of our goals.

Study about Goal Setting, planning and decision making can help you achieve new life performance. Whether it be to find a job, gain a promotion, volunteer, or achieve financial independence.

GOAL SETTING

A. Goal Setting: This is a very powerful technique that can garner strong returns in all areas of your life. At its most basic level, the process of setting goals and targets allows you to choose where you want to go in life. By knowing precisely what you want to achieve, you know what you have to concentrate on and improve. Goal setting provides you with long term vision, and short- term motivation. It focuses the knowledge you acquire and helps organize your resources.

1. By Setting Goals you can:

- Achieve more
- Improve Performance
- Increase your motivation to achieve
- Improve your self-confidence
- Plan to eliminate attitudes that hold you back and cause unhappiness.

2. The advantages of effective goal setting for the goal setter:

- Suffer less from stress and anxiety
- Concentrate better
- Show more self-confidence
- Perform better
- Are happier and more satisfied.

3. Goal Setting Helps Self-confidence: By setting goals, and measuring their achievement, you are able to see what you have done and what you are capable of. The process of achieving goals gives you the confidence and self-belief that you need when contemplating higher or more difficult goals.

B. Establishing Lifetime Goals: Setting lifetime goals helps place your decision-making activities in perspective.

1. Categorical Goals: Take a look at the following areas for lifetime goal setting.

▪ **Artistic**

Do you want to achieve any artistic goals? If so, what?

▪ **Attitude**

Is there any part of your mental attitude that is holding you back?
Is there any part of the way you behave that upsets you? If so, set goals to cure the problem, even if that goal is only to get help.

Attitude is often **“everything”**, when we are speaking about the difference between a life well lived and one which features existence.

- **Career**

What type of career do you want? What level do you wish to achieve? Are you aware there are five factors you may wish to consider in this process? **(1)** What am I interested in doing? **(2)** Do people already working in that area share my interests? **(3)** Does my temperament allow me to do this sort of work over an extended period of time? **(4)** Do I have the “horsepower” or aptitude to do this work? **(5)** Do I have the means to obtain the credentials via education and training to perform the career?

- **Education**

Is there any knowledge you want to acquire in particular? What information and skills will you need to achieve other goals?

- **Family**

Do you want to be a parent? If so, how are you going to be a good parent? How do you want to be seen by a partner, or by members of your extended family?

- **Financial**

How much do you want to earn by each stage of your life? How much do you want to invest? At what age do you want financial independence?

- **Physical**

Are there any athletic goals you want to achieve? Do you want good health deep into old age? What steps are you going to take to achieve this?

- **Pleasure**

How do you want to enjoy yourself? You should ensure some of your life is reserved just for you.

- **Public Service**

Do you want to make the world a better place by your existence? If so, how?

- **Social**

Do you have any social ambitions?

Once you have decided your goals in these areas assign your priority to them, with the most important earning an **A**, the least important earning an **F**. Then

review your goals and re-prioritize until you are satisfied that the goals and priorities you have set reflect the shape of the life that you want to lead. Also ensure that the goals you have set are the goals *you*, not your parents, spouse, family, or people around you want them to be.

C. How to Start to Achieve your lifetime goals: Once you have set your lifetime goals now set a *25-year plan* of smaller goals that should be achieved if you are to reach your lifetime plan. Then set a *5 year plan*, *1 year plan*, *6 month plan*, *1 month plan* of progressively smaller goals that should be reached to achieve your lifetime goals. Finally set a *daily to do list* of things you should do today to reach your lifetime goals. At this stage many of your goals may simply be to read books and gather information on the achievement of your goals so that you can improve the quality and realism of your goal setting.

D. Staying the Course: Once you have decided your goal plans, keep the process going by reviewing and updating your *to-do-list* on a daily basis. Some people recommend this as the last thing being done the day before, other as the first thing done in the morning - this is up to you. Periodically review your other plans, and modify them to reflect your changing priorities.

E. Setting Goals Effectively: The following guidelines apply to setting effective goals.

- **Positive Statement:** Express your goals positively: “Execute this detail well” is a much better goal than “don’t make this stupid mistake.”
- **Be Precise:** If you set a precise goal, putting in dates, times and amounts so that achievement can be measured, then you know the exact goal to be achieved, and can take complete satisfaction from having completely achieved it.
- **Set priorities:** Where you have several goals, give each a priority. This helps to direct you attention to the most important ones.
- **Write Goals Down:** Do this to avoid confusion and to give them more force.
- **Keep Operational Goals Small:** Keep the goals you are working towards immediately small and achievable. If a goal is too large, then it can seem you are not making progress towards it. Keeping goals small and incremental gives more opportunities for reward. Today’s goals should be derived from larger goals.

F. Set Performance Not Outcome Goals: *This is very important.* You should take care to set goals over which you have as much control as possible – there is nothing as upsetting as failing to achieve a personal goal for reasons beyond your control such as bad business environments, poor judging, bad weather, injury or just plain bad luck. Goals based on outcomes are extremely vulnerable to failure because of things beyond your control.

If you base your goals on personal performance or skills or knowledge to be acquired, then you can keep control over the achievement of your goals and draw satisfaction from them. For example, you might set a personal best time in a race but be disqualified due to a poor judging decision. A goal to place in the top three would have then been a disappointment, despite having run your best time.

Other outcome measures such as financial wealth or external recognition from colleagues can be fleeting as time goes on. You will either have to perform at a heroic level for feel less satisfied with the external responses.

G. Set Specific Goals: Set specific measurable goals. If you achieve all conditions for a measurable goal, then you can be confident and comfortable in its measurement. If you consistently fail to meet a measurable goal, then you can adjust it or analyze the reason for failure and take appropriate action to improve your skills.

H. Setting Realistic Goals: There are numerous reasons why goals can be set unrealistically high. Some of the more common reasons are listed below.

- **Other People:** Other people (Parents, media, society) can set unrealistic goals for you. Based on what they want. Often this is done in ignorance of goals, desires, and ambitions.
- **Insufficient Information:** If you do not have a clear, realistic understanding of what you are trying to achieve and of the knowledge and skills to be mastered, it is difficult to set effective and realistic goals.
- **Always expecting your best performance:** Many people base their goal on their best performance, however long ago that was. This ignores the factors that led to the achievement in the first place. It is better to base your goals on your average performance, as it is more realistic.
- **Lack of respect for self:** If you do not respect your right to rest, relaxation, and pleasure then you risk burnout.

I. Setting goals too low: Alternatively goals may be set too low because of the following factors.

- Fear of failure: If you are frightened of failure you will not take the risks needed for optimum performance. As you apply goal setting and the achievement of goals, your self-confidence should increase, helping you to take bigger risks. Know that failure is a positive thing as it shows you areas where you can improve your skills and knowledge.
- Taking it too easy: It is easy to take reasons for not setting goals unrealistically as an excuse to set them too low. If you are not prepared to stretch yourself and work hard, then you are extremely unlikely to achieve anything of real worth.

J. Setting goals at the right level: Setting goals at the right level is a skill that is acquired by practice.

- You should set goals so they are slightly out of your immediate grasp, but not so far that there is no hope of achieving them. No one will put a serious effort into a goal that they believe is unrealistic. However, remember that a belief that a goal is unrealistic may be incorrect. Such a belief can be changed by effective use of imagery.
- Personal factors such as tiredness, other commitments and the need for rest, etc. should be taken into account when goals are set.

K. Thinking a goal through: When thinking about how to achieve goals, the following questions can help you focus on the sub-goals that lead to their achievement.

- What skills do I need to achieve this?
- What information and knowledge do I need?
- What help, assistance, or collaboration do I need?
- What resources do I need?
- What can block progress?
- Am I making any assumptions?
- Is there a better way to do things?

L. Achieving goals: Once you have achieved a given goal take the time to “smell the roses”. Absorb the significance of the goal achievement, while observing the progress you are making toward other goals. If the goal was a significant one, or one that you had worked towards for some time, take the time to reward yourself.

M. Failure to achieve a goal: Feedback is a wonderful process as it aids learning. Lessons learned from failure are invaluable. When analyzing a failure take a look at the following factors that may have played a role.

- That you did not try hard enough.
- That your technique, skills or knowledge were faulty and need to be enhanced.
- That the goal you set was unrealistic.

Use the above information as a means to adjust the goal if it was set too high, or set goals to acquire new skills or knowledge. Feedback like this turns everything into a positive learning experience – even failing to meet a goal is a step forward towards a more perfect performance.

Remember that the act of trying something, even if it does not work, often opens that would have otherwise remained closed. We only have to remember that Christopher Columbus failed to find a westward passage to the Indies, to appreciate the fact that an apparent failure in one area can result in opening up a whole New World of possibilities.

N. Achieving the goal: Feedback is equally important when analyzing an achieved goal.

- If the goal was easily achieved, then make your next goals harder.
- If the goal took a dispiriting length of time to achieve, make the next goals a little easier.
- If you learned something that would lead you to alter existing goals then do so.
- If you determined you were deficient in some of your skills while trying to achieve your goals, then set goals to achieve skill improvement.

Goals often change as we mature, adjust them regularly to reflect this growth in personality. If goals do not hold any attraction, then let them go – goal setting is your servant – not your master – it should bring you real pleasure, satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment.

O. Summary of goal setting: The following is a synopsis of this topical area.

- Goal setting is an important method of:
 - ❑ Deciding what is important for you to achieve in your life
 - ❑ Separating what is important for you from what is irrelevant
 - ❑ Motivating yourself to achievement
 - ❑ Building your self-confidence based on measured achievable goals
- You can set goals effectively by:
 - ❑ Phrasing them positively
 - ❑ Defining them precisely
 - ❑ Prioritizing multiple goals
 - ❑ Writing them down
 - ❑ Keeping them manageable; not too hard, not too easy
 - ❑ Setting performance goals, not outcome goals
- Failure in meeting goals is useful in improving techniques and long term success as long as you draw useful lessons from it and feed this back into your goal setting program
- You should allow yourself to enjoy the achievement of goals and reward yourself appropriately. Lessons should be drawn where appropriate, and should be fed back into the process.

PLANNING

A. Why should you plan?

When you are about to attempt a project, whether organizing an expedition, launching a new product or embarking on job search, you inevitably face risks. These might be:

- Risks to life or health
- Risks to status, career or employment
- Problems of lack of resources
- Risks of wasting limited resources whether time money or power.
- The risk to your self esteem if you fail
- Etc.

B. The planning process.

Planning is the process by which you determine whether you should attempt the task, work out the most effective way of reaching your target, and prepare to overcome unexpected difficulties with adequate resources. It is the start of the process by which you turn empty dreams into achievements. It helps you avoid the trap of working extremely hard but achieving little.

- ***Planning is an up-front investment in success*** – and by applying the planning process effectively you can:
 - ***Avoid wasting effort:***
It is easy to spend large amounts of time on activities that in retrospect prove to be irrelevant to the success of the project. Alternatively, you can miss deadlines by not assessing the order in which dependent jobs should be carried out. Planning helps you achieve the maximum effect from a given effort.
 - ***Take into account all factors, and focus on the critical ones:***
This insures that you are aware of the implications of what you want to do, and that you are prepared for all reasonable eventualities.

- ❑ ***Be aware of all changes that will have to be made:***
If you know these, then you can assess in advance the likelihood of being able to make those changes, and take action to ensure they will be successful.
 - ❑ ***Gather the resources needed:***
This will ensure that the project will not fail or suffer for a lack of a critical resource.
 - ❑ ***Carry out the task in the most efficient way possible:***
So that you can conserve your own resources, avoid wasting ecological resources, make a fair profit and are seen as an effective, useful person.
- The formal procedure for applying the planning process helps you to:
 - ❑ Take stock of your current position.
 - ❑ Identify precisely what is to be achieved
 - ❑ Detail precisely and cost the who, what, when, where, why and how of achieving your target.
 - ❑ Assess the impact of your plan on your organization and the people within it, and on the outside world.
 - ❑ Evaluate whether the effort, costs and implications of achieving your plan are worth the achievement. Known negative externalities of the plan may result in a decision to abort or modify it to avoid known difficulties.
 - ❑ Consider the control mechanisms, whether reporting quality or cost controls, etc. that are needed to achieve your plan and keep it on track.

C. Pareto Principle

You may have heard of one approach to the Pareto Principle: that 80% of a job is completed in 20% of the time. Another application of the principle in a non-planning environment is that 80% of the effort tends to achieve 20% of the results. By thinking and planning, we can reverse this to 20% of the effort achieving 80% of the results. We may even decide that it is more efficient not to attempt the remaining work at all!

D. Why do people avoid planning? There are a number of reasons why people avoid planning.

- **Organizational problems:**

- ❑ **Poor reward structures**

- Where an organization assumes success, it will often fail to reward it. Where failure occurs, then it may be punished in lack of promotion or redundancy. This often results in a situation where it is better for the individual to do nothing (and not draw attention) than risk trying something, fail and be punished.

- ❑ **Fire-fighting**

- An organization can be so deeply embroiled in crisis management and fire-fighting that it simply does not have time to plan.

- ❑ **The 'get stuck in' culture**

- An organization may oppose planning as a waste of time. This may be because the organization is doing a very simple job, or where managers are so experienced in a job that they do not appreciate that they are planning. The approach cripples inexperienced staff by denying them the benefits of planning, and puts more loads on experienced managers.

- ❑ **Opposition to time and expense of planning**

- Time spent on planning is an investment. Some organizations are culturally opposed to spending resources. Sometimes this may be appropriate, but often it is shortsighted.

- **Individual Avoidance of Planning**

Where people are resistant to planning, this can result from:

- ❑ **Laziness**

- People may simply not be bothered to devote the time to thinking a plan through.

- ❑ **Lack of Commitment and Resistance to Change**

- The individuals may not see the benefits of the planning process, may believe there is no need to plan, or may perceive things are okay as they stand.

- ❑ **Fear of Failure**

- By not taking action there is little risk of failure unless a problem is urgent and pressing. Whenever something worthwhile is attempted there is risk of failure.

□ ***Experience***

As individuals amass experience they may find that they rely less and less on formalized planning. This may be appropriate. It is easy, however, to be overconfident and overestimate experience – forethought is rarely wasted and is the mark of professionalism

□ ***Poor experience of planning***

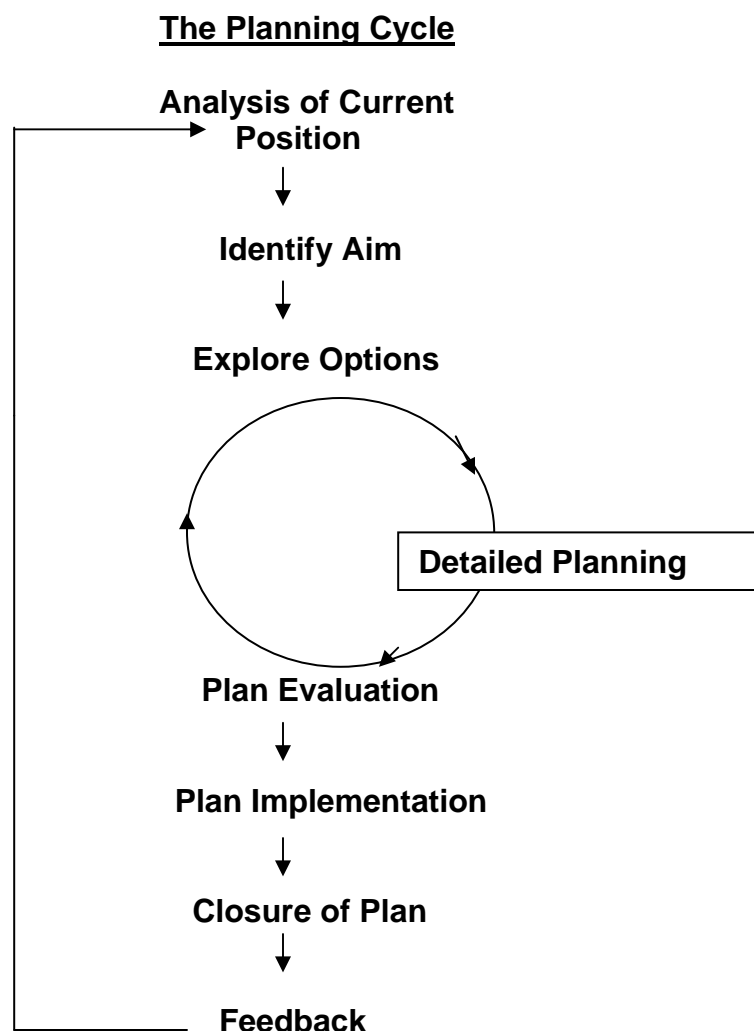
People may have had a previous bad experience with planning, where plans have been long, cumbersome, impractical or inflexible. Planning, like anything, can be done badly. Done properly, planning can be highly beneficial.

E. The planning cycle

Planning is best thought of as a cycle, not a straight-through process: once a plan has been devised it should be evaluated. This evaluation may be cost or number based, or may use other analytical tools. This analysis may show that the plan specified may cause unwanted consequences, may cost too much, or may simply not work.

In this case the planning process will have to cycle back to an earlier stage, or the plan may have to be abandoned altogether – the outcome of your planning may simply be that it is best to do nothing!

The stages of the planning cycle that will be explained below:



Once we have examined the planning cycle we will look at managing change and completing projects.

F. How to spot what needs to be done

Planning may be done on a routine basis or may need to be carried out as a result of new ideas, poor performance or pressure from customers or the organization's environment. This section examines how you can clarify the problems and opportunities that face you.

G. New Ideas

One simple approach to generating ideas is to look at what irritates you in your life and what seems unnecessarily laborious and tedious. Often this will prompt ideas for improvements, whether these are administrative changes in your organization or are ideas for new consumer products or services.

H. SWOT Analysis – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

A more systematic method is to use SWOT Analysis to detail or examine your organization's Strengths and Weaknesses, and to examine the Opportunities and Threats it faces. Often carrying out an analysis using the SWOT framework will be enough to reveal the changes that can be usefully made.

To carry out a SWOT Analysis for yourself or your organization, write down answers to the following questions:

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
What are your advantages?	What could be improved?	What are the good chances facing you?	What obstacles do you face?
What do you do well?	What is done badly?	What are the interesting trends?	What is your competition doing?
Be realistic, look at it from your point of view and from your customers point of view.	What should be avoided?	Useful opportunities come from changes in technology and markets on both a broad and industry specific scale.	Are the required specifications for your products and services changing?
If stumped start by writing down a list of your organizations characteristics.	Face any unpleasant truths now, rather than at a crucial point.	From changes in governmental policy, or changes in social patterns, population profiles lifestyle changes, or employment trends.	Do you have bad debt or cash flow problems?

I. Forced change

In some cases you may need to approach planning as a result of pressure for change. This can come about as a result of:

◆ *Internal Factors*

- New products, services or requirements of your organization
- New technology, i.e. computers, inter/intranets, cell phones, equipment
- Changes in the structure of your organization

◆ *External Factors*

- Changes in the economy
- Legal changes
- Appearance of new technology or ideas
- Competition
- Social changes
- Politics

In cases where change is forced on you, ensure you respond to the cause of the pressure, not to the symptoms of it.

J. Identifying the aim of your plan

Once you have completed a realistic analysis of your current position, the next stage of the Planning Cycle is to decide what the aim of your plan is? Deciding and defining an aim sharpens the focus of your plan, and helps you avoid wasting your time on irrelevant side issues.

The aim is best expressed in a simple single sentence. This ensures that it is clear and sharp in your mind.

If you are having difficulty in deciding the aim of your plan, ask yourself:

- What do I want the future to be?
- What benefits do I want to give my customers?
- What returns do I seek?
- What values do my organization and I believe in?

By answering all of the above questions you and anyone else you are working with have the basis for exchanging opinions in an ethical format. Sharing opinions about aims will help with the buy-in later on.

K. Vision & Mission Statements

The aim of the plan can often be broken down into a *Vision Statement* and a *Mission Statement*.

The *Vision Statement* typically is the aim of the highest level plan for the organization, and expresses the benefit that the organization provides to its customers, or the organizations ultimate aim.

The *Mission Statement* gives concrete expression to the *Vision Statement*, explaining how it will be achieved.

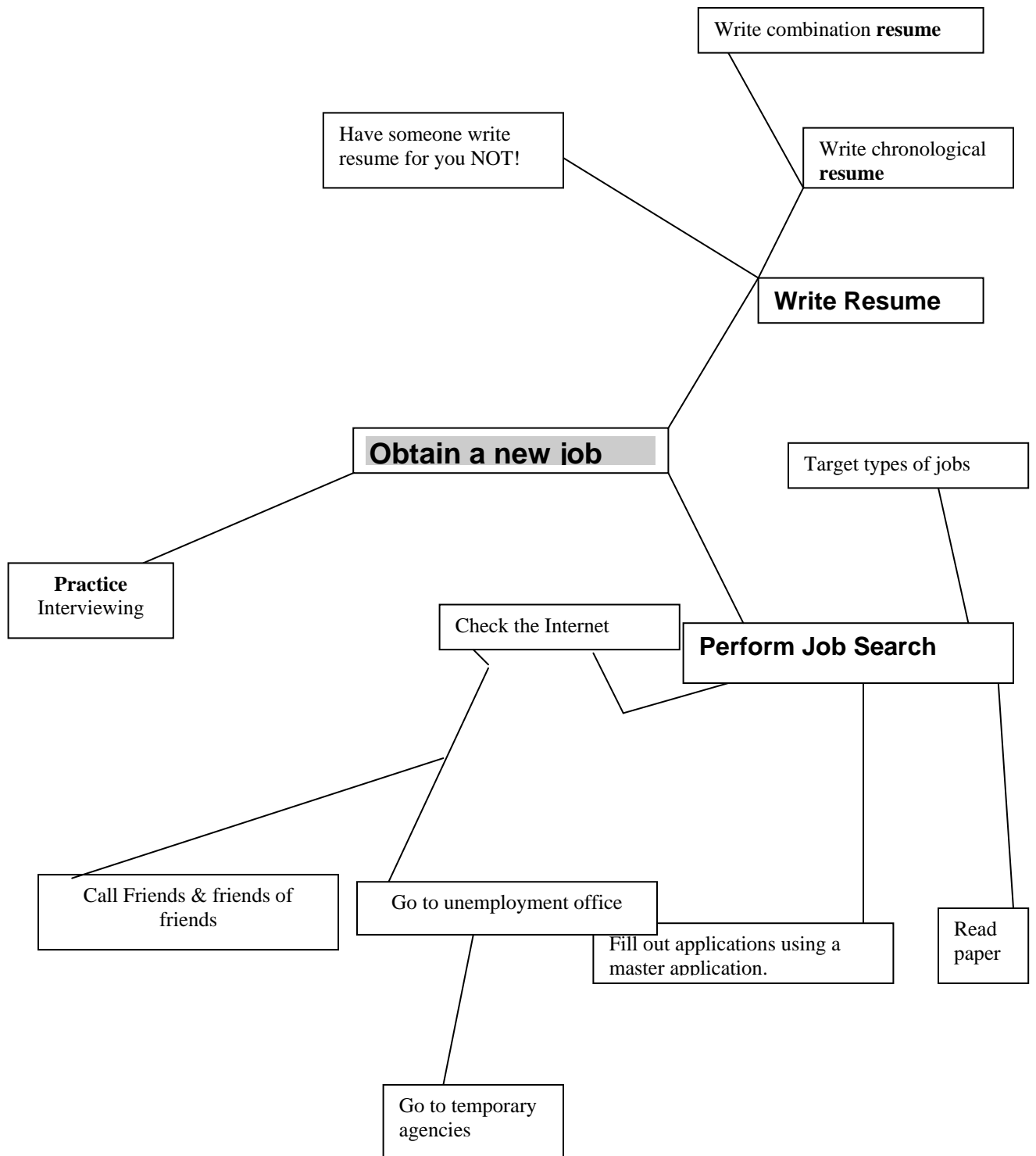
L. Exploring Options

When you know where you are, and know where you want to go, the next stage is to work out how you could get there. Although it is always important to take other people's views into account, ensure that you think for yourself during this process.

The first stage of this is to explore options available to you. There are several techniques available for doing this:

- ***Logical Thinking***
An effective way to do this is to diagram your thinking. Start by writing your aim in the center of a large piece of paper. Radiating from this, draw a line for each of the solutions you can think of, and note the solution with each line. After doing that, using additional lines, express all of the ways a solution can be accomplished. Do this until you have completed all possible solutions. See sample below:

SAMPLE



The above sample is not exhaustive but it provides an idea of the concept

- **Brainstorming**

This is a technique, generally done in a group, but can be done singularly, for developing creative and unusual solutions to problems. The process is free wheeling and uncritical. The concept is to generate ideas and approaches that are deliberately strange. These will inspire unusual solutions that can be developed by either logical thought or further brainstorming.

1. **What is brainstorming?**

Brainstorming is a method for developing creative solutions to problems. It works by focusing on a problem, and then deliberately coming up with as many deliberately unusual solutions as possible and by pushing ideas as far as possible.

One approach to brainstorming is to “seed” the session with a word pulled randomly from a dictionary. This word can be used as a starting point in the process of generating ideas.

During the brainstorming session there is no criticism of ideas – the idea is to open up as many possibilities as possible, and break down preconceptions about limits to the problem.

Once this has been done, the results of the brainstorming session can be analyzed and the best solutions can be explored either using further brainstorming or more conventional solutions.

2. **How to brainstorm**

The following rules are important to brainstorming successfully

- A leader should take control of the session, initially defining the problem to be solved with any criteria that must be met, and then keeping the session on course. He or she should encourage an enthusiastic, uncritical attitude among brainstormers and encourage participation by all members on the team. The session should be announced as lasting a fixed period of time, and the leader should ensure that no train of thought is followed for too long. The leader should try to steer it towards development of some practical solutions.
- Participants in the brainstorming process should come from as wide a range of disciplines as possible. This brings many more creative ideas to the session.
- Brainstormers should be encouraged to have fun brainstorming, coming up with as many ideas as possible, from solidly practical ones to wildly impractical ones in an environment where creativity is welcomed.
- Ideas should not be criticized or evaluated during the brainstorming session. Criticism introduces an element of risk for a group member in putting forward

an idea. This stifles creativity and cripples the free running nature of a good brainstorming session.

- Brainstormers should not only come up with new ideas in a brainstorming session, but also should 'spark off' from associations with other people's ideas and develop other people's ideas.
- A record should be kept of the session either as notes or a tape recording. This should be studied subsequently for evaluation. It can also be helpful to jot down ideas on a board that can be used by all brainstormers.

3. Individual versus Group Brainstorming

Individuals, groups or both can either carry out brainstorming:

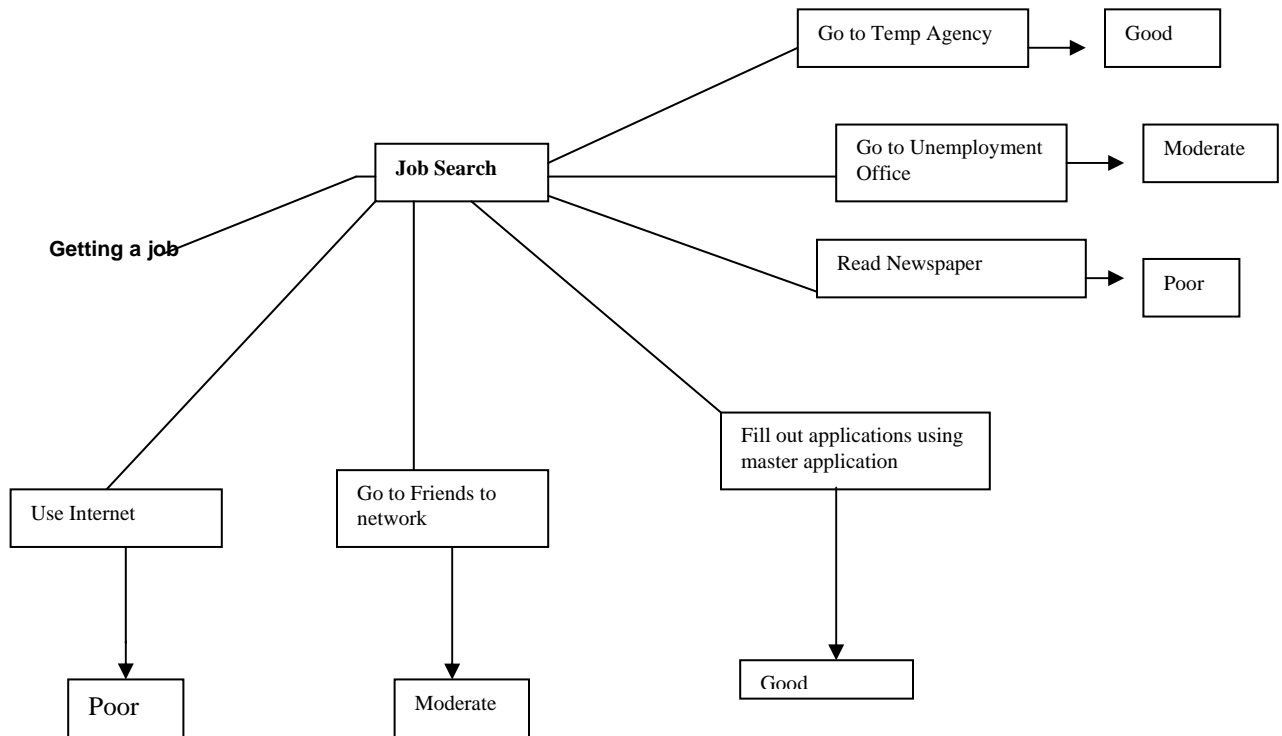
- Individual brainstorming tends to produce a wider range of ideas than group brainstorming, but tends not to develop the ideas as effectively, perhaps as individuals on their own run up against problems they cannot solve. Individuals are free to explore ideas in their own time without any fear of criticism, and without being dominated by other group members.
 - Group brainstorming develops ideas more deeply and effectively, as when difficulties in the development of an idea by one person are reached, another person's creativity and experience can be used to break them down. Group brainstorming tends to produce fewer ideas (as time is spent developing ideas in depth) and can lead to the suppression of creative but quiet people by loud and uncreative ones.
 - Individual and group brainstorming can be mixed, perhaps by defining a problem, and the letting team members initially come up with a wide range of possibly shallow solutions. These solutions could then be enhanced and developed by group brainstorming.
- **Research**
Similar problems may well have been faced by people you know, or may be documented in material that is available to you. Don't forget to check these sources.

M. Selecting the best option

Once you have explored the options available to you, it is time to decide which one to select. If you have the time and the resources available, and then you might decide to evaluate all options, carrying out detailed planning, risk

assessment for each. In the absence of that the best option is to build a decision tree.

SAMPLE DECISION TREE



N. Detailed planning

By the stage where you begin detailed planning, you should have a pretty good picture of where you are, what you want to achieve and the range of options available to you as the most likely to yield the results required.

Detailed planning is the process of working out the most efficient and effective way of achieving the aim you have defined. It is the process of determining who will do what, when, where, how and why and at what cost.

O. Identifying key activities

The first stage in the process is to identify the key actions that need to be performed in order to achieve the aim of the plan. If these actions are large and complex, reduce them down to a number of smaller key actions.

For each of these key actions, plan out how they will be achieved, working out the time that will need to be taken and the resources that will need to be allocated to achieve the action. This will allow you to calculate the costs of that action.

P. Prioritizing activities

Once you have done this, prioritize the actions in order of importance so that you do not waste time on low priority tasks. It can also be helpful to set mock deadlines (allowing appropriate contingency time for overruns and unavoidable delays). This gives a target to work towards.

If some of the actions being carried out depend on the completion of other activities, it may be useful to carry out a **Critical Path Analysis**. This will show you the minimum length of time that will be needed to achieve the plan, and will help you to decide task priorities. It will also help you to identify the key activities to keep moving when your resource requirements conflict with other managers/colleagues/family members using the same resources.

Critical Path Analysis

Critical path analysis is an extremely effective way of analyzing a complex project. It helps you calculate the minimum length of time in which a project can be completed, and which activities should be prioritized to complete by that date.

Where a job has to be completed on time, critical path analysis helps you focus on the essential activities to which attention and resources should be devoted. It gives an effective basis for the scheduling and monitoring of progress.

- **Sequential and parallel activities**

The essential concept behind **Critical Path Analysis** is that some plan activities are dependent on other activities being completed first.

These dependent activities need to be completed in a sequence, with each activity being more-or-less completed before the next activity can begin. Dependent activities are also called “sequential” activities.

Other activities are not dependent on completion of any other tasks, or may be done at any time before or after a particular stage is reached. These are non-dependent or ‘parallel’ tasks.

- **Method**

The process of carrying out a critical path analysis is shown below.

1. *List all activities in path*

Show the earliest start date, estimated duration and whether tasks are parallel or sequential. If the tasks are sequential, show what they depend on.

This will show a task list like the one below (simplified custom computer installation):

NB: Start week shows purely when resources become available: Whether a task is parallel or sequential depends largely on the context.

- o 1. High level analysis
Start week 1, 5 days, sequential
- o 2. Selection of hardware platform
Start week 1, 1 day, sequential
Dependent on 1
- o 3. Installation and commissioning of hardware
Start week 3, 2 weeks, parallel
Dependent on (2) any time after
- o 4. Detailed analysis of core modules
Start week 1, 2 weeks, sequential
Dependent on (1)
- o 5. Detailed analysis of supporting utilities
Start week 1, 2 weeks, sequential
Dependent on (4)
- o 6. Programming of core modules
Start week 4, 3 weeks, sequential
Dependent on (4)
- o 7. Programming of supporting modules
Start week 4, 3 weeks, sequential
Dependent on (5)
- o 8. Quality assurance of core modules
Start week 5, 1 week, sequential
Dependent on (6)
- o 9. Quality assurance of supporting modules
Start week 5, 1 week, sequential
Dependent on (7)
- o 10. Core module training
Start week 7, 1 day, parallel
Dependent on (6) any time after

- o 11. Development of accounting reporting
Start week 6, 1 week, parallel
Dependent on (5) any time after
- o 12. Development of management reporting
Start week 6, 1 week, parallel
Dependent on (5) any time after
- o 13. Development of management analysis
Start week 6, 2 weeks
Dependent on (5) any time after
- o 14. Detailed training
Start week 7, 1 week, sequential
Dependent on (1-13)
- o 15. Documentation
Start week 4, 2 weeks, parallel

2. *Head up graph paper with the days or weeks to task completion*

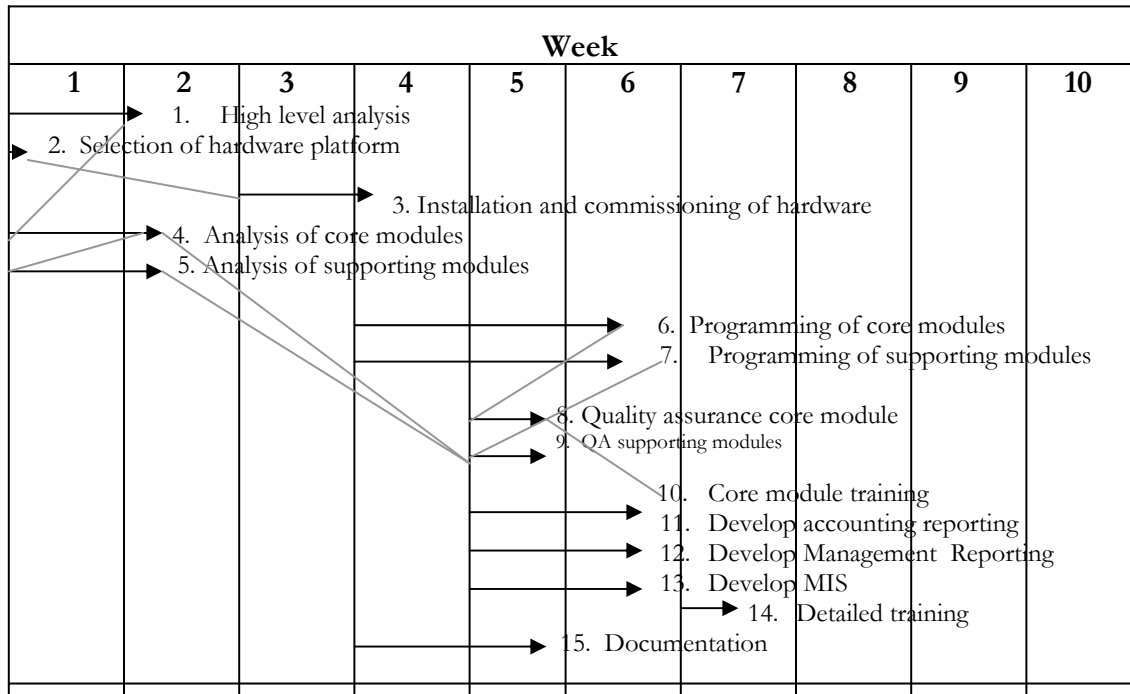
3. *Plot the tasks on the graph paper*

Start on the earliest dates, and mark the duration. Show the tasks as arrows, and the ends of tasks with dots. Above the task arrows, mark the time taken to complete the task. Do not worry about task scheduling yet, all we are doing is setting up the first draft of the analysis.

Once you have plotted the tasks, plot in lines to show dependencies.

This will produce an untidy draft analysis like the one on the next page.

Critical Path Analysis- Example 1 – First Draft



4. Scheduling Activities

Take the draft analysis, and use it to schedule the actions in the plan, in such a way that sequential actions are carried out in the required sequence. Parallel actions should be scheduled so that they do not interfere with sequential actions on the critical path, if possible.

While scheduling, bear in mind the resources you have available, and allow some slack time in the schedule for hold-ups, over-runs, failures in delivery, etc.

▪ Presenting the analysis

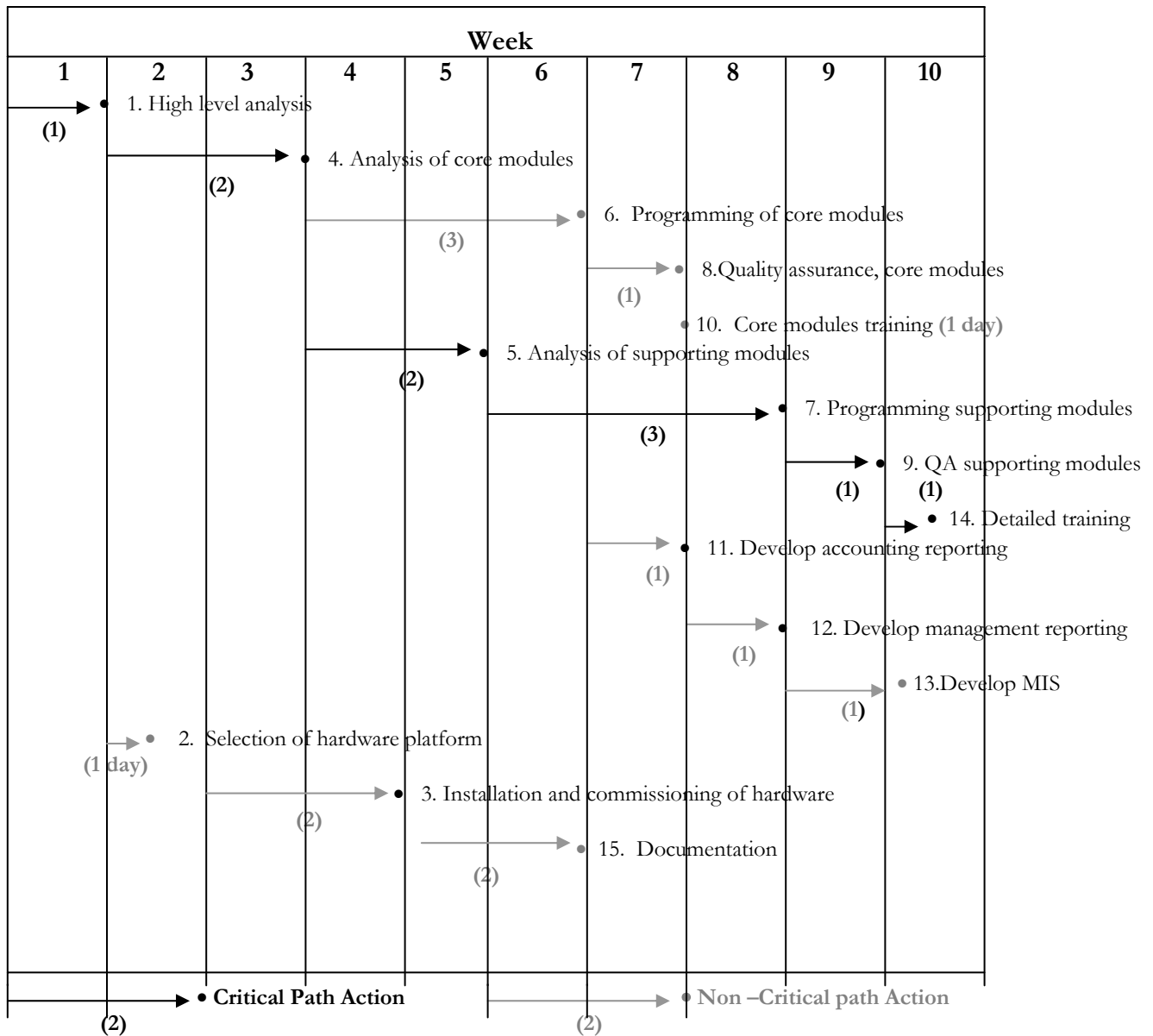
The final stage in this process is to prepare a clean copy of the analysis. This should combine the draft analysis (see above) with your scheduling and analysis of resources to show when you anticipate that jobs should start and finish.

There are two formats for this clean copy. The choice of the most effective form of presentation comes down to the circumstances of the analysis and personal taste.

1. GANTT Charts

A redrawn and scheduled version of the analysis above is shown below, in the format of a *modified* Gantt Chart

Critical Path Analysis- Example 2 – Schedules Activities



Here time is marked out in columns across the chart, with individualized tasks represented as arrows terminating at dots. The length and positions of the arrows show the start date and duration of tasks.

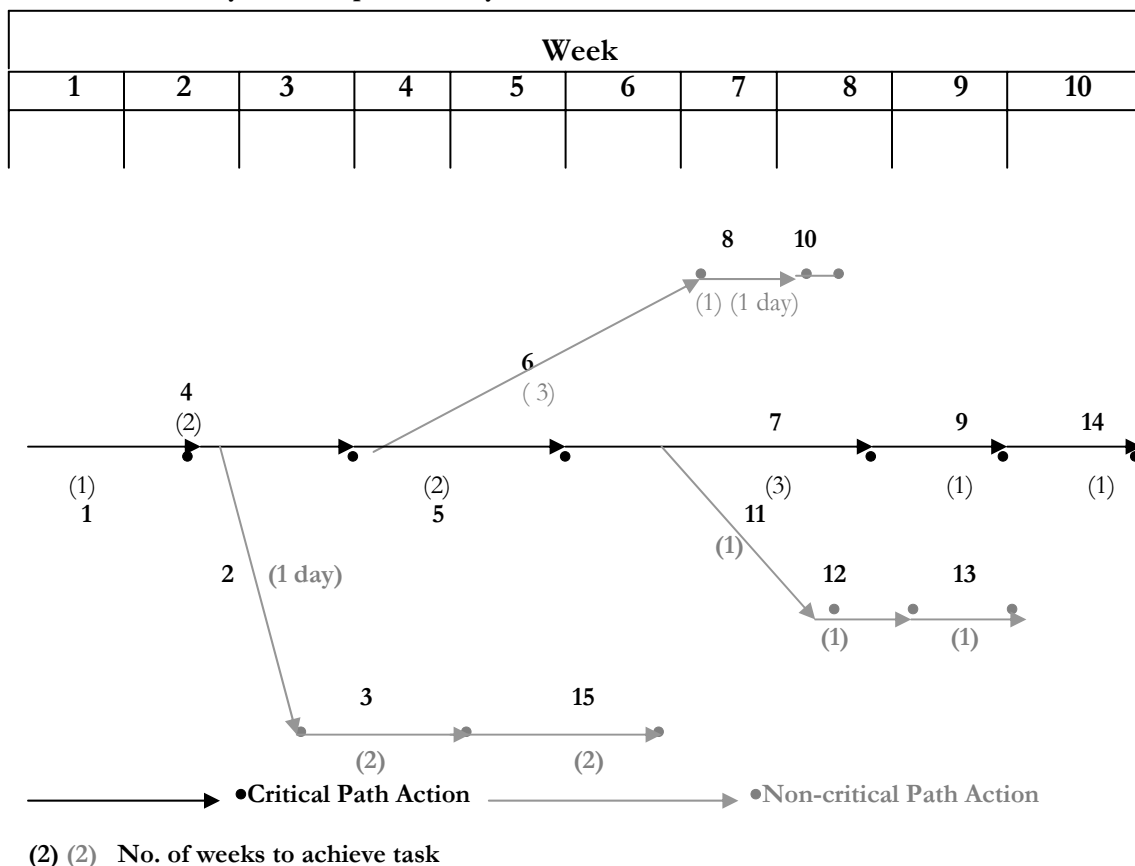
You may prefer to show tasks in pure GANTT format, as solid bars rather than arrows terminating in dots. Similarly you may prefer not to show the linkages between related tasks, this a matter of personal taste and convention. The *Critical Path* is the sequence of dependent activities that lead to the completion of the plan. Any delay of a stage in the critical path will delay completion of the whole plan unless future sequential activities are speeded up.

2. PERT Charts

PERT stands for Program Evaluation and Review Technique. Here circles represent completion of tasks, with linking lines showing the time taken to achieve the tasks. The critical path for the project is shown as the horizontal series of tasks.

Note that in the diagram below, we are using dotted lines to link completed tasks back to the appropriate stages at the critical path. These lines serve to tidy the diagram and do not represent tasks to be carried out. This diagram shows our example critical path analysis in PERT format:

Critical Path Analysis- Example 2 – Analysis in PERT Format



1. High level analysis
2. Selection of software platform
3. Installation of hardware
4. Analysis of core modules

8. Quality assurance, core modules
9. QA, supporting modules
10. Core module training
11. Develop accounting reporting

- 5. Analysis of supporting modules
- 6. Programming of core module
- 7. Programming of support modules

- 12. Develop management reporting
- 13. Develop MIS
- 14. Detailed training
- 15. Documentation

Carrying out the example critical path analysis above shows us :

- That if all goes well the project can be completed in 10 weeks.
- That if we want to complete the task as rapidly as possible, we need:
 - 1 analyst for the first 5 weeks
 - 1 programmer for 6 weeks starting at week 4
 - 1 programmer for 3 weeks starting at week 6
 - Quality assurance for weeks 7 and 9
 - Hardware to be installed by week 7
- That the critical path is the path for development and installation of supporting modules
- That hardware installation is a low priority task as long as it is completed by the end of week 7

Summary

Critical Path Analysis is an effective and powerful method of assessing :

- Tasks which must be carried out
- Where parallel activity can be carried out
- The shortest time a project can be completed
- Resources needed to achieve a project
- The sequence of activities, scheduling, and timings involved
- Task priorities
- Etc.

An effective critical path analysis can make the difference between success and failure on complex projects, and can be an effective tool for assessing the importance of problems faced during the implementation process.

Q. Control Mechanisms

While you are concentrating on the actions that need to be performed, ensure that you are also considering the control mechanisms that will allow you to monitor the performance of the activity. These will include the activities such as reporting. Quality assurance, cost control, etc. that are needed to spot and correct any deviations from the path.

R. Elements of a Good Plan

A good plan will:

- ◆ Have a clear statement of the current situation
- ◆ Have a clear aim
- ◆ Reflect the resources available
- ◆ Detail the tasks to be carried out, whose responsibility they are, their priorities, and deadlines.
- ◆ Explain control mechanisms that will alert the manager to difficulties in achieving the plan.
- ◆ Plan for contingencies, so that a rapid effective response may be made to crises, perhaps at a time when you are at low ebb or confused following a setback.

S. Making Effective Plans

The following points will help to make your plan effective.

- ◆ Involve people affected by the plan to gain their support
- ◆ Explain why the plan is being carried out
- ◆ Ensure that the required resources are available and remain available.
- ◆ As far as possible keep existing ways of doing things. This avoids unnecessary disruption.
- ◆ Build in milestones and review progress. This helps to keep a sense of movement in the plan, and allows achievement to be rewarded.
- ◆ Use KISS (Keep it simple and straightforward)
- ◆ Keep the plan flexible
- ◆ Consider traditional arrangements, how will you keep things going while you implement the plan?

T. Evaluation of the plan and its impact

Once you have worked out the details of your plan, the next stage is to work out whether it will work and its impact: often you may find that the plan will have unexpected effects, either positive or negative.

You may also find that when you cost the plan, and compare it against the benefits achieved, that the plan is simply not worth carrying out. This can be frustrating after the hard work of detailed planning, however it is much better to find this out than when you have invested time, resources and personal standing in the success of the plan. Evaluating the plan now gives you the

opportunity to either investigate other options that might be more successful or to accept that no plan is needed or should be carried out.

U. Plan Evaluation

There are a number of ways in which you can evaluate your plan:

❖ **Cost/Benefit Analysis**

This is probably one of the simplest ways of evaluating a plan. During the process above you should have carried out an analysis of the costs involved with each activity within the plan. Simply add up these costs, and compare them with expected benefits.

❖ **PMI**

Once you have carried out a cost/benefit analysis, you may find it useful to mix its financial information with an assessment of the intangible or non-financial aspects of the decision. An effective way of doing this is with a **PMI** analysis. This is an advanced form of 'weighing the pros and cons', and involves listing the positive points in the plan in one column, the negative points in a second column. Each point can be allocated a subjective positive or negative score.

PMI – Plus/Minus/Interesting

1. What is PMI?

PMI stands for 'Plus/Minus/Interesting'. It is a valuable development (by Edward de Bono) of the 'pros and cons' technique used for centuries.

PMI is a basic decision making tool. When you are facing a difficult decision, simply draw up a table headed up 'Plus', 'Minus', and 'Interesting'. In the column underneath the 'Plus' heading, write down all the positive points of taking the action. Underneath the 'Minus' heading write down all the negative effects. In the 'Interesting' column write down the extended implications of taking action, whether positive or negative.

2. Scoring your PMI Table

You may be able to make a decision just from the table you have drawn up. Alternatively, consider each of the points you have written down and assign a positive or negative score to each appropriately. The scores you assign can be entirely subjective. Once you have done this, add up the score. A strongly positive score indicated that an action should be taken, a strongly negative score that it should be avoided.

An example is shown below:

Should I move to the big city?

Plus	Minus	Interesting
More going on +5	Have to sell my house -6	Easier to find a new job +1
Easier to see my friends +5	More pollution -3	Meet more people +2
Easier to get places + 3	Less space -3	More difficult to get work done -3
	No countryside -2	More difficult to get to work -5
13	-14	-5

Total = -6 – I'm happier living just outside of the city

❖ **Force field analysis**

Similar to PMI, Force Field Analysis helps you get a good overall view of all the forces for and against the change you want to implement. This allows you to see where you can make adjustments that will make the plan more likely to succeed.

Force Field Analysis

1. Force Field Analysis

Force Field Analysis is a method used to get a whole view of all the forces for or against a plan so that a decision can be made which takes into account all interests. In effect this is a specialized method of weighing pros & cons.

Where a plan has been decided on, force field analysis allows you to look at all the forces for or against the plan. It helps you to plan or reduce impact of the opposing forces, and strengthen and reinforce the supporting forces.

2. Carrying out a Force Field Analysis

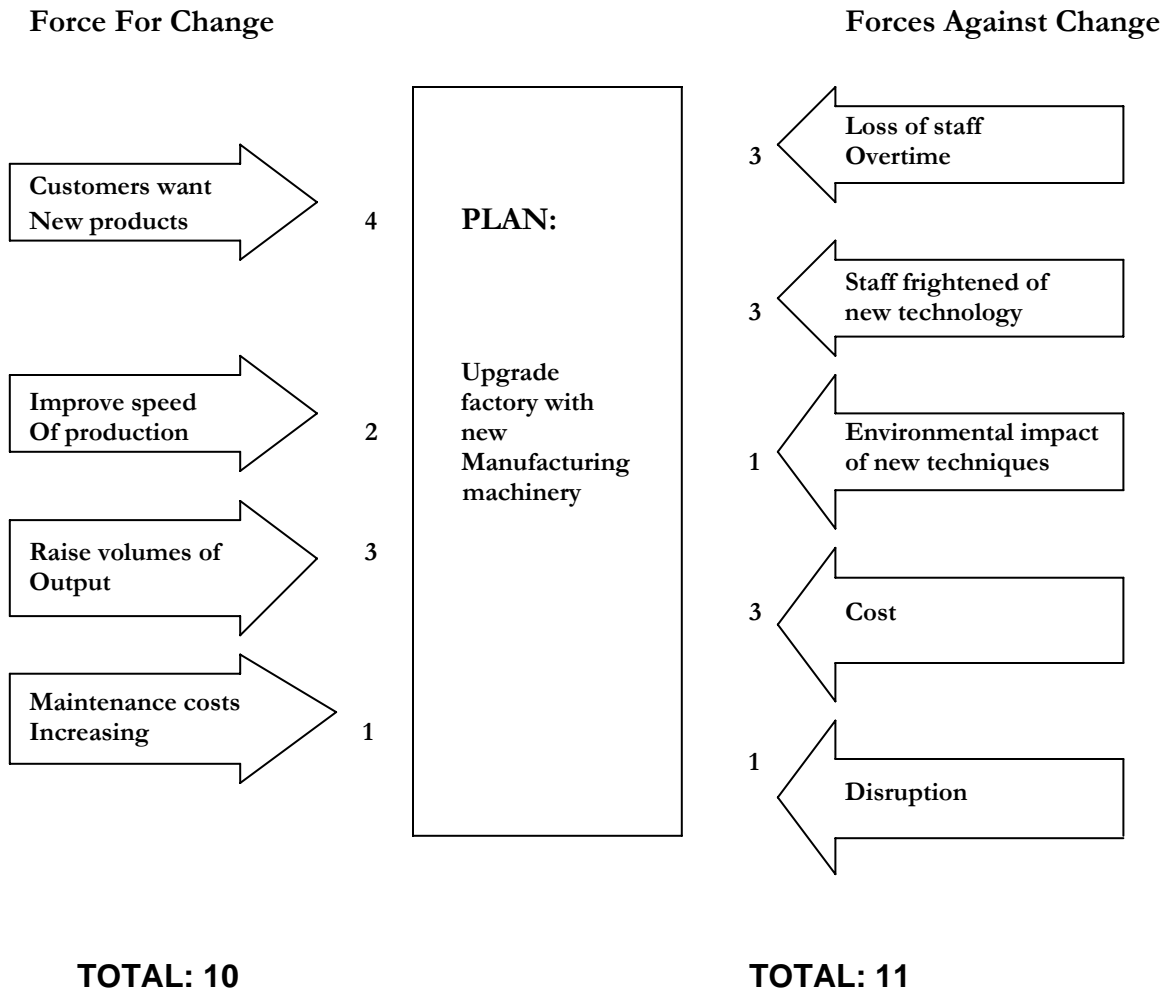
To carry out a force field analysis, follow the following steps:

- ◆ *List all forces* for change in one column, and all forces against change in another.
- ◆ *Assign* a score to each force, from 1 (weak) to 5 (strong).
- ◆ *Draw* a diagram showing the forces for and against, and the size of the forces.

3. Example Force Field Analysis

An example of the analysis is shown below:

Force Field Analysis Example



Once you have carried out an analysis, you can decide on the viability of the project.

Where you have decided to carry out a project, it can help you analyze how you can push through a project that may be in difficulty. Here you have two choices:

- To reduce the strength of the forces opposing a project
- To increase the forces pushing a project

Often the most elegant solution is the first: just trying to force a change may cause its own problems as e.g. staff can be annoyed into active opposition to a plan instead of merely just not welcoming it.

If you were faced with the task of pushing through the project in the example above, the analysis might suggest a number of points:

- By training staff (increase cost by 1) fear of technology could be eliminated (reduce fear by 2)
- It would be useful to show the staff that change is necessary for business survival (new force in favor, +2)
- Wages could be raised to reflect new productivity (cost +1, loss of overtime –2)
- Slightly different machines with filters could be installed (environmental impact –1)

These changes swing the balance from 11:10 (against the plan), to 8:13 (in favor of the plan).

4. Summary

Force Field Analysis is an effective method of getting a picture of all of the forces for and against a plan. It helps you to weight the importance of these factors and determines whether a plan is worth pursuing.

Where you have decided to proceed with a plan, carrying out a Force Field Analysis helps you identify changes that might be made to improve the plan.

❖ *Cash Flow Forecasts and Break Even Analysis*

Where a decision is/has mainly financial implications, such as in business and marketing planning, preparation of a Cash Flow Forecast can be extremely useful. Not only does it allow you to assess the affect of time on costs and revenue; it helps in assessing the size of the greatest negative and positive cash flows associated with a plan, and provides the basis for accurate break-even analysis.

When it is set up in a spreadsheet package, a good Cash Flow Forecast also functions as an extremely effective model of the plan, allowing the effect of variation in assumptions to be examined.

❖ *Risk Analysis & Contingency Planning*

All of the above analyses broadly assume that the plan functions correctly. None of them assesses the risks associated with carrying the plan out and the potential costs should those risks damage the plan. These risks can be assessed effectively by using a variant of the Decision Tree (illustrated earlier) which allows you to show the major uncertainties associated with different stages of the plan, analyzed by probability and outcome. Wherever an outcome is unfavorable, this will help you to assess and plan contingency actions needed and the cost of getting the plan on course.

V. Assessing Impact

It is important to ensure that you do not rely exclusively on the results of numeric analysis as the basis of your plan evaluation. Many factors, which are important to the evaluation of your plan, cannot be quantified.

These factors include:

- *Ethical Considerations*
This should include an assessment of likely changes in public ethics over the lifetime of the plan.
- *Shareholders*
How will the shareholders, owners, or trustees of the organization view the plan? (In the military: the chain of command, Congress, etc.)
- *Members/Employees*
What effects will the plan have on the organization's members or employees? Should these effects stand in the way of improving efficiency?
- *Customers*
Will the plan change the way in which your organization's customers view it? Will this affect the likelihood of reordering/using the services?
- *Suppliers*
How will your plan affect relations with suppliers?
- *Public Relations*
Will the plan have a positive or negative effect on your organization's relations with the public, press, and politicians?
- *Environment*
Will it enhance or damage the environment?

Any analysis of your plan must be tempered by common sense. It is much better to change a beautifully crafted plan that analysis shows will not work, than deal with the consequences after a failed attempt at implementation.

W. Implementing change

Once you have completed your plan and decided that it will work satisfactorily, it is time to implement it. This involves directing resources to complete the activities specified, and monitoring the execution of the activities so that corrections can be applied if necessary. Monitoring execution also allows you to determine when the task has been achieved and activity can cease.

X. Plan Execution Tools

Tools that can help you in the routine execution of the plan are:

- *Year Planners*
This allows you to show tasks, task duration and completed dates and track periods when resources will not be available.
- *Diary*
For the recording of the achievement dates, intermediate target dates, and routine activities.
- *Statistics and Analytical tools*
These are useful tools for tracking progress.
- *Specialized Software*
Some companies sell goal setting and planning software.

Y. Managing Change

It can be helpful to take four steps to ensure that you manage change effectively:

1. Ensure that everyone understands why change is necessary. If people are dissatisfied with the way things are, they will be more likely to welcome change.
2. Show people how things will be better in the future.
3. Ensure that people understand the plan.
4. Try to ensure that there can be no way of going back to previous ways of doing things: ensure that only new forms are available, that computer systems reflect the new way of doing things, and that procedures work smoother under the new system than the old.

Z. Resistance to Change

People can resist your efforts for a number of reasons:

- *Self Interest*
Where someone has achieved status, privilege or self-esteem through effective use of an old system, they will often see your plan as a threat.

Where the plan threatens paid overtime, people will naturally fear the impact on their bank balance.

- *Fear of the Unknown*
People may be uncertain of their abilities to learn new skills, their aptitude with new systems, or their ability to take on new roles.
- *Conscientious Objection or Differing Perceptions*
People may sincerely believe that you are wrong. They may view the situation from a different viewpoint, or may have aspirations for themselves or the organization that are fundamentally opposed to yours. It is worth trying to understand their position, however once you have done so and formed an opinion, do what *you* think is right. Remember that that different people in different jobs will have different perceptions of a situation: a sales manager will almost inevitably have a different view of the right level of commission payments to salesmen than from the viewpoint of a finance director.
- *Suspicion*
People may not trust you.
- *Conservatism*
Organizations or people may simply be opposed to change. This can result from a feeling that everything is okay, from loss of touch with customers, from lack of exposure to better ways of doing things, or from the slowness of the decision making, etc.

If you understand the root of possible resistance to change, you can plan for it and overcome it before it becomes a significant obstacle.

AA. Closing Projects:

Once a plan has been achieved, the project can be closed.

At this point is often worth carrying out the evaluation of the plan, concentrating on:

- The quality and consistency of delivery achieved
- The work achieved
- The length of time it took to achieve the plan
- The real cost of carrying out the plan against the planned costs

BB. Success

Where the plan has been successfully executed, this is a good time to formally close the project with a ceremony, whether this is a meal or a party, or a formal presentation of awards/rewards. Not only does this formally close the plan in people's minds; it allows them to feel part of the success. Often the broad success of a plan can be lost in a volume of tiny adjustments. This can leave highly effective people unhappy and dissatisfied following a success.

CC. Summary

This section on planning & decision making has shown the following points:

- Planning is an important investment in the success of a project. Carrying out the process is not only prepares you for what lies ahead, ensuring you have adequate resources and use them in the most effective way possible, but also can warn you that a plan is not worth pursuing. This is valuable information, however frustrating it may be.
- That people can avoid planning either because organizational structures are poor or for personal reasons. Where a manager is highly experienced, he/she may have enough prior knowledge to avoid the need of a plan on a conscious level. He should not underestimate the value of his own experience by denying new managers the benefit of planning.
- Good planning takes place in a cycle, with evaluation following detailed planning. Where evaluation indicates a plan should not be followed, you can still return to take a different course with minimal loss. After a plan you assess the plan, and learn how to improve your planning and execution. The planning cycle is shown below:
 - *Spotting what needs to be done*
By spotting new ideas, SWOT Analysis, or responding to outside pressure.
 - *Identifying the Aim of your Plan*
By asking yourself how you want the future to be. Maybe prepare a vision or mission statement.
 - *Exploring Options*
Firstly evaluating a number of options by Brainstorming or research. Selecting options with e.g. Decision Trees.

- o *Plan Evaluation*

This allows you to work out the likelihood of your plan working before you try to implement it. Techniques such as cost/benefit analysis, PMI, Force Analysis, Cash Flow Forecasting, Risk Analysis can alert you to unsuspected considerations. Information learned can be fed back into the plan.

Plan evaluation should consider intangible points such as ethics, effects on people, and the environment. Where a plan is not likely to work, it should either be adjusted, other options could be explored, or the plan could be scrapped.

- o *Implementing Change*

Once you have selected a plan, you will have to implement it. To do this you will have to monitor execution of the plan so that you can apply corrections if necessary. You may have to understand and overcome resistance to change.

- o *Closing a Plan*

Here the success or failure of the plan is acknowledged, and information is fed back into future planning.

Decision Making

As previously discussed in earlier sections, planning is very important. This section on decision making drives that point home, as well as giving additional decision making techniques not previously mentioned outside of the context of planning.

A. Planning for Decision Making

While decision making without planning is fairly common, it is often not pretty. The terms used to describe it —crisis management, putting out fires, seat-of-the-pants governing—reveal the awkwardness and mendacity of this way of life. Planning allows decision to be made in a much more comfortable and intelligent way. Planning even makes decisions easier by providing guidelines and goals for the decision. We might even say that planning is a type of decision simplification as was shown in many ways in the last section. Here we are focusing on decision making, and relating planning to that process.

1. Planning allows the establishment of independent goals.

The vision, which will shape the decisions, is set apart from surrounding events. Decisions are not made only as reactions to external stimuli or pressures. “Management by fire fighting” is replaced by a conscious and directed series of choices. Managers now steer the organization, individuals steer their lives, rather than being steered external forces. Sometimes the difference between planning & not planning is the difference between taking control of your life or swaying with the wind, which according to lore can come from the four- corners of the earth. Proactive behavior is much more rewarding then reactive behavior.

2. Planning provides a standard of measurement.

A plan provides something to measure against, so that you can discover whether or not you are achieving or heading toward your goals. As the proverb says *if you do not know where you are going, it doesn't matter which way you go.*

3. Planning converts values to action.

When you are faced with a decision, you can consult your plan and determine which decision will help you advance your plan best. Decisions made under the guidance of planning can work together in a coherent way to advance company or individual goals.

Planning is useful in emergency situations, too. When a crisis arises, a little thought will help determine which decision to make that will not only help resolve the crisis, but will also help advance the overall plan.

4. Planning allows limited resources to be committed in an orderly way.

Budgets, time, effort, manpower—all are limited. Their best use can be made when a plan governs their use.

A simple use would be planning to buy a house or car. Rather than having to decide between buying the item now with all of the cash or never having it, you plan to buy it over several years by making payments. Or, you might combine this plan to buy a smaller house and add rooms later as they could be afforded. By planning you can accomplish things that might otherwise look impossible.

B. Decision Levels

We all recognize that some decisions are more important than others are, whether in their immediate impact or long term significance. As a means of understanding the significance of a decision so that we can know how much time and resources to spend on it, three levels of decision have been identified:

1. Strategic:

Strategic decisions are the highest level. Here a decision concerns general direction. Long term goals, philosophies and values. These decisions are the least structured and most imaginative; they are the most risky and the most uncertain outcome, partly because they reach so far into the future and partly because they are of so much importance.

For example: Decisions about what to do with your life, what to learn, or what methods to use to gain knowledge (travel, work, and school) would be strategic. Whether to produce a low priced product and gain market share or produce a high priced product for a niche market would be a strategic decision.

2. Tactical:

Tactical decisions support strategic decisions. They tend to be medium range, medium significance, with moderate consequences.

For example: If your strategic decision were to become a forest ranger, a tactical decision would be where to go to school and what books to read. Or if your company decided to produce a low priced product, a tactical decision might be to build a new factory to produce them at a low manufacturing cost.

3. Operational.

These are every day decisions, used to support tactical decisions. They are often made with little and are structured. Their impact is immediate, short-term, short range, and usually low-cost. The consequences of a bad operational decision will be minimal, although a series of bad or sloppy operational decisions can cause harm. Operational decisions can be preprogrammed, pre-made, or set out clearly in policy manuals.

For example: If your tactical decision were to read some books on forestry, your operational decision would involve where to shop for the books. You might have a personal policy of shopping for books at a certain store or two. Thus, the operational decision is highly structured: "Whenever books are needed, look at Joe's Books".

Decisions need to be made at all levels. For example, too many decisions made at the operational level would indicate you are probably not doing enough strategic thinking, which implies a lack of planning. As a result, you are liable to be leading a reactionary life, one that is out of your control.

C. Some additional techniques for decision-making.

1. T-Chart. A T-Chart is an orderly, graphic representation of alternative features or points involved in a decision, so that the decision-maker can consider them in a thoughtful and coherent way. In one form, it can be a list of positive and negative attributes surrounding a particular choice. Drawing up such a chart insures that both positive and negative aspects of each direction or decision will be taken into account.

For example, what are the pros and cons of deciding to buy a sport utility vehicle?

PRO	CON
Better visibility	Higher Insurance
Safer structure	Poorer gas mileage
Can take off road	More expensive maintenance

In another form, two possible choices are listed, with good points or arguments or effects listed for each: Suppose your company is trying to decide whether to create its own advertising or hire an agency?

Use Outside Agency	Write Ads In House
Professional work	Faster product
Expertise of ideas	Better knowledge of product
Media connections	Use same ad in flyers

Another technique similar to this is the PMI technique discussed earlier it is different in that “interesting” ideas are included besides the pro & con approach.

2. Buriden’s Ass. This method of decision making is used when two or more equally attractive alternatives are faced. (This is from an old fable about an ass placed between two equally nice bales of hay. The ass could not decide which bale to turn to because they were both so attractive, and so it starved to death.) The method is simply to list all of the negative points or draw backs about each decision. That is, when two or more alternatives seem very desirable, we become blinded to any drawbacks. The Buriden’s Ass method simply focuses on the drawbacks.

For example, suppose you are a young lady about to become engaged. Mr. Right asks you, "Darling, which would you rather have, a \$4000.00 engagement ring, or \$4000.00 worth of furniture for our new Swiss Chalet?" You find these to be both very attractive alternatives, so you decide to use the Buriden's Ass method to decide between them.

What are the drawbacks of the ring?

- *It might get stolen or lost*
- *It isn't useful like furniture*
- *People might think you married Mr. Right for his money, (or that he had to buy your consent with a big rock)*
- *It might make your friends feel bad because they have little rings; you might worry about damaging it, etc.*

Now, What are the drawbacks of the furniture?

- *It will wear out eventually and be gone*
- *You might worry about staining or damaging the furniture*
- *Furniture isn't "romantic" like diamonds & so on*

Try it yourself —————→

Your kindly boss wants to increase your total compensation. He offers you these choices:

- Take an increase in hourly pay
- Take a long paid vacation each year and continue to work at same hourly pay
- Work fewer hours each week so that you're per hour rate of pay will increase.

Note: Each option is exactly the same in terms of compensation.
--

3. Measured Criteria. With this technique, you list the criteria you want your decision to meet and assign points to each criterion based on its relative importance in the decision. Then, each alternative is given a certain number of points according to how fully it meets the criterion. For points you can use a scale of 1 to 10, 1 to 100, or any other range that makes sense to you.

In the example below, traveling by train is rated 25 out of 30 for the “comfort” criterion. The plane is ranked a little less comfortable, at 21 out of 30. Once all of the alternatives have been assigned their due, all the points for each alternative are added up and the alternative with the highest total points is the one chosen. In the example below, that would be the plane.

Example:

	Possible Points	Train	Plane	Car
Comfort	30	25	21	18
Speed	15	7	15	3
Safety	20	13	17	9
Food	10	6	2	10
Total	75	51	55	40

Business/Marketing Plans

❖ *Analysis of the current position*

○ *Consumer Analysis*

- What is the need for your product or service?
- Who is buying the product, who is consuming it?
- What is the buying process?
- Is it an impulse buy, or is it carefully weighed? How anxious is the consumer to make a right decision?
- *Segmentation & targeting*
Will one part of the potential market be more lucrative than others?

○ *Market Analysis*

- *What is the relevant market?*
Are you sure that you are viewing the market correctly? How do you define it? How large is it? Is it expanding or contracting? What are the market trends?
- *Market product life cycle*
What differentiates products in the market? What guides the consumer's choice?
- *What are the key factors determining success?*
These could be quality, price, advertising, R&D, design, service, etc.

○ *Competitive Analysis*

- *SWOT*
What are your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats relative to the competition? What is your access to resources?

○ *Distribution Analysis*

- *Channels of distribution*
What are the precise channels of distribution between you and the consumer?
- *Markups*
What are the mark-ups at each stage of the channel?
- *Power in the Channels*
Who has the power to dictate the way channels operate?

- ❖ *Planning the Marketing Mix.* The marketing mix represents your plan for making the most of your product. This involves consideration of:
 - *Product*
How will your product appear? What will it do? How will it meet consumers needs? How does it fit with the existing product range? (Presentation; fit with product range, etc.)
 - *Price*
What price will you charge for it? How will you justify the price?
 - *Promotion*
How will you promote the product? What marketing strategy will you use? What image will you present? How will you handle PR? How will you handle advertising?
- ❖ *Evaluation of your plan*
What does cash flow forecast show? How long will it take to break even? Is your plan viable? Do you need to re-plan your marketing mix or abandon the plan?